Perspectives of Professional Learning Policy Implementation

For Supporting English Language Learners

In A Rural Ontario School Board

by

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Abstract

The issue of lower academic achievement for English language learners (ELLs) compared to their English-speaking peers has been identified in the research literature. Professional learning for classroom teachers, English as a second language (ESL) teachers, and ESL paraprofessionals has been promoted as one strategy to address this achievement gap. In some rural school boards, ELLs represent a small proportion of the overall student population. Academic achievement, however, is as much an equity issue for ELLs in rural as in urban school boards. The purpose of this study was to describe how the implementation of ELL-related professional learning policy was perceived in a rural school board in the province of Ontario, Canada from 2007 to 2013. Honig’s (2006) conceptualization of education policy implementation guided the study. The unit of analysis for this descriptive case study was a rural school board in which ELLs were approximately 2% of the student population. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 participants: board-level ESL consultants, ESL teachers, classroom teachers, ESL paraprofessionals, and a secondary school principal. ELL-related learning materials published by the school board were also collected. Five themes emerged from data analysis: first, the board’s two ESL consultants were the key providers of ELL-related professional learning; second, the ESL consultants were learners as well as leaders of professional learning; third, schools varied in their capacity to initiate ELL-professional learning; fourth, ELL-related professional learning initiatives were parallel to rather than integral to the board’s primary professional learning delivery model of collaborative inquiry; and fifth, challenges in providing ELL-related professional learning related to the uneven distribution of the board’s small ELL population across a wide geographical area. The study’s significance was in contributing to empirical work at the intersection of rural education, second language learning, and professional learning; and in describing how a rural context interacted with both normative and technical aspects of education policy implementation. Implications for future research included further research into the following: first, relationship building as a policy implementation instrument; second, links between ELL-related
professional learning and increased achievement for ELLs; and third, the provision of ELL-related professional learning for paraprofessionals.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Implementation research was once characterized as “the dismal science of policy studies” (Pal, 2010, p. 205) because some researchers identified gaps between policymakers’ apparent or stated intentions and policy outcomes as observed through empirical work. In the latter half of the twentieth century, implementation was conceptualized as a “black box” of complex and poorly understood processes (Hill & Hupe, 2009, p. 43); one focus of implementation research at that time was uncovering explanations for the apparent lack of fidelity between policymakers’ goals and implementation outcomes (Fowler, 2009). Researchers found that gaps between policy goals and actual outcomes resulted from, among other issues, poor policy design (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984), inattention to the resources needed by implementers (Gross, Giacquinta, & Bernstein, 1971), and political conflict among levels of government bureaucracies (Odden, 1991). Other researchers argued that many policies were implemented in a manner consistent with policymakers’ goals, but that implementation occurred over longer time horizons than those typically studied in empirical work (Kirst & Jung, 1980). Another perspective was that policies were often implemented in a manner reflecting adaptations to local settings whose innumerable variations were beyond the scope of many policy documents to encompass (Lipsky, 1980). Implementation processes as currently conceptualized by empirical researchers are described as situated in and contingent upon local contexts (Honig, 2006); the analytical task arising from this conceptualization is investigating how implementers’ responses to policy are shaped by local “capacity, internal administrative structures, and norms of action” (McLaughlin, 2006, p. 213).

This conceptualization of policy implementation processes and outcomes as situated in particular implementation contexts has informed the current study, as did my experiences as a former teacher of English as a second language (ESL). Having read, interpreted, and implemented education policies as a teacher and department head in two secondary schools, I experienced firsthand what I would later learn through graduate studies to characterize as complex implementation environments.
involving contestation and mediation of particular policies. Having taught English language learners (ELLs) at the secondary school and university level, I also view issues relating to second language teaching and learning as incorporating not only technical components but also an equity dimension. The current study brought together my professional background and the conceptualization of implementation in the policy studies literature as situated in particular contexts.

**Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

Provincial education policy requires boards of education in Ontario, Canada to establish procedures for welcoming, assessing, placing, and tracking the progress of ELLs. There is a concomitant requirement for school boards to provide “appropriate [ELL-related] professional development opportunities” (Ministry of Education (MOE), 2007b, p. 31) to administrators, ESL teachers, classroom teachers, and paraprofessionals. Professional learning is one aspect of capacity building and is found in the policy literature to be integral to the implementation of education policies targeting changes in teachers’ instructional practices (Massell & Goertz, 2002). Capacity building that incorporates professional learning also has the potential to narrow achievement gaps between cohorts of students, resulting in more equitable educational outcomes (Greenleaf et al., 2011; Rorrer, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2008).

The purpose of this study was to describe how the implementation of Ontario ELL-related professional learning policy was perceived in a rural school board.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What local policies, procedures, and activities relating to professional learning for teachers of ELLs and support staff working with ELLs have been initiated or supported by one rural school board in the course of implementing the Ontario Ministry of Education’s 2007 *ELL Policies and Procedures, K–12* document and 2011 *Steps to English Proficiency (STEP)* document?

2. How do the participants in this rural board report the development and implementation of
these policies, procedures, and activities to have been influenced by the rural and small communities context in which the school board functions?

3. Who has been involved, individually or in groups, in implementing ELL-related professional learning within the school board?

4. What challenges has the school board confronted in implementing the Ministry of Education’s directive to provide professional learning opportunities for teachers of ELLs and support staff working with ELLs?

Rationale for the Study

A number of research findings as well as gaps in the literature underscore the importance of this study. For example, there is an established and large body of policy studies literature with findings about how education policies, once developed, are actually implemented in a variety of educational settings (e.g., Fowler, 2009; Franzak, 2008; Gross et al., 1971; Hill, 2006). In addition, a subset of the education policy literature relates specifically to the implementation of policies concerning ELLs (e.g., Markus, 2012; Paciotto & Delany-Barmann, 2011), who are present in increasing numbers in Canadian and American mainstream classrooms (Liggett, 2010; Roessingh, 2006). Researchers with an interest in second language teaching and learning have investigated issues relating to the provision of programming for ELLs in elementary and secondary schools (e.g., Elfers, Lucero, Stritikus, & Knapp, 2013; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Roessingh, 2004; Roessingh, 2008). Extensive research, both Canadian and international, has been undertaken into the design and provision of professional learning opportunities for teachers (e.g., Coburn & Stein, 2006; Cranston, 2009; Desimone, 2009; Fullan, 2007; Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010; Greenleaf et al., 2011; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). In addition, Canadian and international researchers have identified issues relating to rural education (e.g., Coladarci, 2007; Fries, 2012; Wallin, 2007; Wallin & Reimer, 2008. There is a gap in the literature, however, with respect to empirical studies integrating these research strands. In the U.S. context, Fries characterized rural education as under-researched and noted
that recruiting and retaining teachers in specialty areas—including English language learning—was a challenge for rural schools. Haworth (2009) found that there was a dearth of research involving contexts with small numbers of ELLs in mainstream classrooms in New Zealand. An extensive review of literature on ESL teaching and learning issues by Canadian researchers (Archibald et al., 2008) did not address the issue of ELLs being educated in rural schools. The current study sits at the intersection of research into education policy implementation, ELL-related professional learning, and rural settings. It addresses a gap in the empirical implementation literature by integrating these research strands in a Canadian context.

ELLs have been found to achieve lower scores on standardized tests and to drop out of secondary school at higher rates than their non-ELL classmates in both Canada (Derwing, DeCorby, Ichikawa, & Jamieson, 1999; Roessingh, 2004; Toohey & Derwing, 2008) and the U.S. (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008; Batt, 2008; Hansen-Thomas, Casey, & Grosso, 2013). However, differences between American and Canadian policy contexts and ELL populations resulted in a call by Roessingh for Canadian-based research in the ESL discipline.

Many investigations into effective instructional practices and programming supports for ELLs are predicated on the assumption that school boards have an existing foundation of local ELL-related instructional capacity upon which to build; there is a paucity of studies into school boards with emerging ELL populations (Zehler et al., 2008). In addition, Zehler et al. reported that rural school boards with small populations of ELLs did not have infrastructures in place that facilitated the provision of ESL programming.

School boards have been found to play a significant role in building instruction-related capacity through offering professional learning opportunities for teachers and support staff (Massell & Goertz, 2002). In spite of this finding, providing professional learning has been characterized as an ongoing challenge for rural school boards (Preston, Jakubiec, & Koymans, 2013). The implementation of Ontario’s requirement to provide ELL-related professional learning may be a
complex undertaking for rural school boards. There is an established body of empirical studies into the role of school boards in implementing large-scale educational reforms which involve new instructional approaches for entire populations of students in specific subjects (in reading and literacy, see Coburn, 2001; Coburn, 2006, Coburn & Stein, 2006; Franzak, 2008; in mathematics, see Hill, 2006; Kaufman & Stein, 2010; Spillane, 2000; Walshaw & Anthony, 2007; in science, see Penuel, Fishman, Gallagher, Korbak,& Lopez-Prado, 2009). The scope of ESL policy in Ontario does not involve wholesale curricular reform, but rather incremental changes in schools’ and teachers’ practices through, for example, the adoption of a tracking form to monitor ELLs’ annual progress in language acquisition (MOE, 2011b). This raises the question of how rural school boards implement policies that affect small numbers of ELLs within their jurisdictions.

Further adding to the potential complexity of implementing MOE policy requiring that school boards provide ELL-related professional learning is that, generally speaking, “all policies aimed at classroom teaching are played out in the crucible of specific subject matter areas” (Grossman & Thompson, 2004, p. 283); this is particularly the case in secondary schools. MOE ESL documents (2007b; 2011b) emphasize that teachers of all subjects are to share responsibility for ELLs’ acquisition of English. Classroom teachers and ESL teachers may need to adopt instructional approaches from each other’s areas of specialty, engaging in collaborative curriculum planning if the MOE’s goal of shared responsibility for fostering ELLs’ language learning is to be realized. Yet collaboration between classroom teachers and ESL teachers has been found to pose challenges (Arkoudis, 2003; Davison, 2006). Further, interdisciplinary projects undertaken jointly by secondary school ESL teachers and classroom teachers were constrained by a dearth of professional learning opportunities and materials as well as by a lack of planning time for the teachers involved (Brochu, 2008).

Classroom teachers who have little training in teaching ELLs have been found to experience frustration when teaching and assessing ELLs (Haworth, 2009). Pre-service teacher education programs in many jurisdictions have been characterized as inadequate in preparing classroom teachers
to address the learning needs of increasing numbers of ELLs in mainstream elementary and secondary school classes (Brubacher, 2013; Cummins, 2006; Wenger, Dinsmore, & Villagomez, 2012). In the province of Ontario, pre-service teacher education programs do not currently have a mandatory ESL component, and ESL teaching qualifications can only be earned after teacher candidates have completed their Bachelor of Education programs (Faez, 2012). Unless they have sought ESL teaching credentials after graduation, or unless school boards have provided in-service professional learning relating to ELLs, classroom teachers may not have a base of second language acquisition knowledge upon which to draw when teaching ELLs.

Researchers have identified a gap in educational achievement and attainment between Canadian rural and urban areas. Across Canada, high school drop-out rates were found to be higher for rural students than for students in urban settings, and, based on the 2003 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, students in urban areas in all ten provinces achieved higher scores in reading, mathematics, and science than their counterparts from rural areas (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006). A gap in educational attainment between urban and rural locations was found to extend into the workplace: over 60% of Canadians aged 25 to 54 in urban areas had some post-secondary education, while the figure for Canadians in the same age group but living in rural areas was under 50%. Given these findings, the Canadian Council on Learning stated that “among OECD countries, Canada has the worst rural-urban gap with respect to levels of education in the workforce” (2006, p. 3). The identification of this gap suggests that empirical studies of education policy implementation in rural settings are needed if policymakers and educators are to narrow it. Further, the presence of this gap, in combination with findings about lower achievement for ELLs than for non-ELLs (Derwing et al., 1999; Roessingh, 2004; Toohey & Derwing, 2008), underscores the need for empirical studies investigating ELLs in rural settings.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in its link to the issue of educational equity; in its
This study is significant in light of the issue of educational equity for ELLs. Cummins (2006) characterized the ELL-related knowledge base of many Canadian classroom teachers as inadequate. He argued that professional learning opportunities addressing the instructional needs of ELLs in mainstream classes were rarely offered by school boards or individual schools. Instead, teachers often relied on ELL-related knowledge they “picked up” (p. 6) through classroom experience rather than through formal professional learning opportunities or pre-service teacher education programs. In Cummins’ view, a lack of teacher knowledge about effective instructional strategies for ELLs had implications for equity. Through its focus on ELL-related professional learning, this study investigates an issue identified by Cummins as consequential to equitable educational outcomes for ELLs.

In addition to its relevance to the issue of educational equity, this study contributes to the education policy implementation literature in two ways. First, McLaughlin (2006) characterized implementation processes as linked to both technical and normative factors. Technical factors involved policy design as well as the capacity of institutions and individuals to implement policies, while normative factors related to implementers’ perceptions, beliefs, values, and experiences. It was McLaughlin’s view that site-based, qualitative studies were best suited to uncovering normative factors that were otherwise difficult to identify and assess through the use of standardized instruments in large-scale implementation studies. This study provides a site-based, in-depth description of the perceptions of policy implementation in one school board and therefore encompasses the identification of normative as well as technical aspects of implementation in this setting. Second, in contrast to implementation studies involving extensive curricular reform affecting instruction for large numbers of students (e.g., Penuel et al., 2009), this study provides a description of the implementation of a
policy affecting ELLs whose numbers are small relative to the board’s overall student population. Thus this study diversifies and extends the base of settings of empirical studies in the education policy implementation literature.

This study is also significant as a response to two calls by education scholars for further research. It responds to the call by Roessingh (2004) for Canadian-based empirical work into issues relating to ELLs. In addition, it provides empirical findings addressing a gap in the literature that was identified by Zehler et al. (2008); that is, a dearth of studies investigating capacity building in school boards with emerging populations of ELLs.

A further aspect of this study’s significance relates to education policymaking and practice both in and for rural settings. Education policymaking and empirical investigations of education policy implementation have been characterized as urban-centric enterprises (Wallin & Reimer, 2008). This study is significant in providing insights to policymakers about the implementation-related challenges identified by implementers of ESL policy in a rural setting; and about implementers’ responses to the instruments accompanying ESL policy. Because it identified the processes, types of personnel, and perceptions involved in implementing ELL-related professional learning, this study is also of practical value to the school board in which the study was located.

**The Ontario ESL Policy Context**

This study uses as its unit of analysis one school board located in the province of Ontario, Canada. Governance of education in Canada is a provincial or (in the case of Canada’s territories) a territorial responsibility (Faez, 2012). Responsibility for publicly funded elementary and secondary school education in Ontario is vested in the Ontario Ministry of Education, while school boards have oversight of individual schools within their jurisdictions (MOE, 2014). Education policy is generated at the level of the Ministry of Education; school boards receive these policies and implement them at either the board or school level, depending upon the requirements and targets of particular provincial policies. School boards develop appropriate procedures and provide the resources necessary for
schools to implement policies in accordance with provincial mandates. Teachers are employed by individual school boards, but the teaching profession itself in Ontario is regulated by the Ontario College of Teachers (Faez).

Education policy implementation researchers have identified that school boards are important meso-level policy actors linking provincial policy (or, in American settings, state policy) to implementation at the school and classroom level (Firestone, Mangin, Martinez, & Polovsky, 2005; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2002). In Ontario, the role of school boards has been central to recent policymaking concerning ELLs in elementary and secondary schools. School boards along with school principals were the target of Ontario’s comprehensive ESL policy document entitled *English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12* (hereafter called *ELL Policies and Procedures*) (MOE, 2007b). This policy document required Ontario’s school boards to establish formal procedures for welcoming, assessing, placing, and providing appropriate programming for ELLs. Subsequent to the 2007 ESL policy document, school boards were described by the MOE as allocators and monitors of the “human and financial resources” required to ensure positive outcomes for ELLs (MOE, 2011b, p. 5).

More than 20% of students in Ontario English-language schools speak a first language other than English. Moreover, the size of this cohort of students is expected to increase (MOE, 2011b). The presence of ELLs in Ontario secondary school classrooms is not new, however: courses for secondary school students in English as a second language (ESL) and English Literacy Development (ELD) were outlined in a curriculum document in 1999, entitled *English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development* (Ministry of Education and Training, 1999). A resource document, *ESL/ELD Companion*, was targeted at classroom teachers shortly afterwards (MOE, 2002). Around the time these documents were released, the results of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) showed a significant gap in achievement between ELLs and the general student population. For the
October 2002 test administration, the pass rate for first-time eligible students across the province was 72%; for students taking ESL/ELD courses, the pass rate was 34% (Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), 2003). Furthermore, the need to inventory successful practices for addressing the needs of ELLs was included in a lengthy list of recommended action plans designed to mitigate the risks of students not graduating from Ontario secondary schools (O’Connor, 2003). A provincial audit of ESL/ELD programs found that teachers needed specific tools to monitor ELLs’ acquisition of English; the audit recommended that the MOE develop “tools that teachers can use to periodically measure students’ English proficiency” (Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, 2005, p. 156). It is in this context that the MOE released a series of ESL policy, curriculum, and resource documents. These documents are listed in Appendix A. In addition to these ESL-specific documents, the MOE has made explicit reference to ELLs in content-area secondary school curricula as these are written or revised (see, e.g., science curriculum for Grades 9 and 10, MOE, 2008b) and has provided ELL-specific funding (MOE 2011a) for which boards are held accountable.

The release of these policy, curriculum, and resource documents focused specifically on ELLs reflected the MOE’s over-arching aim of success for all of Ontario’s elementary and secondary school students. This aim was encapsulated in the MOE’s Student Success/Learning to 18 (2012a) strategy in which five specific goals for Ontario’s education system were stated: increasing secondary school graduation rates; supporting “good outcomes” for all students; providing students with learning opportunities which are “new and relevant”; building on students’ strengths and interests; and helping students transition effectively from elementary to secondary school (Ungerleider, 2008, p. v). Three MOE priorities were reflected in these goals: “high levels of student achievement; reduced gaps in student achievement; and increased public confidence in publicly funded education” (MOE, 2010c, p. 1). To achieve these goals and support these priorities, the MOE introduced a Student Success Strategy encompassing a number of initiatives, including the placement of Student Success Leaders in each school board in the province (MOE, 2010a). The MOE operationalized success on a system level
as a secondary school graduation rate of 85% (MOE, 2008a) and stated that the provincial secondary school graduation rate increased from 68% in 2003–2004 to 82% as of March, 2012 (MOE, 2012a).

The policy document *ELL Policies and Procedures* (MOE, 2007b) included the specific goal of “describing procedures designed to support increased credit accumulation, graduation rates, and postsecondary enrolment among English language learners” (p. 11). In spite of this focus on ELLs by the MOE, however, troubling issues and statistics relating to ELLs remained. For example, the Ontario public advocacy group, People for Education, expressed concerns about the support structure for ELLs. This advocacy group criticized *ELL Policies and Procedures* for its failure to provide differentiated funding according to the level of literacy and language support required by different categories of ELLs. Another concern of People for Education was the failure of *ELL Policies and Procedures* to require that classroom teachers with substantial numbers of ELLs in their classes have ESL teaching certification (People for Education, 2007).

A search of EQAO websites and a review of ELL-related research literature suggest that the picture of academic achievement for many ELLs is not consistent with the overall picture of evolving success as painted by the 82% graduation rate in Ontario. Ontario’s EQAO undertook a longitudinal analysis of the OSSLT results, tracking students who failed the test in 2006. Eighteen percent of students who had still not met Ontario’s literacy requirement two years later were ELLs (Hinton, Rogers, & Kozlow, 2010). OSSLT results from March, 2012 showed that the pass rate for all first-time eligible students across the province was 82%; for ELLs, the pass rate was 66% (EQAO, 2013).

**ESL Documents: ELL Policies and Procedures and STEP**

The *ELL Policies and Procedures* document (MOE, 2007b) mandated that ELLs be given “appropriate program support to enable them to participate successfully in Ontario schools” (p. 22). However, school boards were given the discretion to deliver ESL-related programming in a manner best reflecting local demographics and circumstances. ESL programming therefore varies from one school board to another in Ontario, although *ELL Policies and Procedures* required all school boards
to ensure that ELLs spend at least part of every school day in a grade-level or subject-specific (i.e., mainstream) classroom. School boards were required to provide ELL-related professional learning to administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals in order to support the implementation of the *ELL Policies and Procedures* document. ESL policy further mandated that information about each ELL’s level of language acquisition be summarized and recorded in the Ontario Student Record file at least once during each school year. Because ELLs learn English at the same time as they learn the Ontario curriculum, teachers of mainstream classes were expected to promote language acquisition for ELLs along with mastery of curriculum expectations.

The annual tracking of ELLs’ English acquisition alluded to in the *ELL Policies and Procedures* document (MOE, 2007b) gave rise to the *STEP* document (MOE, 2011b). The two documents were explicitly linked through a statement in *STEP* that it was “developed out of a growing need for accountability with respect to English language learners” (p. 3) and that this accountability had been clearly expressed in the *ELL Policies and Procedures* document itself. Further evidence of a link between the two documents was the use of the same terminology, for example in defining the term *English language learner*. *STEP* itself was described as “a framework for assessing and monitoring the language acquisition and literacy development of English language learners across the curriculum” (MOE, 2011b, p. 4). Its purpose, as stated by the MOE, was to guide classroom-based assessment. Teachers were to use the MOE’s *STEP* Observable Language Behaviours (OLB) Continua to gather information about ELLs’ progress in language acquisition “over time and in various learning contexts” (MOE, 2011b, p. 4). These OLB Continua were described as capturing “distinct language behaviours that can be observable across curriculum through daily instructional activities” (MOE, 2011b, p. 12). An assessment process for ELLs was outlined, including first, initial registration, welcoming, and orientation for ELLs, along with a family interview; second, an initial assessment of each ELL in the areas of oral communication, reading, writing, mathematics along with the collection of a writing sample in the ELL’s first language; third, the placement of each ELL on the *STEP*
continua; fourth, recommendations for support and placement of each ELL in elementary or secondary schools; and fifth, ongoing assessment of ELLs’ language acquisition using the \textit{STEP} Tracking Form.

Unlike \textit{ELL Policies and Procedures} (MOE, 2007b), which made explicit a series of mandates for school boards and school principals through numbered and highlighted directives, the \textit{STEP} document (MOE, 2011b) as a whole was characterized by the MOE as a guide. This document was nonetheless prescriptive in requiring all school boards to use the MOE-generated tracking form for ELLs. The \textit{STEP} document also stated that “teachers must adapt their instructional program in order to facilitate the success of English language learners in their classrooms” (p. 14).

Both \textit{ELL Policies and Procedures} (MOE, 2007b) and \textit{STEP} (MOE, 2011b) emphasized that growth in language acquisition was not the sole responsibility of ESL teachers. Rather, this responsibility was to be shared by classroom teachers, ESL teachers, school administrators, and school boards. The \textit{STEP} document, for example, contained the following statement: board-level supervisory officers should consider “developing a Board culture that promotes shared knowledge and shared responsibility for outcomes by assisting principals in recognizing and articulating the learning their staff needs to support ELLs” (p. 5). In addition, the MOE stated that the \textit{STEP} document itself could be used by principals and vice-principals to “facilitate discussion about teacher learning needs to support ELLs in language acquisition and literacy development” (p. 5). The \textit{STEP} document further noted that ESL teachers could play a role in providing professional learning for their colleagues: according to the document, ESL teachers could use the \textit{STEP} resource to “discuss students, supporting colleagues in the use of \textit{STEP}, and helping colleagues understand second language acquisition” (p. 6).

Although \textit{STEP} (MOE, 2011b) was explicitly referred to by the MOE as an accountability measure, no timelines were given to school boards for full implementation. Furthermore, completed tracking forms were retained at the school level in ELLs’ student files. There was no mechanism associated with the \textit{STEP} document that provided the MOE with information about whether or how well schools and school boards implemented the use of the \textit{STEP} tracking forms.
Definitions of Key Terms

**ELL** is “…the acronym for English language learners, [and] refers to students whose first language is a language other than English, or is a variety of English that is significantly different from the language of instruction” (Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2008, p. 58).

**ESL** is the acronym for English as a Second Language and refers to a discipline or field of study. **ELLs** refers to English language learners themselves.

**Instruction** refers to one or more of the following components as outlined by Spillane and Burch (2003): delivering curriculum content to students; the academic tasks assigned to students; teaching strategies used to engage students in curriculum content; classroom discourse between teachers and students; grouping students as they work on academic tasks; and the materials (such as textbooks) used in conjunction with curriculum.

**Policy, curriculum, and resource documents**: Because this study was undertaken in the context of the province of Ontario, I adopt the MOE’s terminology: “Policy documents outline mandatory requirements and standards. Resource documents support implementation of policy and their use is a local decision” (MOE, 2012b). Curriculum documents define what students are taught in Ontario publicly funded schools. They detail the knowledge and skills that students are expected to develop in each subject at each grade level. By developing and publishing curriculum documents for use by all Ontario teachers, the Ministry of Education sets standards for the entire province. (MOE, 2012b)

**Professional development and professional learning**: The **ELL Policies and Procedures, K–12** document (MOE, 2007b) does not provide a definition of professional development in spite of the fact that school boards are required to provide it. “Professional development” is paired in the ESL policy document with “training” (p. 11), and examples of professional development opportunities relating to ELLs include adapting teaching and assessment strategies as well as fostering parent and community involvement in ELLs’ schooling (p. 31). These examples represent a considerable range of activities
that were potentially categorized as professional development opportunities. I turned to other MOE documents in search of a definition. Continuing professional development was equated to “reinforcing all the dimensions of good teaching throughout a teacher’s career” (MOE, 2004). In a later document from the Working Table on Teacher Development (MOE, 2007c), professional learning was portrayed as encompassing three components: training, staff development, and professional development. Training referred to specific content knowledge required by the employer or another agency; an example was training in Ontario’s Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System. Staff development referred to system-wide learning activities prompted by needs of the broader community and education system; anti-bullying programs were cited as an example. The third component of professional learning, professional development, was defined as “self-chosen activities that teachers investigate individually or as part of a professional community” (p. 3). Examples included action research, additional teacher certification courses, and graduate work. The MOE’s tripartite conception of the term professional learning is used in this dissertation in order to encompass the range of learning activities delimited by the Working Table on Teacher Development. Of note, however, is that the participants in this study often used the terms professional development and professional activity day to refer to their own experiences relating to professional learning, and these references appear verbatim in excerpts from interview transcripts.

Collaborative Inquiry is an approach to teachers’ professional learning characterized by teacher-led, critical conversations that focus on the causal links between teaching and student performance. These conversations involve the sharing of multiple perspectives (i.e., more than two teachers are involved in collaborative inquiry meetings). The meetings occur regularly and may involve classroom visits and observations of students (Baecher, Rorimer, & Smith, 2012).

Policy implementation is “what develops between the establishment of an apparent intention on the part of government to do something, or to stop doing something, and the ultimate impact in the world of action” (O’Toole, 2000, p. 266).
School board is used geographically to refer to a provincially designated area and the schools within its boundaries; it is used organizationally to refer to the entity legally responsible for providing education and related services to all of the students living within its designated boundaries (Hightower, Knapp, Marsh, & McLaughlin, 2002).

The term classroom teacher refers to teachers of one or more grades in elementary schools or teachers of specific content area classes in such disciplines as geography, science, mathematics, career studies, or history in secondary schools. Grade-level and content-area classes are referred to as mainstream classes, in contradistinction to ESL classes in which ELLs receive instruction incorporating such aspects of second language learning as writing conventions, grammar, syntax, and vocabulary development. Classroom teachers in Ontario elementary and secondary schools are not required to have certification in teaching English as a Second Language even though they may have ELLs in their classes (MOE, 2007b).

Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation comprises five chapters. Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter that outlines the purpose, research questions, rationale, and significance of the study. In Chapter 1, I also provide an overview of the policy context in which this implementation study took place, followed by definitions of terms used in this dissertation. Chapter 2 is a review of empirical and theoretical literature relating to policy implementation, professional learning, second language acquisition, and rural education. The conceptual framework underpinning the study is also presented in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology I adopted in order to answer the research questions identified in Chapter 1. In Chapter 4, I present the findings of the study; these findings are presented as five themes that emerged from my data analysis. This is followed by Chapter 5 in which I discuss the findings of the study and situate them in the context of the conceptual framework as well as the literature that was reviewed in Chapter 2. The significance of the study, its limitations, and the implications of the study for further research are also presented in Chapter 5.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review is presented in five sections. It begins with a discussion of the framework used to identify literature to review. The second section of this chapter reviews literature relating to policy implementation. This is the longest section of the literature review, reflecting this study’s focus on the implementation of an education policy mandate. In the third section of this chapter, I review literature that focuses on professional learning for teachers and paraprofessionals. This is followed in the fourth section by a review of literature relating to rural education. The fifth section of the chapter presents the conceptual framework underpinning the study. Chapter 2 concludes with a brief summary of the literature that has been reviewed.

Framework for Identifying Literature to Review

Before reviewing the literature, I note briefly how I located and selected the theoretical work and empirical studies it highlights. I adopted Saetren’s (2005) framework that identified three types of decisions guiding the selection of material for a literature review: concepts, types of publication, and time frame. I foregrounded literature on policy implementation but also identified concepts relevant to the study that emerged from the literature relating to professional learning, rural education settings, and second language teaching.

Saetren (2005) identified that the first decision to be made in a literature review was identifying central concepts, crystallized as key words used in database searches. My initial search was broad in scope: I identified and read policy studies books and articles relating to the policy cycle (e.g., Pal, 2010), with particular attention to the policy cycle in the education sector (e.g., Delaney, 2002; Fowler, 2009). The literature relating specifically to policy implementation is multidisciplinary (Saetren, 2005); after reading books and articles on policy implementation generally (e.g., Hill & Hupe, 2009), I focused on literature relating to policy implementation in the education sector (e.g., Honig, 2006). I identified concepts that became key word searches: “policy instruments,” for example, as well as “school boards” plus “education policy implementation.” With an emerging interest in the
implementation of policies relating to ELLs as well as to rural education and professional learning, I searched for literature using terms such as “ELLs rural schools,” “professional development ELLs,” and “professional development rural teachers.” My search included Canadian as well as international databases. I also searched the websites of organizations which might have links to relevant publications (e.g., Canadian Council on Learning), and I searched the website of Ontario’s MOE for publications of potential relevance to this study.

The second decision in Saetren’s framework involved the types of publications to be included in the review. He noted that empirical studies of policy implementation included American and international doctoral dissertations. Thus, while the preponderance of the literature I identified and reviewed included books, articles from peer-reviewed journals, and book chapters, I also searched for Canadian-based dissertations relating to education policy implementation, ELLs in rural settings, or teachers’ professional learning.

The third decision identified by Saetren was the delineation of a time frame. Because education policy researchers identified that recent policy activity in many Western jurisdictions has centred on changes in teachers’ instructional practices and on higher student achievement (e.g., Fowler, 2009; Honig, 2006; Spillane, Reiser, & Gomez, 2006), I focused primarily on literature from the year 2000 onwards. However, some empirical implementation studies such as the Cambire study (Gross et al., 1971) were viewed as foundational in the educational policy studies literature, and I have included these in the review. In addition, I have included conceptualizations identified in the implementation literature in the 1980s and 1990s that continue to be referred to by current researchers, such as Lipsky’s (1980) conception of street-level bureaucrats.

A growing body of education policy studies literature is adopting the lens of critical theory to explore implementation-related processes and outcomes (e.g., Ball, 1993; Dumas & Anyon, 2006). These studies were not the primary focus of this literature review, although I acknowledge this subset of empirical work that calls attention to what Ball characterized as second-order policy effects (i.e.,
the impact of education policy implementation on societal-level patterns of social access and opportunity as well as social justice).

**Policy Implementation**

**Implementation and the policy cycle.** The public policy process has been conceptualized as a cycle or series of stages involving: *issue identification and agenda-setting*, when problems amenable to government action are identified and become part of a government’s policy agenda; *policy formulation*, at which time policy is articulated in written form; *policy adoption*, when legislative or administrative approval is given; *implementation*, when policies are put into practice; and *evaluation*, when policy outcomes are assessed and policies are maintained, modified, or discontinued (Fowler, 2009). This portrayal has been characterized as a heuristic (Heck, 2004; Knoepfel, Larrue, Varone, & Hill, 2007; Sabatier, 2007) because it does not address the issue of causation and because policy activity as observed in empirical studies does not fall neatly into discrete phases but rather is iterative (Ali, 2006; Barrett & Fudge, 1981; Fitz, Halpin, & Power, 1994; Schofield, 2001). Policy researchers acknowledge these limitations but have found the conception of public policy as a cycle to be useful in providing a series of contexts and sub-contexts in which policy-related variables can be investigated (Hill & Hupe, 2009).

In spite of a large body of empirical studies investigating the implementation of public policies across such sectors as public administration, education, health, and the environment, researchers have noted the absence of fully-developed, parsimonious and testable theories or models accounting for implementation processes and outcomes (Ball, 1993; O’Toole, 2000; Saetren, 2005). Empirical studies nonetheless have resulted in findings relating to implementation structures and processes; the identification of factors that facilitate or hinder implementation; and the role of school boards in the implementation of education policies.

**Implementation structures.** I focus on two topics in policy research relating to implementation structures in this part of the literature review: first, the effect of multi-level
implementation systems; and second, conflict in the implementation literature about whether implementation is best studied from the top-down or from the bottom-up.

**Multi-level implementation systems.** Implementers (both individual and institutional) at each layer of bureaucracies were found to interpret the actions required of them by new policies (Heck, 2004). This finding emphasized the difficulty of implementing policy through multiple layers of government and has been conceptualized as a principal-agent problem (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003) in which multi-layered modern states require principals (i.e., decision-makers) to rely on the implementation efforts of agents distributed in multiple vertical and horizontal bureaucratic arrays.

In education research, implementers at each level were found to refract policy as it moved through multiple, cascading layers of the traditional North American paradigm involving the state (or, in Canada, province) > school boards > schools > classrooms (Fuhrman, 1993a; McLaughlin, 1987; Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010). Implementers at each level could become policymakers themselves as they interpreted policy goals and developed procedures to implement them; for this reason, henceforth I refer to the original makers of policies as policy formulators.

Because policies were potentially recast at each layer of bureaucratic systems, implementation processes were conceptualized as recursive in nature (Hill & Hupe, 2009) as well as involving considerable time horizons if the scope of policy-mandated change was significant. Kirst and Jung (1980), for example, argued for the utility of a time horizon of a decade or more in order to capture fully the implementation processes and outcomes associated with complex policies.

**Top-down versus bottom-up investigations of implementation.** Researchers debated the merits of studying implementation processes from the top-down or the bottom-up. See, for example, Sabatier (1986) versus Lipsky (1980). Top-down researchers focused on the concept of fidelity of implementers’ actions with policymakers’ goals (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1981) while bottom-up researchers studied the dynamics of interactions among implementers themselves (Birkland, 2005) as well as processes of negotiation between “those seeking to put policy into effect and those upon whom
action depends” (Barrett & Fudge, 1981, p. 25). In the bottom-up approach, discretion on the part of implementers at the bottom of the implementation chain was characterized in positive terms: as Lipsky argued, the “street-level bureaucrats” (p. xii) who implemented policy were engaged in complex tasks which were not amenable to pre-determined rules or instructions. Policy formulators could not reasonably anticipate the combinations and permutations of local circumstances in operation at the end of the implementation chain; observation and judgement were therefore required of street-level implementers rather than compliance.

Debate about top-down versus bottom-up approaches to studying implementation receded with the recognition that both approaches to empirical work had merits (Peck and 6 [sic], 2006) and that the debate was ultimately “rather sterile” (O’Toole, 2000, p. 267). One aspect of the top-down versus bottom-up debate, however, was the normative dimension of implementation and of the implementation research it threw into relief. The top-down approach was associated with the goal of implementer compliance with the intentions of democratically-elected policy formulators: Sabatier and Mazmanian (1981) stated that “insofar as possible, policy decisions in a democracy ought to be made by elected officials rather than civil servants” (p. 25). In this perspective, the analytical task of implementation researchers was to uncover barriers to compliance with formulators’ intentions.

Investigations into implementation processes from the bottom-up, on the other hand, were associated with the analytical task of describing how implementers, singly and jointly, exercised discretion in interpreting and acting upon policymakers’ intentions (O’Toole, 2004). McLaughlin (1990) characterized implementation processes as involving mutual adaptation; that is, “the adaptation of a project and institutional setting to each other” (p. 12). The analytical task associated with this characterization of implementation was identifying the processes through which this adaptation occurred.

Beyond debate about the values reflected in top-down versus bottom-up investigations of implementation structures, the formulation, adoption, and implementation of policies themselves have
been characterized as normative exercises. In education, for example, policies were characterized as reflecting potentially competing interpretations of the purpose of schooling (Bascia, 2001; Fuhrman, 1993b). More broadly, how public problems were defined was found to shape the inclusion or exclusion of potential solutions by policy formulators (Coburn, Toure, & Yamashita, 2009). For this reason Ball (1998) argued against decoupling research into the implementation of specific policies from the larger political and social contexts in which these policies were generated.

**Implementation processes.** Two topics relating to implementation processes are of particular relevance to this study. I begin by reviewing literature about the role played in implementation by policy instruments. This is followed by a review of literature relating to processes of implementer learning.

**Policy instruments.** One focus of implementation research has been the identification of policy instruments and their effects. Policy instruments are the mechanisms employed by policymakers to convert policy goals into action (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). Four such instruments were identified by McDonnell and Elmore: mandates, inducements, capacity building, and system changing.

Mandates as conceptualized by McDonnell and Elmore (1987) specified required behaviour and outlined penalties for non-compliance. However, compliance and enforcement issues arose when policy mandates did not provide institutions or individuals with sufficient information with which to implement them. Mandates were also seen as vulnerable to failed implementation if they were associated with complex processes of implementer learning and motivation or if they relied on incorrect assumptions about institutional capacity or the skills possessed by individual implementers. Inducements were funds or services tied to particular policies, with the understanding that they were to be used as specified by policy. Capacity building was conceptualized by McDonnell and Elmore as “the transfer of money for the purpose of investment in material, intellectual, or human resources” (p. 134), while system change involved transferring authority from existing groups or individuals to
different (or new) groups or individuals within bureaucratic structures. Hortatory policy was later added to these four instruments; McDonnell (1994) characterized this mechanism as a form of persuasion that emphasized to implementers that the goals associated with a particular policy were viewed by policy formulators as a high priority.

Fowler (2009) noted that policymakers used one or more of McDonnell and Elmore’s (1987) instruments depending on: the political and economic contexts in which particular policies were enacted; the extent to which mandates could be enforced; or the optimal time horizon for implementation envisaged by policymakers. Capacity building and system changes were seen to be instruments involving a longer time frame for implementation than mandates or inducements (Honig, 2006; Levin, 2001). McDonnell and Elmore were not the only policy researchers to articulate a typology of policy instruments, but theirs is the typology frequently cited by education researchers (e.g., Bascia, 2001; Delaney, 2002; Fowler, 2009). Pal (2010) distinguished between instruments (the technical means of achieving a goal) and implementation (the organizational structures and processes to execute a particular instrument), but acknowledged that the two overlap.

The list of policy instruments identified by McDonnell and Elmore (1987) was not exhaustive. In the education policy sector, policy formulators have expanded the toolkit of policy instruments and have increasingly used accountability measures as an instrument to effect the changes policy formulators envisage (Honig, 2006). Another instrument that has been developed is the alignment of curriculum, standards, testing, and professional development; however, the results of empirical investigations into the use of alignment have not shown this instrument to be universally effective in changing teachers’ instruction (Firestone, Fitz, & Broadfoot, 1999; Penuel et al., 2009).

**Implementer learning.** A recent research focus in the education policy literature has been on implementation as learning (Fowler, 2009; Stein & Coburn; 2008). This focus reflects researchers’ interest in identifying constraints to implementation beyond those relating to implementation structures or policy design (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). The application of a cognitive theory
lens has drawn attention to the sense-making dimension of implementers’ responses to new policy: mandated reform “signals a problem with current practice and offers cues to implementers about the problem and the new practices required to address it” (Spillane, 2000, p. 146). Implementers needed multiple opportunities to make sense of the changes in practice mandated by policy. Radical changes in practice running counter to teachers’ values, beliefs, or prior experiences were likely to be rejected; at the same time, subtle but significant mandated shifts in practice were overlooked if teachers interpreted these newly-mandated practices as similar to the instructional approaches they currently used (Spillane et al.).

Extending findings about individual sense-making, other researchers have found that the implementation of education policy is facilitated when there are opportunities for collective sense-making through teacher networks and learning communities, both within and across schools (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Leithwood, 2010). The role of school boards has been seen as one of supporting teacher learning communities through aligning local resources, regulations, and past experiences at the system level (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). A caveat was that the mere presence of learning communities did not result in congruence of policy goals and implementers’ actions. For example, in a case study focusing on two mathematics teachers in New Zealand, researchers found that mismatches between reform intentions and individual teachers’ interpretations went unnoticed in the context of collaborative groups even when the groups appeared to be committed to improving their instructional practice (Walshaw & Anthony, 2007).

A limitation of Spillane et al.’s (2002) sense-making model was that it did not account for how policy interpretations could be contested not only among teachers but across categories of implementers. It was for this reason that Coburn (2006) examined the microprocesses of interactions among staff implementing a new reading policy and found that the school principal shaped the implementation of reading policy in her school by drawing teachers’ attention to some aspects and interpretations of the policy rather than others. Empirical work by researchers such as Walshaw and
Anthony (2007) and by Coburn has therefore provided nuanced insights into the well-established trajectory of the role of sense-making in education policy implementation.

The construct of implementer learning has been extended beyond individuals to institutions. For example, school boards have been theorized to be involved in implementation-related learning. Having reviewed theoretical literature on organizational learning as well as sociocultural learning, Honig (2007) integrated the two in order to articulate a framework for analyzing school boards as learning organizations. Honig conceptualized school boards as engaging in three types of interconnected processes: searching (identifying problems and seeking information from research and practice to address them); encoding (incorporating search results into local perspectives, policy, and practice); and retrieving (using encoded information on an ongoing basis). A limitation of Honig’s framework was the long time horizon required for empirical work that could delineate and describe learning trajectories for individual school boards. A benefit of Honig’s work, on the other hand, was the characterization of formal learning opportunities for school board staff as lacking. Honig noted that professional learning opportunities were provided in many school boards for teachers, but that such opportunities for school board staff were infrequent, procedures-oriented, and under-theorized. In addition, topics for staff learning at the school board level rarely addressed management issues such as building partnerships with schools. Thus, Honig’s conceptualization of school board learning underscored that school board staff are simultaneously engaged in providing ongoing learning and in need of structured professional learning opportunities themselves.

Factors Facilitating or Hindering Implementation

Researchers have focused on aspects of policies that have implications for implementation. These aspects have included policy design as well as policy attributes. Other researchers have focused on contextual variables that have been found to play a role in implementation. A key finding in the education literature was that the processes and outcomes associated with the implementation of education policy were situated and contingent upon local context (Ball & Bowe, 1992; Burch &
Policy design. A list of preconditions for successful policy implementation was articulated by Hogwood and Gunn (1984). Although they acknowledged that perfect implementation was an analytical concept that was not attainable in what O’Toole would later characterize as the “world of action” (2000, p. 266), Hogwood and Gunn theorized that implementation difficulties arose when policies were not based on a valid theory of cause and effect. In other words, if policy formulators did not adequately understand the causes of a problem and its cure, then policies generated by formulators were likely to flounder. Hogwood and Gunn also theorized that a precondition for successful implementation was that policies specified tasks and procedures both fully and in the correct sequence.

Another aspect of policy design of interest to implementation researchers was policy coherence and its impact on implementation. Coherence has been defined in the implementation literature as congruence and communication of the same messages across multiple policy documents (Fuhrman, 1993b) or as the alignment of policy texts with standards, curricula, and assessments (Honig & Hatch, 2004). In other words, coherence has traditionally been seen as a feature of policies and their accompanying curriculum and resource documents, with implementation theorized as facilitated when coherence within and across all documents is evident and hindered when such coherence is lacking. A different conceptualization of coherence was outlined by Honig and Hatch. They proposed that coherence be viewed as an active, ongoing process involving negotiations between schools and school boards about the best fit between schools’ circumstances and priorities on one hand and external policy demands on the other. In this conceptualization of coherence, the role of school boards was to “become interpreters and supporters of schools’ local decisions” (p. 19); such a role, Honig and Hatch noted, ran contrary to traditional views of school boards as primary decision makers within their districts. Apart from offering a new conceptualization of coherence of use in empirical
studies, Honig and Hatch’s conceptualization was significant for two reasons. First, it posited that multiple external policy demands are not inherently problematic for implementation; and second, it recast the role of school boards from a supervisory one to one supporting school-level decision-making. Such a role underscored that implementation processes are bidirectional; this was consistent with conceptualizations in the broader policy literature which, once initial debate subsided, did not privilege either a top-down or a bottom-up approach to studying implementation processes (O’Toole, 2000).

An additional aspect of policy design of interest to researchers was the written language used by policy formulators. The language used in policy documents was found to constrain implementation when the meaning of education-related terms was shaped by discourse communities whose vocabulary varied from one group or level to the next in the implementation chain. *Discourse* referred to “conversations that occur within communities and in which the use of particular terms, grammar, and styles of speech … demarcate individuals as belonging to a given community” (Hill, 2006, p. 68). Hill adopted a linguistics lens in an implementation study of mathematics education reform in K–6 schools in four American school districts. Hill found that policy formulators and implementers did not share the same meanings of key mathematical terms. Rather, some teachers applied terms from documents in ways that were entirely inconsistent with the meanings intended by the mathematics specialists consulted by policy formulators. Another empirical study identified similar implementation challenges arising from lack of clarity in policy documents about key terms: an investigation into the implementation of reading policy within an American school board revealed that key terms were not operationalized by policy formulators and that teachers’ interpretations of policy mandates differed as a result (Franzak, 2008).

Policy implementation processes were also found to be affected by the availability of resource materials for teachers. A study of the implementation of an educational innovation in an American elementary school revealed that the innovation was poorly implemented in part because teachers were
not provided with adequate support through curriculum materials (Gross, Giacquinta et al., 1971). More recently, Penuel et al. (2009) studied the alignment by policy formulators in Alabama of science curriculum with state standards, assessment, and professional learning opportunities for teachers. Careful alignment of standards, assessment, and professional learning had been conceptualized as facilitating implementation of the new curriculum; however, the researchers found that the implementation of the science curriculum was hindered in part because teachers were not given time to prepare instructional materials to use in class.

**Policy attributes.** Adopting a conceptualization of policy attributes and their influence on implementation, Desimone (2002) undertook a review and synthesis of recent empirical investigations into the implementation of comprehensive school reform policies. The attributes studied were: *specificity*, reflecting a policy’s prescriptiveness and detail; *consistency*, or coherence among policies; *authority*, relating to how a policy coheres with social norms, reflects expert knowledge, or is advocated by charismatic leaders; *power*, including incentives and sanctions; and *stability*, or constancy over time in people and policies and the circumstances surrounding them. Linking the influence of these attributes to the implementation of comprehensive school reform, Desimone’s review suggested that increased specificity in the form of detailed and specific guidelines appeared to relate to greater fidelity of implementation; power produced immediate changes in practice but did not result in lasting reform; and authority was associated with long-term change. The degree of consistency of reform initiatives with current school and district organization and culture was found to facilitate implementation, or, if radically conflicting, to constrain it. Stability of staffing and the policy environment contributed positively to implementation, though Desimone noted that reform designs needed to allow a number of years for implementation to occur. Demands by policymakers for immediate results undermined implementation processes.

Attribute theory contributes to our understanding of implementation processes and outcomes, but its limitation is that it does not take into account the contextual factors identified by other
investigators (e.g., Kaufman & Stein, 2010) as consequential to implementation. For example, relating to Desimone’s argument that the attribute of authority relates to long-term change, policy design may allow or restrict space for the exercise of leadership at the school board or school level; clearly, however, policy itself cannot mandate that leadership be charismatic.

**Environmental and implementer variables.** Policy researchers have studied the interaction between the environment in which policies were formulated and the impact of these environments on implementation processes and outcomes. In education, for example, a policy environment in which multiple education policies aimed at higher student achievement were released in quick succession was found to confuse implementers and constrain implementation processes (Honig, 2007; Kaufman & Stein, 2010). Policy accretion has been identified as endemic and problematic for teachers: over time, as policymakers turned their attention to new issues, teachers were left to struggle with implementing multiple and successive instructional changes with little understanding as to why or how such changes should be made (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Kaufman & Stein). In addition, it was difficult for teachers to sustain policy-mandated changes in their instructional practices in a policy environment characterized by shifting or competing policy priorities (Coburn, Russell, Kaufman, & Stein, 2012).

Researchers have also investigated the influence of implementer variables on implementation processes and outcomes. In the education sector, for example, teachers were generally the “street-level bureaucrats” (Lipsky, 1980, p. xii) who implemented policies mandating changes in instructional or assessment practices. They were found to implement such changes in individualized ways (Wenger et al, 2012) that may, in part, be accounted for by the sense-making framework outlined by Spillane et al. (2002) as described above. Another interpretation of teacher responses to education policies was conceptualized by Brain, Reid, and Boyes (2006). According to this interpretation, teachers mediated specific education policies through their own views about policy goals and the means policy formulators used to achieve those goals. Brain et al. developed a typology outlining combinations of
teacher acceptance and rejection of policy goals and means (i.e., instruments). In this typology, it was possible for teachers simply to reject policy goals outright, or to accept the goals of particular policies but not the means through which those goals were to be implemented. In either of these scenarios, implementation of education policy as intended by policy formulators was hindered. Implementation was facilitated, on the other hand, when teachers accepted both goals and means.

Because teachers’ responses to policy were shaped by their prior experiences and beliefs about instructional practice, Brain et al.’s (2006) typology was consistent with McLaughlin’s (2006) view of education policy implementation as encompassing normative as well as technical elements. Brain et al.’s typology was useful in providing a snapshot of varied teacher responses to policy initiatives at a particular time. McLaughlin (1990) observed that implementers’ responses to changes mandated by policy can change over time; that is, an initial skeptical reaction to policy on the part of some teachers can evolve into acceptance or even support of policy goals or means. This suggests the possibility that individual teachers might change positions within Brain et al.’s typology during an implementation study with a long time horizon.

**The role of school boards in education policy implementation.** Sustained research into school boards as key implementers of state education policies is relatively recent in the implementation literature. Much of the empirical work in the 1990s and early twenty-first century focused on the school as the locus of school improvement initiatives and therefore as the preferred unit of analysis (DeBray, 2005; Marsh, 2002; Rorrer et al., 2008). More recently, school boards have been characterized by researchers as important policy actors linking the province (or, in American studies, the state) to individual schools (e.g., Honig & Hatch, 2004; Louis et al., 2010; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2002, 2006; Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010). Recent education policy has increasingly focused on reforming classroom instruction (Coburn & Stein, 2006; Fowler, 2009; Spillane, Reiser, & Gomez, 2006; Walshaw & Anthony, 2007) and on the goal of higher student achievement within schools or across school boards (Desimone, 2002). School boards face “unprecedented demands to shift their
roles from regulating to supporting schools” (Honig, 2007, p. 3) and have been viewed as playing a central role in instructional leadership and instructional improvement (Coburn et al., 2009). School boards have also been characterized as playing a key role in promoting equitable outcomes for all students (Rorrer et al.). Yet education policies targeting instructional change (i.e., changes which are proximal to classrooms) were found to be more difficult to implement than policies concerned with such issues as governance (Levin, 2001). This finding may be accounted for because changes involving instruction and assessment implicate complex processes of teacher sense-making (Spillane et al., 2002) in a manner in which changes more distant from the classroom may not. McLaughlin argued that policy “cannot mandate what matters to effective practice” (1990, p. 15) because teachers’ instructional practices are constrained at the local level by both capacity and will.

Education policy researchers have identified that one of the key functions of school boards is to build local capacity; that is, long-term investments in human, intellectual, or material resources to support changes or improvement in teachers’ instructional practices (Fowler, 2009). One component of capacity building in the education sector has been professional learning; school boards have been found to be the primary designers and deliverers of professional learning within their jurisdictions (Firestone et al., 2005). Capacity building has been conceptualized as extending beyond professional learning, however. Levin and Fullan (2008), for example, defined capacity building very broadly as “any strategy that increases the collective effectiveness of a group to raise the bar and close the gap of student learning” (p. 296). They argued for a tripartite conception of capacity building that encompassed the development of knowledge and competency; resources; and motivation.

Another conception of capacity building was the outcome of a three-year empirical study of 23 American school boards in eight states. Massell and Goertz (2002) found that school boards used three strategies to increase instructional capacity: first, providing professional learning opportunities for teachers; second, providing instructional guidance that aligned local policies and procedures with state standards; and third, guiding instructional improvement through the use of data to promote
changes in teachers’ practices or to identify professional learning needs. A particular finding of Massell and Goertz was that teachers needed to understand the principles underlying new curricula; this was consistent with a statement by McLaughlin (2006) about the need for teachers to be given opportunities to grasp the first principles of educational reforms. Another finding of Massell and Goertz’s research was that approaches to professional learning varied from one board to another. School boards varied in how they “defined the problem of building knowledge and skills” (p. 59). These differences reflected individual boards’ theories of action about how to bring about changes in instruction. For example, school boards diverged in whether they focused primarily on professional learning that increased teachers’ discipline-specific knowledge or whether they focused on building teacher learning communities. Massell and Goertz also attributed variation in approaches to professional learning to differences in the sizes and fiscal resources of the school boards in the study, which had included urban, rural, and suburban settings. In spite of the variation they noted from board to board, Massell and Goertz identified some common trends in the provision of professional learning by school boards. These included less emphasis on workshops as well as the increased use of such non-traditional forms of professional learning as placing school board staff in schools in order to develop professional learning that was tailored to the needs of particular settings.

**Professional Learning**

A proposition to emerge from empirical studies is that professional learning is a “pathway” into the implementation of education policies that increasingly require changes in teachers’ instructional practices and the acquisition of new knowledge and skills (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013, p. 391). The work of Spillane et al. (2002) offered insight into how even well-designed professional learning activities may not be sufficient to change teachers’ practices if teachers have not understood the intent or nature of policy-mandated changes; this insight suggested that professional learning was necessary but not always sufficient to bring about changes in teachers’ practices. Nonetheless, much empirical work relating to teachers’ professional learning has been undertaken (Burch & Spillane,
2005; Grossman & Thompson, 2004), and I first review this literature before examining literature that investigated the issue of learning opportunities for paraprofessionals working in education. This is followed by a review of literature focusing specifically on professional learning for teachers and paraprofessionals working with ELLs.

**Professional learning for teachers.** As noted earlier in this chapter, education policies have increasingly targeted teachers’ instructional practice (Honig, 2006). Guskey (2002) and Desimone (2009) proposed two slightly different conceptions of the link between professional learning and changes in teachers’ instructional practices. Guskey (2002) criticized most models of professional learning that implicated a causal chain in which first, through exposure to professional learning activities, teachers altered their attitudes and beliefs about new instructional practices; second, teachers changed their pedagogical practices; and, third, student outcomes improved. Guskey found this causal chain to flawed, because research findings suggested that changes in teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about their instructional practices did not occur readily. Guskey argued that such changes in attitudes and beliefs occurred only after teachers saw evidence of improved student outcomes. The causal chain as conceptualized by Guskey therefore involved a sequence of, first, professional learning by teachers; second, changes in teachers’ instructional practices; third, improvements in student outcomes; and, finally, changes in teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards new instructional practices. In Guskey’s model of teacher change, improvement in student outcomes was defined very broadly; rather than being linked exclusively to higher achievement on standardized tests, improvement could reflect a range of evidence valued by individual teachers, such as improved student attendance or improved scores on teacher-designed assessment. Guskey’s model of teacher change and professional learning was consistent with McLaughlin’s (1990) finding in the education policy implementation literature that belief can follow practice; that is, after initial resistance, it is possible for implementers to become convinced of the value of policy-mandated changes once those changes have actually been implemented.
Rather than focusing on the many types of professional learning which have been identified in the literature (such as workshops, conferences, and discussions in professional learning communities), Desimone (2009) undertook an extensive literature review in which she looked for features of professional learning activities which have been shown to have positive outcomes on teacher practice and student learning. She identified five such features of high-quality professional learning: first, a focus on content (attending to both subject matter content and pedagogy); second, active learning (for example, observing expert teachers and then discussing what was observed); third, coherence (defined as teacher learning which fits with teachers’ knowledge and beliefs and, in addition, as consistency between mandated reforms and professional learning); fourth, duration (occurring over a sufficient span of time, such as a semester; and involving an estimated 20 or more hours of contact time); and fifth, collective participation (involving teachers from the same school, grade, or department). The theory of action Desimone articulated was that first, teachers receive high-quality professional learning and thereby increase their knowledge and skills or adjust their attitudes and beliefs; second, teachers then apply new knowledge, skills, and attitudes to improve their instruction of content or to improve their pedagogical approaches; and third, these changes result in increased student learning. Desimone’s conceptualization of professional learning differed somewhat from Guskey’s (2002) model of teacher change. According to Desimone’s conceptualization, changes in teachers’ beliefs and attitudes could be concurrent with well-designed professional learning opportunities, whereas in Guskey’s model such changes occurred only after teachers implemented new instructional approaches and gathered their own evidence of the link between their new approaches and improved student outcomes.

In Guskey’s (2002) model of teacher change, professional learning was conceived of as a process rather than as one or more discrete events. Extending this concept, Webster-Wright (2009) argued that the learning processes of professionals not only encompassed discrete learning opportunities and continuing education programs but also interactions with work colleagues and
experiences beyond the workplace. Such professional learning was “situated, social, and constructed” (p. 724). In capturing this concept of broadly-based learning on the part of practitioners, Webster-Wright used the term *Continuing Professional Learning* (CPL). This was the preferred term, in Webster-Wright’s view, because the more common term of professional development connoted deficiencies needing authoritative correction.

The limitations of professional learning as a term and as a strategy have been noted by some education researchers: while traditional professional learning activities were not without some use, “the notion that external ideas alone will result in changes in the classroom is deeply flawed as a theory of action” (Fullan, 2007, p. 35). Fullan argued that many professional learning activities were not specific or sustained enough to result in changes in classroom practice. Before outlining features of effective professional development identified through a best evidence synthesis commissioned by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, Alton-Lee (2011) noted that some instances of professional learning “shifted the practices of teachers in ways that had deleterious effects on student achievement and/or other outcomes” (p. 311). Poorly designed or poorly executed professional learning was described by Alton-Lee as potentially harmful: an example was given of the reinforcement in an American teachers’ professional learning community of deficit thinking about the underachievement of African American students.

There was disagreement in the professional learning literature about the design and generalizability of empirical studies investigating the types or features of particular approaches to professional learning. Some researchers expressed concern about a lack of quantitative data linking features of professional learning with improved student achievement (Alton-Lee, 2011; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Others such as Desimone (2009) argued that empirical findings were a sufficient base for developing frameworks about effective professional learning. Specific findings from empirical studies have included: the need to differentiate professional learning activities for beginning versus experienced teachers (Grossman & Thompson, 2004; Hinds,
the desirability of grouping teachers by subject or grade level and attending to teachers’ subject (i.e., discipline-specific) knowledge as well as to their instructional practices (Alton-Lee, 2011; Burch & Spillane, 2005; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon & Birman, 2002); and the need to allow multiple opportunities for individual and collective sense-making about the changes in instructional practice required by new policies (Coburn & Stein, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 1990). In addition, context was theorized to play a significant role in the extent to which professional learning was effective; that is, no particular professional learning activity or approach was found to be effective in all contexts (Guskey, 2009). This emphasis on context in the professional learning literature echoed the finding from the education policy implementation literature that implementation processes are contingent upon local context (Honig, 2006).

**Professional learning for paraprofessionals.** The literature relating to professional learning for paraprofessionals (known as Educational Assistants in some jurisdictions) is sparse. Empirical work focusing on the learning needs of paraprofessionals has centred primarily on the area of special education. A gap in professional learning opportunities identified by Canadian researchers has particular relevance to the current study. This gap related to the area of teacher-paraprofessional partnerships (Williams, Brien, & LeBlanc, 2012). In their survey of professional learning communities in 50 elementary and secondary schools in the province of New Brunswick, the researchers found that almost all schools failed to provide professional learning about how teachers and paraprofessionals can jointly support students with special education needs. More specifically, the researchers found that nearly half of the schools surveyed provided little or no training for paraprofessionals relating to how they provide instructional support to teachers.

The Canadian findings of Williams, Brien, and LeBlanc (2012) were consistent with a study of paraprofessionals working with students with special education needs in mainstream classes in Ireland (Keating & O’Connor, 2012). In their study involving teachers, paraprofessionals, and principals in 55 primary schools, the researchers found that teachers lacked training in the types of
management skills that facilitate collaborative relationships with special education paraprofessionals. Keating and O’Connor also found that paraprofessionals reported having limited access to job-specific training opportunities in such areas as specific learning disabilities and behaviour management. In another study, McKenzie (2011) described a district-level initiative in Colorado involving the provision of a professional learning program for special education paraprofessionals. The program involved regular (i.e., monthly) learning activities that were differentiated on the basis of whether paraprofessionals were new to their job or were experienced in working with students with special education needs. McKenzie reported that the program had positive outcomes in terms of retention of paraprofessionals and increased collaboration among team members (including teachers) providing Individual Education Programs for students with special needs. A limitation of McKenzie’s work was that it did not discuss how these outcomes were identified or evaluated.

**Professional learning for teachers and paraprofessionals working with ELLs.** Board organizational structures were found in empirical work to have an impact on the provision of ELL-related instructional support. The placement of ESL departments within program rather than special education divisions of school boards improved the possibility of comprehensive and cross-curricular support for teachers of ELLs (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). Four issues of particular relevance to the current study arose from the second language acquisition literature. The first issue related to the ESL knowledge base, while the second was professional learning for classroom teachers and ESL teachers. The third issue was collaboration between ESL teachers and classroom teachers, and the fourth was that of professional learning for paraprofessionals working with ELLs.

**Knowledge base relating to second language acquisition.** A finding that emerged from the second language acquisition literature was that ESL teachers’ knowledge base in second language acquisition is largely unrecognized even though the scope of this knowledge base has been identified and outlined (Baecher et al., 2012; Colombo & Furbush, 2009; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Faez, 2011; Harper & deJong, 2009)). ESL teaching was viewed by non-ESL teachers and administrators in a
reductionist manner as strategy-driven (Arkoudis, 2006). Classroom teachers may have limited awareness of the second language acquisition discipline. “Teaching content effectively to ELLs is good teaching, yet it is more than just good teaching. It requires knowledge of linguistics, of second language acquisition, and the role culture plays in teaching and learning” (Colombo & Furbush, p. xiii). The argument that ESL teaching strategies work well for all students is one that has been used to leverage support for ELL-related professional development for classroom teachers (Elfers et al., 2013). However, de Jong and Harper (2005) argued that, while some merit exists in this concept, there are also important differences between first and second language acquisition that are minimized in conceptions of ESL teaching strategies as benefitting all students in a mainstream classroom. These differences were identified as including the domains of language and culture. In the language domain, for example, classroom teachers needed to know that second language learners understand more than their oral language development might suggest. With respect to the domain of culture, an example was given of classroom teachers’ lack of awareness of differing conceptions from one culture to another about how literacy is demonstrated and evaluated. Additional linguistic and cultural knowledge was viewed by de Jong and Harper as necessary to bridge a gap between notions of “just good teaching” for all students (p. 102) and the professional knowledge and skills necessary to support ELLs in their acquisition of English.

Five components of effective practices for classroom teachers of ELLs were identified by McGraner and Saenz (2009). These components were as follows: first, sociocultural and political foundations for teaching ELLs; second, foundations of second language acquisition, such as the length of time required for ELLs to achieve mastery of the academic language necessary to meet curriculum expectations; third, knowledge of teaching academic content to ELLs; fourth, knowledge of effective instructional practices for teaching ELLs; and fifth, knowledge about assessment practices and accommodations for ELLs, including knowledge about differentiating instruction. McGraner and Saenz acknowledged that these five components covered a considerable depth and breadth of
knowledge for teacher candidates and for practicing teachers; they also acknowledged debate about what classroom teachers might realistically be expected to learn and know about second language acquisition. Teacher knowledge was not viewed in the second language research literature as merely a technical issue: as noted earlier, Cummins (2006) identified a lack of teacher knowledge about effective instruction for ELLs as an issue of equity.

**Professional learning for classroom teachers and ESL teachers.** Some specific models of ELL-related professional learning for classroom teachers have been investigated through empirical studies. A “training of trainers” model was investigated in which nine classroom teachers received ELL-related instruction through nine hours of graduate coursework at a university in Texas and then returned to their school board with a remit to train their teaching peers (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2013, p. 134). The focus of the study was on the trainers themselves, who reported having gained content knowledge about ELLs as well as confidence in their role as providers of ELL-related professional learning for their peers. A limitation of the study was that it did not evaluate the ultimate impact of the project on ELLs’ achievement. Reports of other initiatives involving ELL-related professional learning for classroom teachers did include measures of gains in ELLs’ achievement in science (He & Prater, 2010) and mathematics (Truxaw & Staples, 2010). In both projects, ELL-related learning for classroom teachers involved multiple sessions totaling 25 hours. These were urban-centric investigations where large numbers of teachers were concentrated within reasonable travelling distance of each other. In addition, in these investigations experts from university faculties of education were available in person to support professional learning, and all participants were able to meet to construct understandings of new material and to work collaboratively on instructional planning. Further, in Truxaw and Staples’ study, the classroom teachers were from four urban schools in which ELLs formed 45% of the schools’ population; in He and Prater’s study, this figure was 63%. In rural schools with fewer ELLs, there may be less motivation or perceived need for teachers to seek ELL-related professional learning or for school boards to provide it.
An ELL-focussed study incorporating professional learning for classroom teachers was undertaken in an urban school board in an American Midwestern state (McIntyre, Kyle, Chen, Munoz, & Beldon, 2010). Twenty-three elementary school classroom teachers received 50 hours of professional learning over the course of 18 months; this learning was to support the teachers’ implementation of a particular instructional model for ELLs, namely the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol. The protocol involved teaching content to all students while simultaneously helping ELLs develop literacy skills. Professional learning included (among others) hands-on activities, group work, watching and discussing videos of the protocol in use in classrooms, practice sessions, and the placement of coaches in the participants’ classrooms. Even with carefully-designed professional learning opportunities provided over an extended time and including multiple opportunities for shared sense-making, the researchers found that just one-third of the classroom teachers in the study were “full implementers” (p. 346) of the new instructional model. McIntyre et al. hypothesized that this may have resulted from the teachers’ perception of the researchers as evaluators rather than supporters of teachers’ implementation of the protocol. Other possible factors influencing implementation, according to the researchers, were the teachers’ preferred instructional approaches, previous experiences, and repertoire of teaching strategies. The findings of McIntyre et al. were consistent with literature reviewed earlier in this chapter about the potential role played in implementation by normative factors (McLaughlin, 2006).

The issue of how classroom teachers adapt their instructional practices when they have small numbers of ELLs in their classes was studied by Haworth (2009) in the context of four primary schools in New Zealand. In these schools, ELLs represented a maximum of 10% of the student population, in contrast to some urban schools in Auckland where ELLs represented up to 80% of the student population. The study involved classroom observations and reflective interviews with eight classroom teachers over one term of the school year; these teachers did not have ESL qualifications. Haworth found that the classroom teachers used a trial-and-error approach in adapting their instruction
for ELLs. In many instances, the strategies the teachers used with ELLs were effective; the teachers, however, were not confident in identifying specific strategies as effective and they did not understand why some strategies might be effective and others not. Given the scope of the effective practices McGraner and Saenz (2009) delineated for classroom teachers of ELLs, it is perhaps not surprising that Haworth found that the classroom teachers lacked a comprehensive second language teaching framework within which to place the diverse professional demands placed upon them by ELLs who presented with a range of language learning strengths and needs, including some ELLs with extremely limited English proficiency.

Turning to the issue of professional learning for ESL teachers themselves, Crandall (1993) provided examples of a range of professional learning initiatives in a variety of international settings. These examples related to literacy education for adult ELLs and were grouped according to the general model of professional learning upon which they were predicated. One model was of professional learning through mentorship, in which ESL-related expertise was conceptualized as a craft that was passed on to less experienced teachers from their colleagues who had greater experience. A second model was that of the theory to practice model in which ESL teachers learned skills whose basis in second language acquisition research was made explicit. Another model was based upon inquiry and reflective practice; within this model, teachers were involved in identifying local concerns, collecting and analyzing observations, and reflecting on their teaching practices. Crandall argued that, in practice, most ELL-related professional learning initiatives combined elements from all three models.

**Collaboration between ESL teachers and classroom teachers.** Policy formulators who mandate shared responsibility by all teachers for ELLs’ language acquisition may envisage or assume that collaboration between ESL teachers and classroom teachers will occur as a means of implementing that mandate. ESL teachers were viewed in the research literature as being able to offer knowledge to classroom teachers about scaffolding academic content for ELLs; in addition, ESL
teachers had the potential to provide information to classroom teachers about the processes of language learning and about socio-cultural influences on ELLs’ acquisition of English (Liggett, 2010).

In spite of its potential benefits (Fu, Houser & Huang, 2007), empirical researchers have found collaboration between classroom and ESL teachers to be problematic in several ways. First, in a study of three urban and three rural ESL teachers in a New England state, ESL teachers were found to be marginalized both physically (with respect to the location and types of teaching space they were allocated) and socially (with respect to intermittent communication from classroom teachers about curriculum units underway) (Liggett, 2010). Second, particularly in secondary schools, collaboration between classroom and ESL teachers was found to involve complex processes of cross-disciplinary negotiation (Arkoudis, 2003; 2006). In analyzing interactions between a science teacher and ESL teacher planning lessons collaboratively in a secondary school in Australia, Arkoudis (2003) found that the teachers were engaged in an ongoing process of negotiating pedagogic understandings. The organization of secondary school teachers into discipline-specific departments had created within-school sub-cultures with differing underlying epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices which had to be bridged. Sustained collaboration, Arkoudis concluded, involved creating new practices and new teaching knowledge rather than promoting or rejecting the pedagogic practices embedded in teachers’ “disciplinary prejudices” (2003, p. 171). A third issue affecting attempts at collaboration between classroom and ESL teachers was that ESL was unfairly positioned, particularly in secondary schools, as a strategy-driven subject which did not have same authority as subjects such as science or mathematics (Arkoudis, 2006). When collaboration occurred, classroom teachers were conceptualized as having more power than ESL teachers: second language teaching was viewed as an adjunct to the teaching of mainstream subjects (Arkoudis, 2007).

**Paraprofessionals working with ELLs.** Researchers have noted the existence of ESL programming models that involve paraprofessionals (Batt, 2008; Elfers & Strtitikus, 2014; Stacey, Harvey, & Richards, 2013; Wenger et al., 2012), and, in particular, the use of bilingual
paraprofessionals in settings where cohorts of ELLs have the same first language background (Wenger et al., 2012). A program in one western American state provided a pathway for ESL paraprofessionals to earn teaching credentials (Bates, Burbank, & Schrum, 2009); the goal of this program was the creation of a more linguistically diversified teacher workforce.

A shift from support and clerical tasks to instruction-related tasks for ESL paraprofessionals was identified in a three-year ethnographic study in seven American urban and rural school districts (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006). This study found that ESL paraprofessionals were marginalized by teachers, administrators, and school boards even though the paraprofessionals assumed responsibility for much of the instruction provided to ELLs and often worked as “hidden teachers” (p. 78). The shift in paraprofessionals’ roles as identified by Ernst-Slavit and Wenger has implications for the ELL-related professional learning school boards provide. In school boards whose ESL programming models include paraprofessionals, these ESL paraprofessionals represent a group of school-level staff whose ongoing professional learning needs warrant attention.

**Rural Education**

While many investigations into policy implementation were urban-centric, rurality was another potential contextual factor influencing implementation processes and outcomes. A finding which emerged from the rural education literature was that policy formulators and researchers generalized about schools and failed to distinguish between urban and rural school environments in which education policy was implemented (Wallin, 2007; Wallin & Reimer, 2008). In this section of the literature review, I discuss literature relating to the issue of how to define the term *rural*. This is followed by findings relating to challenges for rural school boards as identified in the research literature. I conclude this section of the literature review with a focus on a framework that was developed by Zehler et al. (2008) to describe the evolution of ESL capacity building in rural school boards. This framework conceptualized the development of ESL programming in rural school boards as progressing through four stages.
**Defining rural.** Rural educational settings have been investigated by both international (e.g., Barley & Brigham, 2008) and Canadian policy researchers (e.g., Wallin, 2007), but a commonly-accepted, quantitatively-based definition of the term rural is not found in the education research literature (Arnold, Biscoe, Farmer, Robertson, & Shapely, 2007; Barter, 2008; Fries, 2012; Preston, Jakubiec, & Kooymans, 2013; Stelmach, 2011). Nor is there agreement about constructs that might be linked to or associated with rural contexts for educational research: Coladarci (2007) commented that constructs in the rural education literature (e.g., local commitments as a feature of some rural contexts) are neither well defined nor universally accepted. The lack of a commonly-accepted measure or conceptualization of rural is a methodological issue which makes comparisons across empirical studies difficult; as Barter noted, how governments choose to define the term rural also has implications for policy formulation and for funding decisions attached to the implementation of public policies.

Researchers have adopted a number of approaches in response to the difficulty of defining the term rural. Some researchers have not defined the term or concept at all (Barter, 2008); others have employed classification systems articulated by government agencies despite variation from one jurisdiction or country to another in how rural populations are defined (Preston et al., 2013). Fries (2012) noted that *rural* has often been juxtaposed to *urban* and has been conceptualized in administrative terms through the use of municipal or jurisdictional boundaries; in terms of land use (i.e., population density); or in economic terms (i.e., with reference to labour markets, trade, and media markets). Given the absence or fluidity of conceptualizations of rural, Coladarci (2007) emphasized the need for empirical researchers to provide detailed contextual information with which readers can assess the context of particular studies in rural settings.

**Educational challenges in rural settings.** In spite of fluid conceptions and applications of the term rural, researchers have consistently identified a number of challenges associated with education in rural settings. One challenge was difficulty in recruiting or retaining principals and teachers,
particularly teachers with credentials in teaching mathematics and science (Wallin & Reimer, 2008) as well as in special education and ESL (Barley & Brigham, 2008; Fries, 2012). Other challenges included: declining enrolment (Stelmach, 2011), resulting in decreased funding and job insecurity for teachers whose course assignments were linked to student enrollment; limited access to professional learning opportunities for teachers and administrators (Preston et al., 2013); closure and consolidation of rural schools (Casto, Steinhauer, & Pollock, 2012); multi-graded classes as a strategy to keep schools open (Stelmach); and isolation from specialized or support services (Barter, 2008; Fries; Wallin & Reimer). Teachers in rural schools were found to teach multiple subjects, including some in which they were not certified (Barley & Brigham); in addition, teachers in some rural schools were assigned multi-grade, mixed-aged classes (Hellsten, McIntyre, & Pryptula, 2011).

Potential benefits of rural settings, on the other hand, have been identified as including smaller class sizes; more individual attention to students from teachers; and teachers’ knowing many of the students attending particular schools (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006; Ortlieb & Cheek, 2008). In a study of sustained improvements in student achievement in an American rural secondary school, dense relationship networks among stakeholders (teachers, school administrators, students, and parents) along with strong leadership from the school principal were found to foster teachers’ and administrators’ collaborative work in monitoring and promoting students’ academic achievement (Chance & Segura, 2009). While they noted that dense relationships could be established in non-rural settings, Chance and Segura commented that rural schools had “natural advantages” (p. 10) relating to building a sense of community and engaging in collaborative work to initiate and sustain higher student achievement.

**ESL capacity building in rural school boards.** Acknowledging that ELLs are increasingly present in rural as well as urban environments, Zehler et al. (2008) outlined a framework describing capacity building in the context of school districts with emerging communities of ELLs. While they noted that the framework was based on a limited base of American findings (i.e., through a literature
search and through interviews with nine school board personnel in four rural school boards and two school boards described as urban fringe areas), Zehler et al. conceptualized ELL-related capacity-building as a four-stage process in school boards which had been previously homogeneous linguistically and culturally.

The first stage of Zehler et al.’s (2008) framework was an ad hoc response to the enrollment of ELLs in a board’s schools: in this stage, school boards typically tried to leverage existing resources to provide services for ELLs, and staff were found to be uncertain about how to meet ELLs’ learning needs. Variation in practice from one school to another was a hallmark of this first stage, with boards and school-level staff responding to ELLs through such strategies as pairing ELLs with English-speaking students and assigning teachers of foreign languages to work with ELLs. The second stage of Zehler et al.’s framework was one in which the school board developed consistent procedures and services for ELLs. This stage was characterized by such board actions as providing professional learning for staff, assigning specialist teachers to work with ELLs, and developing board-wide procedures for identifying and registering ELLs. The third stage was program development; in this stage, there was greater coordination across schools and the board provided regular ELL-related professional development as well as curriculum resource materials across grade levels. The fourth and final stage was characterized by expanded perspectives in which the school board integrated services for ELLs from kindergarten to Grade 12. In the fourth stage, all teachers (and not just ESL specialist teachers) were seen as having responsibility for fostering ELLs’ language growth. While these four stages were described separately, Zehler et al. emphasized the iterative nature of a school board’s response to increasing numbers of ELLs; that is, that a board’s progression through these stages was unlikely to be strictly linear. Developmental change in Zehler et al.’s model was theorized to occur in response to increasing numbers of non-English speaking immigrants within a school board’s boundaries through the arrival of new immigrants to the U.S or through an outflow of immigrant families from American urban centres to rural areas.
Zehler et al. (2008) conceptualized ELL-related capacity as incorporating five dimensions. These dimensions were personnel, instruction, administration, assessment, and outreach. Consistent with theorizing about the role of school boards in building local capacity (Levin & Fullan, 2008; Massell & Goertz, 2002), Zehler et al.’s conception of capacity building was not limited to providing professional learning but rather reflected other dimensions as well. Its emphasis on capacity building in a rural context made Zehler et al.’s framework applicable to understanding and describing how, over time, a school board which has been previously homogeneous begins implementing ELL-related professional learning for teachers and paraprofessionals. Associated with this framework was that shared responsibility for ELLs arrives later in the developmental stages. Further, it can be inferred that school board learning was implicated as the board progressed through the four stages.

Zehler’s et al.’s framework acknowledged the steady increase in immigrant families to rural school boards; this phenomenon has been noted in the rural education research literature (Preston et al., 2013; Shim, 2013). In conjunction with adapting to growing numbers of ELLs from immigrant families, however, some rural schools and school boards joined their urban counterparts in actively recruiting international, fee-paying ELLs in order to offset some of the impacts of declining enrollment. In a study of an American rural Kindergarten to Grade 12 school, Casto et al. (2012) used interviews and surveys to investigate the introduction of an international education program and found that the program was seen to have both benefits (such as increased cultural awareness for staff and students) and challenges (such as assessment dilemmas for teachers). One challenge was that no professional learning opportunities were provided to the high school teachers whose classes included ELLs.

**Conceptual Framework**

Honig (2006) synthesized findings from education policy implementation research and developed a framework in which she identified three implementation-related “dimensions” (p. 14) that influenced the processes and outcomes associated with policy implementation. As noted earlier,
implementation researchers have not articulated a parsimonious theory of policy implementation (O’Toole, 2004; Saetren, 2005); Honig rejected the aim of formulating a universal theory of implementation and, instead, conceptualized the goal of implementation researchers as understanding how implementation outcomes are shaped by interactions among the three dimensions. These dimensions are *policies*, *people*, and *places*. While the labels of these dimensions may appear straightforward, Honig conceptualized implementation as involving complex interactions among all three dimensions.

Honig’s (2006) epistemological stance was one in which she rejected the search for “universal truths” (p. 4) about policy implementation. The framework she developed was intended to reveal “implementation as a complex and highly contingent enterprise in which variation is the rule, rather than the exception” (p. 4). Honig’s framework was a heuristic rather than a theory or model: it did not address the issue of causation and it did not purport to predict implementation outcomes. Instead, policy implementation processes and outcomes were conceptualized as inseparable from local context, and the goal of implementation researchers was to “help build knowledge about what works for whom, when, where, and why” (p.4). Nuanced understandings of policy implementation were built through an accumulation of empirical studies in varied settings. Honig’s framework can therefore be characterized as reflecting and supporting an inductive approach to knowledge building about policy implementation.

Honig conceptualized the three dimensions of policies, people, and places as forming a triangle. Each dimension was placed at one apex of the triangle, and the three apices were joined with bidirectional arrows. The bidirectional nature of the arrows linking the apices indicated that interactions occurred among policies, people, and places to influence how implementation unfolds in particular contexts. In other words, the framework did not privilege one dimension over any other but rather reflected that all three were consequential to implementation processes and outcomes.

Honig (2006) conceived of the *policies* dimension as including the goals, targets, and tools
associated with particular education policies. Policy goals that were closer to “the core of schooling” (p. 14), such as mandated changes in teachers’ instructional practices or in curriculum content, created challenges for implementers that differed from the challenges associated with implementing changes at the periphery of schooling. Another goal-related influence on implementation was the time frame set out by policy formulators; that is, whether the expected changes outlined in a particular policy were to be implemented within a short period of time or over the longer term. An additional potential goal-related variable captured by the policies dimension was the gap between school districts’ or schools’ existing capacity and the capacity required to meet policy goals: greater implementation challenges were associated with a large gap between current and required capacity. Policy targets were seen to influence implementation processes because of the potential for individuals or groups identified in policies to support or hinder implementation processes according to their perceptions of whether they stood to benefit or lose from changes required by new policies. Additionally, Honig argued, policy formulators sent signals about how groups were valued through naming or labeling specific groups of implementers in particular policies; interpretations of their apparent value to policy formulators affected implementers’ actions and therefore policy outcomes. The tools accompanying specific policies also influenced implementation; these tools (or instruments, as McDonnell and Elmore (1987) had referred to them) included but were not limited to mandates, inducements, or accountability measures.

The second dimension of Honig’s (2006) framework was people. Honig argued that contemporary implementation studies have uncovered the role played in implementation processes and outcomes of individuals and organizations both within and outside formal educational systems; parents, youth workers, and social services providers were cited as examples of the latter category. Policy actors not specifically named in documents were nevertheless found at times to influence implementation; these actors might include local politicians or business people whose interests were associated with the implementation of particular policies. The people dimension also reflected
empirical findings that variations in beliefs and implementation behaviours occurred within professional groups (such as “teachers”) that had previously been viewed as homogeneous. Such findings suggested that fine-grained analysis of within-group variation would contribute to a deeper understanding of how implementation unfolds in particular settings. An additional aspect of the people dimension was that of the organizations and communities to which implementers belonged: teachers’ professional communities, for example, had the potential to influence implementation processes. Honig included in her conception of the people dimension the possibility that policy implementers could themselves become policymakers; this possibility was consistent with the literature reviewed earlier, which characterized implementation processes as recursive rather than linear.

The third dimension of Honig’s (2006) framework was places. Within this dimension, Honig drew attention to the influence on implementation processes of the historical and political contexts in which formally constituted organizations such as school boards operated. This dimension also reflected empirical findings that demographic characteristics of particular settings were consequential to how education policies were implemented: for example, implementation processes in urban school boards might differ from those in rural or suburban school boards. In addition, Honig’s framework acknowledged that education policy implementation could intersect with policy formulation and implementation in other sectors such as social services or community development. The places dimension also reflected Honig’s finding that, in some instances of contemporary education research, researchers provided the actual rather than anonymized name of a school board or jurisdiction that was the subject of empirical investigation. Studies of effective schools or school boards were among recent investigations naming particular implementation sites.

Honig’s (2006) framework is a useful heuristic for empirical investigations because it conceived of implementation as complex, contingent, and variable. These characteristics of implementation have been underscored in empirical studies (e.g., Ball & Bowe, 1992; Burch & Spillane, 2005; Coburn, 2001; Coburn, 2006; Honig, 2004). In addition, the framework serves to focus
researchers’ attention on identifying key aspects of each dimension as well as the context-specific manner in which the three dimensions interact as particular policies are implemented in specific settings. A further benefit of Honig’s framework is that the normative aspect of implementation as identified by McLaughlin (2006) can be explored within it. In other words, the framework can incorporate investigation of such normative elements of implementation as policy actors’ beliefs and values at the same time as technical aspects of implementation (such as organizational structures or the use of policy instruments) are studied. Additionally, although it calls attention to all three dimensions of implementation, Honig’s framework is flexible enough to allow for one dimension to be foregrounded in empirical work.

**Summary of the Literature Review**

Empirical findings and theoretical constructs from a range of disciplines informed this literature review. Implementation was seen as part of a policy cycle, although the limitations of this conception of policy as a cycle were noted. Findings from the implementation literature suggested that policy implementation was influenced by the cascading, multi-layered nature of public bureaucracies, with the attendant possibility of policy being interpreted and mediated at each level. The literature also suggested that implementation could be investigated by adopting a top-down, bottom-up, or combined approach, with the possibility that each of these approaches would yield differing perspectives on implementation processes in the same setting. A finding in the education policy literature was that policies requiring changes in teachers’ instructional practices were being formulated and implemented in increasing numbers; these changes, often accompanied by accountability measures, were seen to involve complex implementation processes which were characterized as situated and contingent upon local context. School boards were found to play an important role in policy implementation through building local capacity. One component of school boards’ capacity building was increasing teachers’ knowledge and skills through providing professional learning opportunities. With respect to professional learning, some researchers have found that there has been insufficient investigation into
quantifiable links between types or features of professional learning and improvements in student achievement. Other researchers have reported specific findings about professional learning. These have included the need for professional learning to be tailored in response to teacher-related variables, such as level of teaching experience; and the need to increase teachers’ subject knowledge as well as their instructional and assessment strategies. Researchers in the second language teaching and learning field have identified the significant scope and depth of this field’s disciplinary knowledge, and have found collaboration between classroom teachers and second language teachers to involve complex processes of negotiation with varying levels of commitment from teachers themselves. In the field of rural education, there has not been a definition or conceptualization of rural that has been widely accepted; a number of challenges relating to rural education have been identified nonetheless. These included difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers with specialist qualifications (e.g., in ESL) and the need for teachers to teach in more than one subject area. The phenomenon of increasing numbers of ELLs in rural schools was identified, and a four-stage framework of the evolution of ESL programming in rural settings was described. The chapter concluded with a presentation of the conceptual framework underpinning this study. This framework conceptualized education policy implementation as comprised of three interacting dimensions of policies, people, and places.
Chapter 3: Methodology

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to describe how the implementation of Ontario ELL-related professional learning policy was perceived in a rural school board. Before outlining the details of the methodology I employed to investigate this issue, I note several features of my stance as a researcher. First, I adopt the position of Honig (2006) and McLaughlin (2006) that implementation processes and outcomes are situated in particular contexts. Second, I support Cummins’ (2006) view that teachers’ knowledge (or lack of knowledge) about effective instruction for ELLs is an equity-related issue. Finally, I note that my experiences as a former teacher of ELLs informed data collection and data analysis in this study.

To address the research questions outlined in Chapter 1, I undertook a qualitative, descriptive case study of the implementation of ELL-related professional learning in a rural Ontario school board. A case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). The rationale for the case study method is that it builds an in-depth, contextualized understanding of the case through the collection of multiple forms of data (Cresswell, 2007). This is consistent with the finding in education implementation empirical studies that policy implementation processes and outcomes are influenced by local context (Honig, 2006). A case study method using qualitative data is also consistent with the view of implementation researchers that attention to the normative dimension of implementation (i.e., how implementers’ decisions and actions are influenced by beliefs and values) is integral to describing how actors are working with particular policies (McLaughlin, 2006).

The case in this study was a rural Ontario school board implementing the requirement of ELL Policies and Procedures (MOE, 2007b) to provide professional learning for elementary and secondary school staff in schools whose student population includes ELLs. The pseudonym I gave to this board was Helmsford District School Board (HDSB). The unit of analysis was the school board, and the case was bounded geographically by the political boundaries of the board and temporally by board policies.
and activity from the release of *ELL Policies and Procedures* in 2007 to the completion of data collection in June, 2013.

In this chapter, I outline the methodology I used to collect and analyze data in order to answer the four research questions. I begin by discussing the informational conversations that I used to design this study. I then outline the timelines and political context of the study, followed by a description of data collection and data analysis procedures. Next, the strategies used to ensure the trustworthiness of data collection and analysis are described. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the methodology I used to answer the study’s research questions.

**Informational Conversations**

I conducted informational conversations to establish an appropriate scope for this study; to identify potential participants in the study according to role; to learn about the range of ELL-related professional development activities that are or have been provided within school boards; to identify the types of interview questions that would elicit relevant data from participants; and to identify a potential school board to be studied. Because my review of the literature had indicated that there might be differences in the implementation of ELL-related professional learning based on the contextual variable of urban versus rural boards (Honig, 2006; Wallin & Reimer, 2008), I included school boards representing a range of rural and small communities indices as assigned by Ontario’s MOE (2010b).

To gather a breadth of information through these informal conversations, I made telephone calls to 12 different Ontario school boards. I was able to gather information about four school boards. Two of the school boards were in the fourth quartile of the MOE’s (2010b) rural and small communities index; that is, they were urban school boards. The third school board was in the second quartile; it was a geographically large board with a mix of rural areas and a large city with a population of over 100,000. The fourth school board was in the top quartile of the MOE’s index; it was a rural school board. I supplemented information gathered from board staff with informal and separate conversations with two ESL-certified teachers from the third school board about their
experiences with ELL-related professional learning. My rationale for doing so was to capture a broader range of perspectives on ELL-related professional learning than those offered by the board-level consultants to whom I had spoken.

These informational conversations helped me identify an initial list of potential board and school-level staff who might provide information about the implementation of ELL-related professional learning within a particular school board. The job titles of the board-level staff to whom I spoke varied, including “consultant,” “resource teacher,” “director of welcome centre for English language learners”; henceforth I use the title “ESL consultant” to refer to board-level staff with responsibility for ESL programming. The informational conversations suggested, not surprisingly, that ESL consultants themselves were likely to be key informants. They were readily able to identify specific examples of ELL-related professional learning for ESL teachers and, in some cases, classroom teachers within their school boards; they also linked these initiatives to specific policy documents; that is, *ELL Policies and Procedures* document (MOE, 2007b) and *STEP* (MOE, 2011b). One of the ESL consultants alluded to coordinating with other board-level staff in a professional learning unit to provide activities specific to ELLs. This suggested that the design of my study would need to be flexible enough to encompass the possibility of identifying emergent policy actors in the field. Conversations with the two ESL teachers revealed that, in the past, an ESL teacher had made presentations to teachers of mainstream classes at their school about ELL-related instructional strategies. The professional learning activities the two ESL teachers described ranged from workshops presented at school staff meetings to ad hoc discussions with classroom teachers about ELL-related teaching and assessment strategies. It thus appeared that ESL teachers could be both the recipients and initiators of ELL-related professional learning.

Another aspect of professional learning to which some consultants referred was the bidirectional nature of flows of information within boards. ESL consultants from two of the school boards alluded to both top-down and bottom-up professional learning initiatives in their boards. This
pointed to the need to examine the provision of support for professional learning from both perspectives: top-down, with a focus on activities directly organized by board staff; and bottom-up, in order to capture activities originating in schools.

The informational conversations were also helpful for identifying topics to raise with the participants in addition to questions that emerged from the policy implementation research literature. For example, the ESL consultant from one of the urban school boards commented that the school board’s preferred model for delivering professional learning had changed since the release of *ELL Policies and Procedures* (MOE, 2007b), emphasizing that models for delivering professional learning are not static. ESL consultants from three of the school boards alluded to an influence on ELL-related professional learning of MOE documents relating to or expanding upon *ELL Policies and Procedures*, such as the *STEP* document (MOE, 2011b).

I learned that non-board personnel are providing support for teachers of ELLs in some Ontario schools: in one of the urban school boards, for example, federally-funded settlement workers acted as cultural interpreters for classroom teachers in elementary schools. This raised the possibility that, once in the field, I might find unexpected categories of participants who play a role in providing or receiving ELL-related professional learning.

**Sampling**

I used purposeful sampling to identify the school board that was the focus of the study. The selection of this board involved two criteria. First, it was a school board with a high (i.e., top quartile) index as determined by the MOE’s (2010b) rural and small communities index. This index is determined on the basis of three factors: board enrollment (predicated on higher per-student costs in smaller boards); distance from a major urban centre (Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, London, or Windsor); and school dispersion (average distance between schools in the board and between the board’s central office and schools) (MOE, 2011a). The second criterion was for the board to have at least one board-level ESL consultant. The school board selected for this study met both criteria and
was the fourth school board I contacted through the informational conversations described earlier.

**Research Context**

Helmsford District School Board (HDSB) is a school board that is in the top quartile of Ontario school boards listed from high to low in terms of the rurality and small communities index as calculated by the MOE (2010b). HDSB is a public school board where English is the primary language of instruction and where business is conducted in English.

HDSB covers a large geographical area of more than ten thousand square miles. The board is subdivided for administrative purposes into two regions, which I designate “Region A” and “Region B.” The board includes rural farmland as well as a number of communities with populations ranging from less than 5000 to approximately 40,000. Although the board is large, all communities within its boundaries are connected by roads; the board is not rural or remote in the sense of containing communities which are accessible only by air or sea.

The overall student population of HDSB is approximately 30,000; this population is composed of approximately 18,000 elementary school students and 12,000 secondary schools students. ELLs represent a small proportion of HDSB’s student population: approximately 375 elementary school ELLs and 275 secondary school ELLs for a total of 650 ELLs or approximately 2% of the student population. The figure of 275 ELLs in secondary schools includes ELLs in the international education program.

The history of ESL programming in HDSB is a relatively short one. A sudden influx of Sri Lankan refugee families occurred in the mid-1990s, concentrated in HDSB’s largest community located in Region B. HDSB had to develop ESL programming very quickly at the time of this influx: in the board’s largest community, one elementary school registered 55 new ELLs on the first day of the school year in 1997. The school board responded to the arrival of ELLs by creating the position of ELL tutor. These tutors were paraprofessionals, paid on an hourly basis to provide support for ELLs, either individually or in small groups of learners. HDSB preferred its ELL tutors to have earned
Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) certification; that is, to have completed a 100-hour ESL training course such as the one offered by the board’s preferred external provider, Oxford Seminars (Oxford Seminars, 2014). TESL certification, though preferred, was not mandatory for ELL tutors at any point in the time frame of this case study. At the time this study was undertaken, some but not all of the ELL tutors held TESL certification. Of the ELL tutors participating in this study, three had TESL certification while the remaining six did not.

While ELL tutors ostensibly worked under the supervision of classroom teachers, several tutors participating in this study, along with one of the board’s ESL consultants, noted that responsibility for designing and delivering ESL programming at the time of the influx of immigrant families was largely deferred to the ELL tutors. Most teachers in HDSB had very limited experience with second language teaching and learning. In some cases, teachers had also had limited exposure to other cultures. Many of the ELL tutors who were hired also had limited experience with ELLs, but HDSB provided regular workshops for tutors on issues ranging from cultural awareness to strategies for reading, conversing, and writing in a second language. Some of these workshops were led by the board’s ESL consultants, while others were led by external providers. For example, daylong workshops were led in the spring and fall of 2008 by staff from the ESL department of an Ontario university. These workshops were held annually at a minimum, and, in some years, more frequently.

As the number of ELLs increased through immigration and, over time, through the enrollment in HDSB schools of Canadian-born ELLs, more ELL tutors were hired. The position of ELL tutor, initially created as a response to an influx of ELLs in the latter half of the 1990s, remained a feature of ESL programming in HDSB at the time of this study. Schools were allotted one hour of ELL tutor support per week per ELL student. The ELL tutors were both full-time and part-time, working for 30 hours per week at a maximum and 1 or 2 hours per week at a minimum. In 2012–2013, the total number of ELL tutors in elementary and secondary schools was between 50 and 55.

Although the majority of ELLs originally attended the board’s elementary schools, ELL tutors
were also hired to provide support to the relatively few ELLs (predominantly from immigrant families) attending secondary schools. Over time and in the largest community in the board, there were enough ELLs in one secondary school for an ESL credit course to be offered. This occurred in 2008, and the first teacher assigned to the ESL course was a participant in this study; she later became HDSB’s ESL consultant for Region B.

A more recent phenomenon within HDSB has been the arrival of fee-paying international students. These international students were initially recruited by HDSB in small numbers and began attending the board’s secondary schools in the mid-2000s. This prefaced the development of a formally constituted international education program introduced by the board five years before the current study took place. HDSB has designated eight secondary schools across the region as international education site schools. Not all eight schools provide the international education program every year: during the school year in which I undertook this study, only seven secondary schools were involved in the board’s international education program. An ELL tutor is employed on a full-time basis (30 hours per week) at each secondary school offering the international education program. Each international education site school offers a multi-level ESL course once per semester (i.e., twice during the school year). The number of fee-paying international students in the 2012–2013 school year was approximately 150, but it is the board’s intention to grow this program to more than double its current size.

ESL programming was initially overseen at the school board level by a coordinator who was also responsible for French as a second language programming. Two other coordinators oversaw ESL programming for short periods of one or two years. The participants in the current study were not aware of the reasons for this turnover of board-level ESL staff after the arrival of refugee families in the mid-to-late 1990s, but several participants in the study noted that in 2007, a retired principal with a strong interest in ESL came out of retirement to assume responsibility for the board’s ELLs. A hallmark of his tenure was the provision of ESL learning materials to schools and frequent
professional learning opportunities for the board’s ELL tutors. The retired principal was succeeded by a full-time ESL consultant whose position was subsequently split in 2009 into two part-time ESL consultant positions, one for Region A and one for Region B.

At the time this study was undertaken, ESL programming in the HDSB was thus overseen by two ESL consultants to whom I have given the pseudonyms Lydia (ESL Consultant 1) and Claire (ESL Consultant 2). Lydia worked in HDSB’s main office, located in Region A. She took up her position as a consultant in 2009. Claire worked out of the board’s satellite office located in Region B; she began in this position in 2010. For both Lydia and Claire, responsibility for ESL programming was only one of two portfolios to which they had been assigned. Lydia and Claire, then, each worked part-time as ESL consultants. The other portfolio for which they each had responsibility was organizing and participating in collaborative inquiry learning hubs, the model of professional learning supported by HDSB. The placement of the ESL consultants in HDSB’s organizational structure is illustrated in Figure 1. This figure does not show all of HDSB’s departments (such as Human Resources and Purchasing) but rather shows the relationship between the ESL consultants and the department of HDSB that recruits international students.

**Timelines and political context of the study.** I received clearance for this study from the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board (GREB) on September 24, 2012. A copy of the clearance letter is found in Appendix B. I then applied to the Helmsford District School Board for permission to undertake research there. I followed the board’s application procedures, which involved completing a form outlining the purpose, rationale, methodology, and potential benefit of my proposed study to the school board and to educational research; and submitting a copy of ethics clearance from Queen’s University’s GREB. My application was reviewed by HDSB’s Research Steering Committee at its meeting of November, 2012.

In the methodology section of my application to HDSB, I requested permission to conduct interviews with principals and staff at the seven international education sites of which I was aware via
HDSB’s website. I also asked to interview the board’s two ESL consultants. This made for a potential pool of two ESL consultants, seven principals, seven ESL teachers, and fourteen classroom teachers.

HDSB’s Research Officer contacted me after the November, 2012 Research Steering Committee meeting to inform me that I had received permission to conduct my study in HDSB. He outlined the board’s procedures with respect to inviting participation in research studies. He stated that he would initiate contact with the seven school principals at the international education site schools to enquire whether they would agree to participate in the study and invite their staff to participate.

HDSB’s Research Officer emphasized that invitations to participate in the study could be issued to school staff only through each school principal. Principals’ decisions about participating in the study were final, as were their decisions about whether or not to allow teachers or paraprofessionals from their schools to participate.

Figure 1. Placement of ESL Consultants in HDSB’s Organizational Structure
The fall of 2012 was a time of labour unrest for teachers in Ontario’s elementary and secondary schools. While teachers in Ontario are employed by individual school boards, the province itself funds teacher salaries and benefits. In a cost-cutting measure, the Ontario government passed Bill 115, which took effect in September, 2012; this bill blocked automatic pay raises based on number of years of teaching experience, reduced the number of sick days for teachers, and restricted teachers’ ability to strike in the event that school boards and teachers were unable to negotiate new contracts by the province-wide deadline of December 31, 2012 (Hammer, Oct. 11, 2012). HDSB was involved in the labour unrest that was a consequence of Bill 115.

Teachers’ federations initiated court challenges to Bill 115 and encouraged teachers to withdraw from voluntary services such as supervising extra-curricular activities. The elementary and secondary school teachers’ federations to which HDSB teachers belonged instructed teachers to stop attending staff meetings, participating in standardized testing, communicating with parents outside school hours (Hammer, Oct. 27, 2012); teachers were to provide minimal comments on report cards (Hammer, Nov. 9, 2012). By December, elementary school teachers were engaged in a series of rotating one-day strikes (Hammer, Dec. 18, 2012). The labour dispute was resolved after the installation of a new premier, with teachers’ federations advising their members in late March to withdraw sanctions (Radwanski, Mar. 28, 2013) and to approve a template for settlements with individual boards of education shortly thereafter (Alfonso, April 2, 2013).

The labour dispute had implications for professional learning. Secondary school teachers, for example, were instructed in writing by their federation not to attend professional development activities; create presentations for professional development seminars or make presentations unless this was required of them in their role as coordinators; attend Professional Learning Communities; or complete Annual Learning Plans (Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation, Oct. 25, 2012).

HDSB posted updates on its website about the impact of the labour dispute on school activities, both co-curricular (e.g., school trips) and extra-curricular (e.g., school clubs and teams).
According to the board’s website, disruption to co-curricular and extra-curricular activities was reported to be continuing in approximately one third of HDSB’s schools, both elementary and secondary (HDSB, 2013) even after teachers’ federations had urged teachers to withdraw their sanctions. This ongoing disruption may have reflected lingering dissatisfaction on the part of some teachers with the province’s enactment of Bill 115 and a continuing determination to fulfill only contractually-obligated duties. Participation in a research study was not such a duty. It was in this climate that I sought participants for the study. With labour unrest subsiding, data collection began on April 16, 2013 with the first of two interviews with the board’s ESL consultant for Region A.

Data Collection

The data set for this study included interview data, document data, and data from the field notes I made after conducting interviews. In this section of the methodology chapter, I describe how I developed and piloted the interview protocols that were used to collect interview data. This is followed by a description of participant recruitment procedures and the adjustments I made to these procedures while in the field. This section of the chapter concludes with a description of data collection through interviews and documents supplied by participants.

Development of interview protocols. The development of interview protocols for this study was informed primarily by the research questions arising from literature I reviewed earlier in the dissertation. However, I was also guided by the information I had elicited from informational conversations with board-level ESL consultants from four different Ontario school boards and the two ESL teachers. This information was used to identify a tentative list of potential participants who might provide data: board-level ESL consultants, principals, ESL teachers, and classroom teachers were included in this list. Because the design of this case study was an emergent one, I also considered the possibility of other categories of participants who might be identified in the field (e.g., other board staff with whom ESL consultants liaise). In developing a tentative interview protocol, I identified that not all questions would yield data from all categories of participants. Based on the research literature
and the informational conversations, I tailored the initial interview protocol for each category of participant.

Yin (2009) noted the importance in data collection of distinguishing between questions asked of individual participants and higher-order questions relating to the case being examined. I therefore mapped individual interview questions onto the higher-order research questions framing this study to

Table 1

*Relationship between Research Questions and Interview Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interview Questions by Participant Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What local policies, procedures, and activities relating to professional learning for teachers of ELLs and support staff working with ELLs have been initiated or supported by one rural school board in the course of implementing the Ontario Ministry of Education’s 2007 <em>ELL Policies and Procedures, K-12</em> document and 2011 <em>Steps to English Proficiency (STEP)</em> document?</td>
<td>C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, C8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P1, P2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ET1, ET2, ET3, ET4, ET5,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CT 1, CT2, CT3, CT4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do the participants in this rural board report the development and implementation of these policies, procedures, and activities to have been influenced by the rural and small communities context in which the school board functions?</td>
<td>C9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ET10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CT6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Who has been involved, individually or in groups, in implementing ELL-related professional learning within the school board?</td>
<td>C10, C11, C12, C13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P3, P4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ET6, ET7, ET8, ET9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CT 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What challenges has the school board confronted in implementing the Ministry of Education’s directive to provide professional learning opportunities for teachers of ELLs and support staff working with ELLs?</td>
<td>C14, C15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ET11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CT 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ensure that, across categories of participants, the interview questions would provide data relevant to
the four research questions. The relationship between the research questions and interview questions is
shown in Table 1, which provides a list of the interview questions for each type of participant.

Interview questions are grouped in Table 1 to answer the main issue associated with each of
the four research questions. The first group of interview questions elicited data about ELL-related
professional learning policies, procedures, and activities in HDSB. The second group of interview
questions elicited data about the influence of the board’s rural setting on ELL-related professional
learning. Interview questions to collect data about the roles played by individuals and groups in
initiating and implementing ELL-related professional learning were found in the third group, while the
fourth group of interview questions elicited data about the challenges associated with the
implementation of ELL-related professional learning in HDSB. In brief, the four groups of interview
questions in Table 1 were designed to collect data about each of the following constructs relating to
ELL-related professional learning: first, policies, procedures, and activities; second, the influence of
rurality; third, the roles of individuals and groups; and fourth, implementation challenges.

Some interview questions were asked of all categories of participants. For example, one
question about which all participants might be expected to offer information or have an opinion was
“How, in your view, has the rural and small communities context of your school board influenced the
provision of ELL-related professional learning?” Several questions were designed to elicit information
and perspectives that could be triangulated with responses from other participants. For example,
participants were asked to comment about their own role and the role of other HDSB staff in providing
ELL-related professional learning. The interview questions included a greater number of questions for
potential key informants (e.g., the ESL consultants) than for participants with whom interviews were
likely to be briefer (e.g., school principals). All interview questions are listed in Appendix C.

**Piloting interview protocols.** Prior to data collection in the field, I piloted the interview
protocols with four participants who were educators but who did not work in HDSB. Each volunteer
was interviewed individually. My purpose in piloting the interview questions was to assess whether
the interview questions (a) were clearly worded and understood by the participants; (b) elicited data
that would be relevant to my study’s research questions; and (c) were sequenced appropriately so that
participants were not jarred by sudden changes in topic.

I recruited volunteers with a variety of backgrounds in education, representing an elementary
school classroom teacher in a rural school board; an ESL instructor with experience teaching young
adults and adults; a secondary school principal from a rural school board in another province; and a
secondary school ESL teacher working in a rural school board. Each participant gave written consent
for me to audiotape the pilot interview so that I could replay the interviews later and note questions
that were poorly worded or did not elicit data. It was clearly stated to these volunteers that none of the
data they provided would be used in the study itself. At the end of each pilot interview, I invited
feedback from each volunteer.

I adjusted the interview protocols on the basis of the pilot interviews in the following ways.
First, I reduced the number of questions for each category of participant, because the pilot interviews
were longer than I had anticipated. Second, I prepared several prompts to use in the field when asking
about the impact of a rural setting on professional learning. I made this adjustment after discovering
that the pilot volunteers had initial difficulty answering questions related to this topic.

**Recruitment of participants.** Given the atmosphere of labour unrest that prevailed at the
time my study was approved by the school board, I contacted HDBS’s Research Officer in early
December, 2012 to discuss how to proceed with the recruitment of participants. We agreed that the
timing for seeking participants for my research study was not propitious. Therefore, contact with
school principals and, through them, to school staff was delayed for the duration of the teachers’
labour action. Even though they worked as board-level staff, ESL Consultants 1 and 2 were still
members of a teachers’ federation. I therefore also postponed contacting them until the end of the
teachers’ labour action.
In March, 2013, labour unrest across the province and in HDSB had begun to settle. The Research Officer emailed the principals at HDSB’s international education sites, providing them with an overview of my research study and stating that the study had been approved by the board’s Research Steering Committee. I followed up with emails to these principals. I was allowed to contact the two ESL consultants directly, and did so by email in March. Recruitment materials included an invitation to classroom teachers, ESL teachers and ELL tutors (Appendix D); formal Letters of Information (Appendix E); and Consent Forms (Appendix F). Table 3 summarizes the sequence of events associated with recruiting participants and conducting interviews.

**Emergent design and adjustments to recruitment during fieldwork.** An outcome of my in-depth interview with Lydia (ESL Consultant 1) in April was the fine-tuning of participant recruitment in three ways. Such adjustments were consistent with the emergent design of the study (Simons, 2009; Yin, 2009). First, Lydia identified a number of schools in HDSB which were not part of HDSB’s international education program but which had, in her view, “significant” numbers of ELLs (i.e., 10 or more) in their populations. All these additional schools were elementary schools. Subsequent to my interview with Lydia, I emailed the Research Officer to ask about contacting principals at these schools and inviting participation in my research study. He consulted with Lydia and generated a revised and expanded list of potential research sites. This revised list encompassed 14 elementary and secondary schools in total. International education site schools were included in this final tally of 14 potential schools.

Second, after consultation with Lydia and the Research Officer, I included HDSB’s ELL tutors in my study. Lydia had informed me that the tutors would have information to offer because they were instrumental in ESL programming in HDSB.

Third, Lydia informed me that many principals were extremely busy with a number of provincial and HDSB policy initiatives, particularly in wake of the previous labour unrest that had disrupted normal board and school routines. I therefore revised my recruitment procedures. Principals
Table 2

*Data Collection Timelines and Activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March, 2013</td>
<td>• Subsequent to Research Officer’s email to principals about my study, emailed principals at the international education site schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Received positive response to research request from principal at one international education site school; followed up with package of Letters of Information (LOIs) for distribution to staff at that school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emailed and then booked a phone call with ESL Consultant 1; gathered contextual information including role in ESL programming of ELL tutors; arranged interview with her for April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April, 2013</td>
<td>• Interview with ESL Consultant 1; gathered samples of board-produced professional learning material from her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Expanded list of schools and potential participants approved by Research Officer; email invitations sent to principals there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ESL Consultant 1 emailed a letter of support for my research study to principals in her region (Region A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Followed up ESL Consultant 1’s email to principals with my own email in which I narrowed my request for participants to teachers (invitations to ESL teachers and up to six classroom teachers at each school) and ELL tutors (invitations to all ELL tutors working at each school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interviewed ELL tutor, ESL teacher, and principal at Secondary School 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May, 2013</td>
<td>• Interview with ESL Consultant 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interviews with ELL tutor at Elementary School 1; ESL teacher at Secondary School 2; ESL teacher at Secondary School 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ESL Consultant 2 emailed a letter of support for my research study to principals in her region (Region B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Followed up ESL Consultant 2’s email to principals with third invitation to principals to allow their schools to participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June, 2013</td>
<td>• Interviews with ELL tutor at Secondary School 2; ELL tutors and classroom teachers at Elementary School 2; ELL tutors at Elementary School 3; a classroom teacher at Elementary School 1;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Second interview with ESL Consultant 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sent thank you notes and email invitations to principals at participating schools inviting them to be interviewed; none agreed to be interviewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sent thank you emails to all participants in the study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

were still the conduit for invitations to participate in the study, but I decoupled principals’ own participation in the study from participation by teachers and ELL tutors in their schools. In other words, I first sought teachers and tutors as participants, and then, towards the end of data collection, invited principals themselves to participate at the end of June or in early July when they might have more time in their schedules. The exception to these procedures was the principal at Secondary School 1, who was the only principal who had indicated early in the recruitment process a willingness to be
Interviews with participants. Interviews are an essential source of case study information, and can be either focused or in depth (Yin, 2009). Focused interviews are generally shorter than in-depth interviews; in-depth interviews may take place over several sittings and provide more extended opportunities for participants to offer their perspectives and opinions as well as factual information. Interviews are useful for collecting information that cannot be readily observed and for learning about participants’ perspectives; they also allow for the possibility of pursuing relevant but unanticipated issues which arise during the interview process (Simons, 2009; Yin, 2009).

I conducted 21 semi-structured interviews with 20 participants from April to June, 2013. The participants included two board ESL consultants, one secondary school principal, three secondary school ESL teachers, nine ELL tutors (paraprofessionals), and five classroom teachers. Of the participants in the study, 18 were female and two were male. Each of the participants signed a consent form prior to the interview. All of the interviews were audiotaped with the explicit consent of the participants. Information about the participants is contained in Table 3.

I conducted a combination of in-depth and focused interviews. I conducted in-depth interviews with participants whose role or years of experience—or both—were such that they were able to provide a large volume of information about ELL-related professional learning. I conducted in-depth interviews with both ESL consultants because of their formal role as consultants and the overview they were able to offer with respect to ESL programming and ELL-related professional learning in HDSB. I interviewed ESL Consultant 1 on two occasions: once at the outset of data collection and a second time at the end of the data collection phase of this study. Other key informants with whom I conducted in-depth interviews were the following: ESL Teacher 3, who was the only ESL teacher in the study who had taught secondary school ESL classes for more than one semester; ELL Tutors 3 and 8, who had been tutors for a long time and therefore able to comment about the evolution of their professional learning; ELL Tutors 1 and 6, who were able to provide detailed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>ESL/TESL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lydia</td>
<td>ESL Consultant 1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Consultant since 2009 Secondary School English (5 years) Additional experience as ESL teacher of adults and ELL tutor</td>
<td>Yes ESL Specialist (3 ESL courses recognized by Ontario College of Teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>ESL Consultant 2</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Consultant since 2010 Secondary School English (14 years)</td>
<td>Yes ESL Specialist (3 ESL courses recognized by Ontario College of Teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>ESL Teacher 1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Secondary School Art (10 years)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyler</td>
<td>ESL Teacher 2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Secondary School English and ESL (6 years of teaching experience in various subjects in elementary and secondary schools, including home instruction for alternative school; Grade 7/8 Family Studies)</td>
<td>No, but 2.5 years teaching ESL in Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>ESL Teacher 3</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Secondary School English (30 years); currently also Native Studies</td>
<td>Yes (ESL, Part 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaitlin</td>
<td>ELL Tutor 1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>First year as ELL tutor in secondary school; previously an EA</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine</td>
<td>ELL Tutor 2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>6 years as ELL tutor in both elementary and secondary schools; currently in itinerant position (five elementary schools); previously an elementary school teacher</td>
<td>Yes (TESL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosemary</td>
<td>ELL Tutor 3</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>6 years as ELL tutor in elementary school</td>
<td>Yes (TESL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
<td>ELL Tutor 4</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3 years as ELL tutor in elementary school; previously an EA</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>ELL Tutor 5</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>2 years as ELL tutor in elementary school; previously a supply EA and ELL tutor</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina</td>
<td>ELL Tutor 6</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2 years as ELL tutor in secondary school; previously an EA</td>
<td>Yes (TESL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delia</td>
<td>ELL Tutor 7</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>15 years as ELL tutor in elementary school; previously an elementary school teacher, then (briefly) EA</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriella</td>
<td>ELL Tutor 8</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>17 years as ELL tutor in elementary school; previously an EA</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>ELL Tutor 9</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1.5 years as ELL tutor in elementary school; previously an EA</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2.5 years as principal of secondary school</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frances</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher 1</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>21 years teaching experience; currently teaching Grade 4/5 French Immersion</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher 2</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>13 years teaching experience; currently teaching French Immersion in Kindergarten</td>
<td>Yes (ESL, Part 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher 3</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>9 years teaching experience; currently teaching Grade 7</td>
<td>Yes (ESL, Part 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoebe</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher 4</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>30 years teaching experience; currently teaching Grade 6</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher 5</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>30 years teaching experience; currently teaching Grade 1/2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The ESL consultants, ESL teachers, and classroom teachers were all certified by and members of the Ontario College of Teachers. EA = Educational Assistant.
implementing *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) in her elementary school. In-depth interviews ranged in length from approximately 0.5 hours to 2.5 hours. Focused interviews of about 15 to 20 minutes were conducted with the principal, two of the classroom teachers, ESL Teacher 1, and ELL Tutor 1; these participants were relatively new to their jobs, had not had extensive experience working with ELLs, or were pressed for time. Information about the interviews is summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Interview Dates and Lengths*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Participant</th>
<th>Date of Interview in 2013</th>
<th>Length of Interview</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board ESL Consultant 1</td>
<td>April 16</td>
<td>2.25 hours</td>
<td>Board Office</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL Tutor 1</td>
<td>April 26</td>
<td>1.25 hours</td>
<td>Secondary School 1</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL Teacher 1</td>
<td>April 26</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
<td>Secondary School 1</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>April 29</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
<td>Secondary School 1</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board ESL Consultant 2</td>
<td>May 6</td>
<td>2.5 hours</td>
<td>Board Office</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL Tutor 2</td>
<td>May 7</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>Elementary School 1</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL Teacher 2</td>
<td>May 7</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>Secondary School 2</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL Teacher 3</td>
<td>May 14</td>
<td>1.25 hours</td>
<td>Secondary School 3</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teacher 1</td>
<td>May 30</td>
<td>1.25 hours</td>
<td>Elementary School 2</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL Tutor 3</td>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>1.75 hours</td>
<td>Elementary School 2</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL Tutor 4</td>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>1.25 hours</td>
<td>Elementary School 2</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL Tutor 5</td>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
<td>Elementary School 2</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teacher 2</td>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>Elementary School 2</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teacher 3</td>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
<td>Elementary School 2</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teacher 4</td>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Elementary School 2</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL Tutor 6</td>
<td>June 18</td>
<td>35 minutes</td>
<td>Elementary School 2</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL Tutor 7</td>
<td>June 19</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Elementary School 3</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL Tutor 8</td>
<td>June 19 &amp; 20</td>
<td>20 minutes + 35 minutes</td>
<td>Elementary School 3</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL Tutor 9</td>
<td>June 20</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Elementary School 3</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board ESL Consultant 1</td>
<td>June 26</td>
<td>1.25 hours</td>
<td>Board Office</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I conducted interviews at the locations where the participants worked; that is, I travelled to schools and board offices in order to meet with the participants. All interviews were held in areas that
were public but quiet, such as conference rooms, staff workrooms, and school libraries. Details about the schools represented in the study are given in Table 5. Participants represented three elementary schools and three secondary schools in HDSB.

Table 5

Participants by School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage of ELLs in student population</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>&lt; 5</td>
<td>ELL Tutor 2, Classroom Teacher 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>ELL Tutors 3, 4, and 5, Classroom Teachers 1, 2, 3, and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>ELL Tutors 7, 8, and 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>&gt;5</td>
<td>Principal, ELL Tutor 1, ESL Teacher 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>&lt; 5</td>
<td>ELL Tutor 6, ESL Teacher 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>ESL Teacher 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Document collection. When I exchanged emails with HDSB staff who agreed to participate in the study, I invited them to bring to our interview any professional learning documents they wished to share with me. This was an emergent aspect of the study’s design because I did not know in advance of the interviews what documents would be provided to me. Lydia (ESL Consultant 1) gave me the greatest quantity of documents, but I also received documents from Claire (ESL Consultant 2) and Victoria (ESL Teacher 3), as well as from Rosemary, Iris, and Gabriella (ELL Tutors 3, 4, and 8 respectively).

I made a list of the documents and then sorted the documents into three groups. The first group of documents included ELL-related professional learning materials originating in or produced by HDSB. There were four documents in this group: three HDSB publications for distribution throughout the board, and a printout of presentation slides prepared by Lydia and Claire (ESL Consultants 1 and 2) for a workshop held in May, 2013. I selected this first group of documents for
content analysis because the documents reflected board-specific priorities, topics, and processes for ELL-related professional learning. The first group of documents was therefore the one that was most relevant to the research questions guiding the study. I scanned this group of four documents and entered them into the data set.

The second group of documents also originated in HDSB and provided confirmation of several ELL-related professional learning activities which had occurred in HDSB or which had been made available to HDSB staff. An example of a document in this second group was a list of professional learning activities which Gabriella (ELL Tutor 8) had attended since she began working as a tutor in HDSB. A list of the documents comprising the second group in found in Appendix G. The third group of documents included ELL-related material produced outside HDSB. Examples were articles published in professional and scholarly journals; these externally-produced materials had been distributed within HDSB by the ESL consultants, including the predecessors of Lydia and Claire. I set these documents aside because they had not been produced within HDSB.

Data Analysis

I was the instrument through which the data were analyzed. I brought to this analysis my teaching experience as described earlier in this dissertation as well as my previous research experience as part of a Master’s of Education degree, in which I studied the perspectives and practices of mainstream teachers of ELLs who were assessing ELLs’ written work (Milnes, 2005). Triangulation through multiple sources and types of data was the primary strategy I used to reduce possible bias in my analysis of the data (Patton, 2002).

Conveying an understanding of the case was the goal of the data analysis procedures I used (Merriam, 2001). As Merriam noted, data sources may be disparate or even contradictory; gathering all data sources together into a case record is the first step in managing data. The data set for this case study included transcribed interviews, documents collected from the participants, and my field notes.

In order to begin immersing myself in the data, I transcribed participants’ interviews myself.
omitted identifying information from the transcripts, including names of participants, geographical references, and names of schools. As I transcribed, I kept a list of specific professional learning activities that participants described. I later showed this collated list to Lydia and Claire (ESL Consultants 1 and 2) in order to check its accuracy. In order to ensure the accuracy of my transcripts, I replayed each interview after I transcribed it.

I imported the interview transcripts into Atlas.ti Version 7, the current version of the qualitative data analysis software available at that time. I then imported into Atlas.ti the .pdf versions of the documents I gathered while I was in the field, eliminating any identifying information before scanning the documents into .pdf format. The final portion of the case record was my field notes; I transcribed my hand-written field notes and imported them into Atlas.ti.

I was guided methodologically in my analysis of interview data and field notes by Saldana (2009) and Miles and Huberman (1994) and in my analysis of documents by Bowen (2009). I began the process of coding the data I had imported into the qualitative software analysis program. Codes were defined in the methodology literature as “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Miles & Huberman, p. 56). Many of the codes I applied were emic in nature and arose from the data. These codes included “ESL teams” or “learning by doing,” for example, as well as codes such as “conversations” that arose from participants’ direct speech. Other codes were etic (e.g., “history of ESL programming”) and were generated by the research questions or Honig’s (2006) conceptual framework. I assigned the code “other” to pleasantries that began and ended the interviews, such as comments on the weather. I used two coding cycles (Saldana, 2009). In the first cycle, I used a combination of coding approaches. These included attribute coding, to capture basic descriptive information about the participants; process coding, to capture actions and activities (e.g., “visiting schools”); descriptive coding, to identify topics discussed by the participants (e.g., “isolation”); and values coding, to capture the values, beliefs, or attitudes of participants (e.g., “participant response to workshop”).

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In the first coding cycle, I began the coding process with the transcripts from my interview in March with the ESL consultant from Region A and my interview in April with the ESL consultant from Region B. My rationale was that these two participants were among the key informants in this study. Our interviews touched on a range of topics and were therefore likely to be a rich source of codes. In addition, the information from these extended interviews prompted my own preliminary impressions about themes that might arise from the data. I wrote memos to track my evolving understandings of the data as well as questions they presented; I noted possible categories that might emerge at a later stage of analysis. I built an initial code list within Atlas.ti, defining codes as they were created. I coded approximately one third of the interview data. I then paused to review and re-examine the code list, merging codes that were similar. I finished coding the interview transcripts, and then coded the documents and field notes. I then recoded the transcript of the first interview with Lydia (ESL Consultant 1) to ascertain whether I had applied the code list consistently. In comparing the first and second round of coding of the transcript of my interview with Lydia (ESL Consultant 1), I found that my application of codes to the same segments of data was generally consistent.

I then began the second coding cycle. This was an iterative process of data analysis with the goal of building categories. Categories are defined as “abstractions derived from the data” (Merriam, 2001, p. 181). Working inductively, I began by looking for patterns in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2009) and developing a tentative list of categories into which the codes could be grouped. I examined these categories and compared them to the research literature, the study’s conceptual framework, and the research questions guiding the study. I made memos that recorded my evolving understanding of data. Through an iterative process of examining the categories, writing and reading memos, and reflecting on concepts from the research literature, I identified a tentative set of themes in the data. I then reviewed the data again, searching for discrepant data. I also re-examined the data to confirm the commonalities and differences in perspectives within and across participant groups. Five themes emerged from these data analysis procedures. These themes are presented in
Chapter 4.

**Saturation of the data.** Saturation has been conceptualized as having two dimensions (Bowen, 2008): saturation of the data and theoretical saturation. Data saturation involves gathering data “to the point of diminishing returns, when nothing new is being added” (p. 140); in other words, the stage of data collection is reached when there is evidence of replication or redundancy. Theoretical saturation involves arriving at the point at which “no new insights are obtained, no new themes are identified, and no issues arise regarding a category of data” (p. 140). Bowen’s discussion of theoretical saturation was in the context of developing grounded theory from the data he had collected. Description rather than theory development was the purpose of this current study; therefore, I focus on the issue of data saturation.

An indication that data saturation was achieved was that the details given by participant groups about ELL-related professional learning opportunities were largely congruent and little new information was elicited from the participants towards the end of data collection. For example, ELL tutors uniformly reported that few recent ELL-related professional learning opportunities had been provided for them by the school board. In addition, the participants consistently characterized the role of their school principal in ELL-related professional learning as one of support and not leadership.

**Trustworthiness of data collection and analysis.** While there is consensus that concepts of internal and external validity and reliability from quantitative methodologies do not transfer readily to evaluating studies that used qualitative methodologies (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Patton, 2002), there are differences in nomenclature and suggested processes for evaluating the trustworthiness of data collection and analysis in a descriptive case study such as the one I undertook. I use the terminology suggested by Lincoln and Guba in discussing the issue of trustworthiness of this study. Lincoln and Guba conceptualized the trustworthiness of an empirical study to be strengthened through credibility (believability of the findings); transferability (providing sufficient information about the study’s context to allow others to assess whether findings can be
transferred to a different research setting); dependability (ensuring that similar findings would be obtained if the study were repeated in the same setting); and confirmability (ensuring that the findings of the study reflect the experiences of the participants).

I used several strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of this study, including triangulation; member checking; recoding to check for consistency in my application of codes to the data; keeping an audit trail and providing a table showing the development of the study’s themes; and providing detail to illustrate the themes I elicited from the data.

Triangulation was the primary strategy I used to enhance the credibility and confirmability of the study. There were multiple sources of interview data within each category of participant, with the exception of the lone principal who participated in the study. Two ESL consultants, three ESL teachers, five classroom teachers, and nine ELL tutors provided interview data. These participants were from six different schools distributed between two regions of HDSB. Multiple sources of interview data allowed for the collection of evidence about participants’ potentially diverse perceptions of ELL-related professional learning within and across participant groups. In addition, three types of data sources were the basis for my data analysis; namely, interviews, school board documents, and field notes. The use of different data sources enabled me to corroborate information about ELL-related professional learning activities and roles within HDSB.

One strategy I used to increase the credibility of the study was to recode the first interview transcript after coding the entire data set in order to establish that there was consistency in my application of the code list. In addition, I attempted to incorporate member checking to help establish the credibility of the findings; the results of this process were mixed. At the end of each interview, I offered to send participants an anonymized transcript for their review and, should they wish, for revisions or commentary. Only two participants (Olivia, Classroom Teacher 2 and Iris, ELL Tutor 4) accepted this invitation to review their transcripts, and they did not subsequently revise, correct, or elaborate on any of their interview data. Member checking also included showing both ESL
consultants the list of discrete ELL-related professional learning activities I developed from the interviews and from documents. Both consultants reviewed the list and made any corrections or elaborations they deemed relevant. My second interview with Lydia (ESL Consultant 1) took place after I had interviewed all the other participants; this provided an opportunity for member checking. Based on the set of completed interviews, the field notes I made, and the memos I made about preliminary impressions of the data, I was able to ask Lydia about topics and themes that were beginning to emerge from the data. An example was that I had noted that “sharing” was a word used by many of the participants, and Lydia offered further insights into this concept based on her experiences managing the ESL program in HDSB.

I kept an audit trail of the data analysis process in order to increase the study’s confirmability. This involved writing analytic memos while transcribing interviews and throughout the data analysis process. These memos tracked my evolving understanding of the data and potential themes that might emerge from them. The Atlas.ti software was an aid in creating and tracking codes. Within the software itself, I wrote definitions for codes as I created them; the software tracked when codes were merged. As noted earlier, when I finished coding the data I returned to the first transcript and recoded it to check that I had applied the code list consistently throughout the coding process. I kept memos recording the iterations of code and category lists as well as several iterations of how groups of categories suggested particular themes. In other words, I recorded the process through which I ultimately identified five themes as a good fit with the data set. In order to make this process of analysis more public, as Anfara, Brown and Mangione (2002) suggested, I created Table 6 to show three levels of data analysis, progressing from codes (at the bottom of the table) to categories to themes (at the top).

I enhanced the transferability of the research findings by providing an in-depth and detailed portrait of ELL-related professional learning in HDSB. I included the participants’ voices to enrich the presentation of the five themes. Credibility was strengthened through my active search in the data for
Table 6

Emergence of Themes from the Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1: ESL consultants were key initiators of ELL-related PL in HDSB</th>
<th>Theme 2: ESL consultants as learners</th>
<th>Theme 3: variability in school-initiated ELL-related PL</th>
<th>Theme 4: ELL-related PL initiatives parallel to rather than integral to board-wide model of PL</th>
<th>Theme 5: implementation challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A. congruence in consultants’ views &amp; roles</td>
<td>2A. learning about second language teaching</td>
<td>3A. role of ESL teachers in ELL PL</td>
<td>4A. board’s current model for professional learning across all subjects</td>
<td>5A. effect of small numbers of ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B. implementing PL through relationship-building</td>
<td>2B. learning about managing ESL programming</td>
<td>3B. role of ELL tutors in ELL PL</td>
<td>4B. ELL-related PL activities and initiatives</td>
<td>5B. effect of large geographical footprint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1C. implementing PL through providing resources to schools</td>
<td>3C. role of principals in ELL PL</td>
<td>3D. effect of STEP piloting</td>
<td>4C. STEP as driver of recent ELL PL</td>
<td>5C. effect of uneven distribution of ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A. consultants’ working relationship</td>
<td>2A. self-directed PL</td>
<td>3E. differing perspectives about PL: consultants vs. teachers &amp; tutors</td>
<td>4D. MOE support for ELL PL in HDSB</td>
<td>5D. differing implementation tasks with respect to ELL PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A. consultant belief/opinion about ELL PL</td>
<td>2A. MOE Sharing Days</td>
<td></td>
<td>5A. board funding for ESL programming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A. “just-in-time learning”</td>
<td>2A. visiting classrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td>5A. certification in ESL or TESL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A. initiating ELL PL</td>
<td>2B. board’s ELL-related procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td>5A. collective agreements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A. observing ELLs</td>
<td>2B. ESL teams</td>
<td></td>
<td>5A. complex instructional demands on teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A. identifying student learning needs</td>
<td>2B. ELLs with special needs</td>
<td></td>
<td>5B. learning by doing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A. role of consultant in ELL PL</td>
<td>2B. ESL learning circles</td>
<td></td>
<td>5A. PL a moving target</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B. “conversations”</td>
<td>2B. identifying ELLs</td>
<td></td>
<td>5A. school PA/PD days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B. ESL expertise</td>
<td>2B. greater involvement of classroom teachers in ESL programming</td>
<td></td>
<td>5A. staff turnover</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B. using local knowledge &amp; connections</td>
<td>2B. ESL learning circles</td>
<td></td>
<td>5B. accessibility of PL opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B. visiting schools</td>
<td>2B. identifying ELLs</td>
<td></td>
<td>5B. unfamiliarity with other cultures in rural board</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B. “pop-ins”</td>
<td>2B. greater involvement of classroom teachers in ESL programming</td>
<td></td>
<td>5B. email as vehicle for PL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B. resources used in meetings with teachers</td>
<td>2B. identifying ELLs</td>
<td></td>
<td>5B. technology as tool for PL in rural board</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1C. board virtual learning website</td>
<td>2B. ESL learning circles</td>
<td></td>
<td>5B. “sharing”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1C. print resources from board</td>
<td>2B. ESL learning circles</td>
<td></td>
<td>5C. characteristics of ELLs in region A vs. B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1C. print resources from MOE</td>
<td>2B. ESL learning circles</td>
<td></td>
<td>5C. subpopulations of ELLs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1C. pre-2009 printed and a/v material</td>
<td>2B. ESL learning circles</td>
<td></td>
<td>5C. itinerant staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1C. limitations of print resources</td>
<td>2B. ESL learning circles</td>
<td></td>
<td>5D. international education program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1C. within-school placement of resources</td>
<td>2B. ESL learning circles</td>
<td></td>
<td>5D. history of ESL programming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

both similarities and differences in the perspectives and information provided by the participants as well as in the documents whose content I analyzed.

Summary

In this chapter, I have described my use of informational conversations to establish the potential scope and range of participants for the type of investigation I planned to conduct as well as to identify a school board that met the criteria for the study. I chose to answer the study’s four research questions through a descriptive case study of one rural Ontario school board and how this board’s implementation of ELL-related professional learning was perceived. I described the sampling procedure, the development and piloting of interview protocols, the recruitment of participants, and the collection and analysis of data from interviews, documents, and my field notes. I also identified several strategies I used to enhance the trustworthiness of data collection and analysis procedures, including triangulation, recoding, member checking, and increasing transparency through a table summarizing the process of developing themes from codes and categories.
Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter I present the findings that emerged from my analysis of three data sources: interview data, HDSB documents, and the field notes I made after conducting interviews with the 20 individuals who participated in the study. I integrated the analysis of all three sources to identify the themes emerging from the data. Five themes became evident through this process.

The first theme was that the two board ESL consultants were the key initiators and providers of ELL-related professional learning in HDSB. Because theirs was the key role in ELL-professional learning, it is helpful to enter the data through the perspectives of these consultants. The second theme also related to the two ESL consultants, namely that they were engaged in learning processes of their own. For these first two themes, the leading data source was the two consultants themselves until affirmatory data was evident, primarily through interviews with the other participants. The third theme was that there was variability from school to school with respect to school-initiated professional learning relating to ELLs. The fourth theme was that ELL-related professional learning initiatives were parallel to, rather than integral to, HDSB’s board-wide professional learning model of collaborative inquiry. The final theme was that the combination of HDSB’s low numbers of ELLs, large geographical footprint, and uneven distribution of ELLs posed challenges for implementing ELL-related professional learning. Interview data from all of the participants as well as data from documents were the primary data sources for the third, fourth, and fifth themes.

After presenting the five themes individually in this chapter, I describe a particular ELL-related professional learning activity that took place in HDSB in May, 2013. This professional learning activity illustrated all five themes that emerged from my analysis of the data set. I conclude this chapter with a summary of the study’s findings, returning to the four research questions in order to do so.

An overview of the themes and sub-themes emerging from the data is provided in Table 7. In addition, Table 7 indicates the type of data source(s) from which the themes and sub-themes emerged;
that is, from interview transcripts, from documents collected from the participants, or from my field notes.

Table 7

*Themes, Sub-themes, and Data Sources*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1: ESL consultants as key initiators and providers of ELL-related PL in HDSB</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A. congruence in consultants’ views &amp; roles</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B. implementing PL through relationship-building</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1C. implementing PL through providing resources to schools</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 2: ESL consultants as learners</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A. learning about second language teaching</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2B. learning about managing ESL programming</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 3: variability in school-initiated ELL-related PL</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3A. role of ESL teachers in ELL PL</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3B. role of ELL tutors in ELL PL</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3C. role of principals in ELL PL</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3D. effect of <em>STEP</em> piloting</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3E. differing perspectives about PL: consultants vs. teachers &amp; tutors</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 4: ELL-related PL initiatives parallel to rather than integral to board-wide model of PL</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4A. board’s current model for professional learning across all subjects</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4B. ELL-related PL activities and initiatives</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4C. <em>STEP</em> as driver of recent ELL PL</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4D. MOE support for ELL PL in HDSB</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 5: implementation challenges relating to the uneven distribution of small numbers of ELLs across HDSB’s large geographical footprint</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5A. effect of small numbers of ELLs</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5B. effect of large geographical footprint</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5C. effect of uneven distribution of ELLs</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5D. differing implementation tasks with respect to ELL PL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theme One: ESL Consultants as Key Initiators and Providers of ELL-Related Professional Learning in HDSD

The two board ESL consultants, Lydia and Claire, were the providers of most of the ELL-related professional learning initiatives that occurred within HDSB’s boundaries. Although they were not acting in their roles as ESL consultants in 2007 when *ELL Policies and Procedures* (MOE, 2007b) was released, and hence at the beginning of the time period studied in this case, Lydia and Claire were active providers and supporters of ELL-related professional learning from the time they joined the board staff as consultants. For Lydia, this was in 2009, and for Claire, in 2010. Three aspects of the consultants’ key role in providing ELL-related PL emerged from the data supporting this theme. First, there was congruence in the two consultants’ views and roles with respect to professional learning. Second, the consultants implemented ELL-related professional learning primarily through building relationships with schools. Third, a secondary means through which the consultants implemented ELL-related professional learning was the provision of ESL resources to schools.

**Congruence in the consultants’ views and roles with respect to professional learning.** As board-level consultants in HDSB, Lydia and Claire were each responsible for two portfolios. In one of their portfolios, they were responsible for the implementation of a collaborative inquiry model for professional learning across all grades and subject areas in the families of schools (groups of elementary and secondary schools) to which they had been assigned. Their work as ESL consultants was the second of their portfolios. Lydia and Claire, then, were not involved in developing and overseeing ESL programming in HDSB on a full-time basis. In spite of working only half time as ESL consultants, Lydia and Claire were key providers and organizers of virtually all of the formal ELL-related professional learning activities that took place in HDSB; these formal activities included workshops and presentations at school staff meetings. Through telephone calls or meetings with individual teachers and ELL tutors, the two consultants were the primary providers of other, less structured ELL-related professional learning opportunities as well.
The provision of ELL-related professional learning was a shared undertaking in which the consultants either worked as a team or carried out similar initiatives in their respective regions of HDSB. Lydia and Claire were in frequent communication with each other even though their offices were in different communities in HDSB. They both characterized their working relationship as a very collegial one. They sometimes visited schools together to gather data from ELLs’ school files. They organized and led workshops jointly, including daylong STEP (MOE, 2011b) workshops in 2012 and 2013 as well as two full days of workshops during the board’s summer institute in August, 2011. Lydia and Claire reported working jointly to identify targets of ELL-related professional learning workshops or activities (by region, school, or role); to apply for MOE funding for workshops as well as for the production of ELL-related material for school staff to use; and to select externally-produced ESL-related resources for distribution to schools in HDSB. In addition, both consultants made visits to individual schools in their regions. These school visits included a mix of consultant-initiated, structured activities (such as consultant-led presentations at staff meetings) and meetings with principals, teachers, tutors, or guidance counsellors in order to address school-initiated requests for information about such issues as accommodations for ELLs on provincial standards-based tests.

Responsibility for providing ELL-related professional learning had not been downloaded to schools in HDSB but rather was shouldered by the board’s two ESL consultants. As Claire commented with respect to the role she and Lydia played in professional learning: “It would be Lydia and myself [providing professional learning]. So if there’s anything, that would come through us and then conversations with teachers” (Claire, P3, 225¹). Victoria, a secondary school ESL teacher, characterized Lydia and Claire as “middlemen” (P11, 187) who received information and training from the MOE and then conveyed this information to schools. In Victoria’s view, Lydia and Claire were “trying to look at the big picture” (P11, 187) of ESL programming in HDSB and provide support

¹Citations from the data set are those assigned by the Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software. “P” refers to the number of the document, assigned in chronological order as interview transcripts, HDSB documents, and field notes were imported into the software program; “P3” therefore refers to the third document in the data set. Numbers follow the document identifier to indicate the location of text within a particular document.
to schools as needed. This support for schools, Victoria reported, included ongoing dialogue between the consultants and secondary school teachers to address classroom teachers’ concerns about what expectations teachers should hold for students who are both learning in English and learning English while trying to earn secondary school credits.

Although I interviewed Lydia and Claire separately, the two consultants expressed congruent views about ELL-related professional learning. For example, they both discussed the importance of readiness and receptivity as a prerequisite for teacher or tutor learning. The consultants shared the belief that professional learning was likely to occur only when teachers or ELL tutors saw the relevance of new learning to issues they identified themselves. Claire stated that unless individuals saw an issue as something they needed to learn more about, “It’s seen as something else. As something extra to have to do” (Claire, P3, 157). Lydia discussed a concept she referred to as just-in-time learning:

Is this the thing that that person needs to learn at that moment? And if it’s not, then they won’t use it. And maybe we’ve both had situations like that ourselves, we’ve been presented with a great idea but it didn’t really fit with what we were doing at the time and so we didn’t—we just kind of put it on the shelf and thought, “Maybe I’ll get to that sometime.” (Lydia, P1, 0219)

Lydia and Claire also expressed a common view of the importance of teachers matching students’ learning needs with appropriate instructional and assessment strategies. Both consultants stated that it was vital for classroom teachers to observe ELLs closely in order to identify ELLs’ learning needs and then plan instruction accordingly. One reason Lydia and Claire supported the MOE’s introduction of the STEP (2011b) tracking form was that the form drew teachers’ attention to the current language proficiency of ELLs in their classes. In meetings with classroom teachers even before STEP was released, Lydia and Claire reported having discussed the importance of observing and assessing individual ELLs in order to plan instruction: Claire, for example, recited from memory
the page number of an ESL resource book where a continuum of observable language learning
behaviours was found.

Lydia made a statement in our interview that was key to understanding her own conception of
ESL programming and ELL-related professional learning in HDSB. Lydia stated: “I think our board
has the same access to understanding of ELLs as any other board” (P1, 0260). Thus, while readily
acknowledging that the ESL context in which she worked differed from an urban one, it was her view
that the goal of HDSB should be to implement (over time) *ELL Policies and Procedures* (MOE,
2007b) and *STEP* (2011b) as outlined by the MOE.

Congruence in the consultants’ views and priorities was evident in their characterizations of
current ESL programming in HDSB as well as in their plans for the direction this programming should
take. Lydia and Claire both indicated that a programming goal towards which they were working was
the establishment of school-based ESL teams with shared responsibility for providing programming
for ELLs. This model was in contrast to the previous model in HDSB in which responsibility for ESL
programming had been delegated to ELL tutors or ESL teachers.

**Implementing professional learning through building relationships.** Lydia stated that
HDSB’s organizational structure was such that the consultants did not have a hierarchical relationship
with principals, teachers, and ELL tutors. Thus, she and Claire did not have the authority to mandate
the provision of ELL-related professional learning activities or the attendance of school-level staff at
such activities; nor did they have the authority to require teachers and tutors to read ESL policy and
resource documents or to focus on ELL-related instructional issues during school-level meetings.
Instead, both consultants reported relying on building relationships with principals, teachers, and
tutors in order to increase receptivity on a school-by-school (and sometimes teacher-by-teacher) basis
to learning about ELLs and building school-level ESL programming capacity. Claire characterized
many of these relationship-building activities as involving small steps occurring over time. An
example of a small-scale activity that fostered professional learning was given by Lydia, who had
recently booked an hour-long individual meeting with a secondary school teacher who had an international student in her class and who did not know how to assess or plan instruction for this newly-arrived ELL. I identified through data analysis that relationship building was accomplished through the consultants’ use of three strategies: first, conceptualizing interactions with school staff as conversations; second, minimizing the consultants’ own role as ESL experts; and third, tailoring information to the needs of individual staff or schools. I discuss each of these strategies in turn.

Both Lydia and Claire consistently characterized their interactions with school-level staff (principals, classroom teachers, ESL teachers, ELL tutors, and Learning Resource staff\(^2\)) as conversations. Claire elaborated on this way of framing her interactions, explaining that, “When you think about the formal PD option, there aren’t conversations. . . . Those more intimate conversations at the time, with someone who’s really struggling [with an instructional issue] prove more long-lasting” (Claire, P3, 773). This characterization of professional learning as a conversation was echoed by Victoria, an ESL secondary school teacher: “And so I would say, a fair bit of professional development goes on that way, through conversations with the board ESL [consultant] and then her trying to provide some materials” (Victoria, P11, 175). The consultants’ conceptualization of these instances of ELL-related professional learning as conversations connoted bidirectional exchanges with school staff rather than a model of unidirectional transmission of information by the consultants to school staff.

The framing of interactions as conversations was closely related to the second strategy associated with relationship building on the part of the two consultants. In spite of having ESL-related qualifications and experience, Lydia and Claire did not position themselves as ESL experts but rather as teachers willing to share ELL-related experiences and suggestions. This was a deliberate choice on their part. Claire said, “I don’t claim to be, I don’t \textit{want} to be perceived as an expert because I’m not. I

\(^2\)Participants in the study used a variety of titles when referring to teachers at individual schools who were assigned responsibility for supporting students with special learning needs. These titles included (among others) Learning Resource Coach and Learning Resource Teacher. To provide consistency in reporting the findings of this study, I use the general term Learning Resource staff to indicate teachers in this role.
still have so much to learn” (Claire, P3, 293). Lydia discussed the model of professional learning in use across all subjects in HDSB; in this model of collaborative inquiry, experts were not routinely brought in to provide learning for HDSB staff. Instead, as Lydia described it, when an issue arose, the approach would be to “take a look at the problem … and study the students. And then … figure out where the gap is and how we might try to address it. Let’s work on that together” (Lydia, P1, 1140). Lydia joined Claire in explicitly rejecting the position of an ESL expert: “Maybe some people like that role of being an expert, but I don’t want to be caught up on not knowing something” (Lydia, P1, 1148).

This stance of the consultants with respect to rejecting being positioned as experts may have reflected the emphasis on co-learning in the collaborative inquiry model within which they worked in the non-ESL half of their portfolios. It may also have been intended to help build relationships with school staff by emphasizing common ground; that is, the consultants may have been positioning themselves as teachers, first and foremost, in their interactions with school-level staff. Moreover, they may have been positioning themselves as teachers who were engaged in ongoing learning themselves. For Lydia and Claire, the word *expert* may have carried connotations of superiority and unidirectional flows of information; this may account for their having rejected it in the context of the relationships they sought to foster with school staff.

The view of other participants differed from that of Lydia and Claire, however. Tutors and ESL teachers uniformly perceived Lydia and Claire as having expertise (i.e., ESL-related knowledge and experience). They viewed the consultants’ expertise in a positive light. Speaking about Claire after attending the May, 2013 workshop, Iris (ELL Tutor 4) commented, “She’s very informed, she’s so knowledgeable. It’s like a breath of fresh air to listen to her again” (P16, 380). Tyler (ESL Teacher 2) remarked on how knowledgeable Lydia was and how valuable he had found an individual meeting with her in shaping his approach to instructional planning for his ESL class at an international education secondary school.
A third strategy used by the consultants to build relationships with schools involved tailoring the information provided to school staff to avoid overwhelming teachers and tutors. For example, as opposed to flooding classroom teachers with a large volume of material about second language teaching and learning, Lydia stated that she might simply give a teacher a short list of “Twenty-Five Tips for Classroom Teachers” as an initial introduction to teaching ELLs. To the extent possible, Lydia and Claire reported having personal contact with school staff. After the production of the board’s publication on ELLs with special education needs, for example, Claire noted that she and Lydia tried to deliver as many copies as possible by hand: “We knew if we put them in the mail, we’d spend a lot of time and we’d spend a lot of effort. And we didn’t want to send them all out for them to be lost” (Claire, P3, 393).

A challenge Lydia reported was that she and Claire were often making only single visits to schools in response to questions or problems identified by school staff. Lydia characterized these visits as pop-ins, and stated that she wished it were possible to “build those relationships over time” (P1, 0725), perhaps sometime in the future through an itinerant ESL teacher who could visit the same schools regularly. The consultants therefore recognized that they faced constraints in their ability to create and maintain relationships with schools.

A finding from this study was that Lydia and Claire had a dual focus as managers of ESL programming and key providers of ELL-related professional learning in HDSB. On one hand, they had to attend to professional learning on a system level. For example, teachers’ professional learning was central to addressing a systems-level concern about the overuse of HDSB’s special education resources by teachers who failed to distinguish between ELLs’ language learning needs and special education needs. Simultaneously, Lydia and Claire were forging relationships with individual schools as well as with individual teachers, Learning Resource staff, and principals; the two ESL consultants were providing these schools and individuals with professional learning tailored to school or staff concerns. Lydia and Claire therefore moved back and forth between ELL-related professional learning
targeting system-level issues and professional learning targeting the needs of particular schools or individual school staff.

**Implementing professional learning through providing resources to schools.** The consultants were involved in creating or disseminating information about two types of resources for school staff—online resources and print resources relating to ELLs. At the time this study was undertaken, HDSB’s virtual learning website was under construction. There were links to classroom activities that teachers or tutors could use with ELLs, but links and information for teachers about ELL-related instructional and assessment strategies were characterized by Lydia as being in development. Print resources were therefore discussed at much greater length by the consultants than online resources. HDSB’s ESL consultants had overseen the development and printing of three ELL-related publications for school staff to use. A brief description of the ELL-related printed publications produced in HDSB is found in Table 8 below.

I analyzed the three publications described in Table 8 and found a contrast between the two 2009 publications and the 2010 publication. Differences between the former and the latter included scope, authorship, priorities, authorities cited, and the inferred theories of action they reflected.

The 2009 publications were lengthy and broad in scope. The publication *Meeting ELLs’ Needs across the Curriculum* (HDSB, 2009a), which was more than 50 pages in length, stated that it was directed at “educators” within the board. In spite of this inclusive term, much of the material was of particular relevance to classroom teachers because it focused on such topics as differentiated instruction, effective lesson planning for ELLs, and assessment strategies for ELLs. *Meeting ELLs’ Needs across the Curriculum* drew on a number of sources, reflecting a mix of quotes, strategies, and checklists from MOE publications and from ESL experts external to the board and the MOE. The publication was authored by the Region B ESL consultant at the time and a group of HDSB teachers from both regions, including Claire (who was an ESL teacher at that time) and Victoria (ESL Teacher 3).
Table 8

HDSB’s Publications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Anonymized Title</th>
<th>Target(s)</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Length</th>
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| 2009 | Meeting ELLs’ Needs Across the Curriculum: A Reference Guide | (Stated) “Educators” (Inferred) Primary Targets: classroom teachers | • Second language acquisition  
• Tiered questioning  
• Differentiation in secondary school classrooms  
• Modifications and accommodations for ELLs  
• Effective lesson planning for ELLs  
• Assessment strategies for ELLs  
• Frequently asked questions and concerns about ELLs from classroom teachers  
• Template for curriculum unit planning | 56 pgs. |
| 2009 | Welcoming ELLs: A School Guide | (Inferred) ELL Tutors, School Administrators | • Welcome and orientation checklist  
• Community resources  
• Maintaining a child’s first language  
• Culture shock  
• Cultural profiles for each of 8 countries  
• Courses and certification programs in ESL | 53 pgs. |
| 2010 | ELLs with Possible Special Education Needs | (Inferred) Classroom Teachers Learning Resource Staff Guidance Counsellors | • Observable behaviour chart  
• Flowchart of ELL review process  
• Modifications and accommodations  
• Differentiating instruction for ELLs | 8 pgs. |

Unlike the first publication, the second publication, *Welcoming ELLs: A School Guide* (HDSB, 2009b), did not explicitly state its target audience. It, too, was a lengthy publication.
that was more than 50 pages in length and included information about creating a welcoming school environment for ELLs and their families; the importance of maintaining ELLs’ first language; and culture shock. The publication also included cultural profiles for eight countries from which many of the board’s ELLs had arrived. The authors represented a cross-section of HDSB employees, among them the Region B ESL consultant at the time, an ELL tutor, a principal at an international site school, and a school office administrator. It can be inferred from the range of topics and the list of contributors that the target audience of Welcoming ELLs: A School Guide included ELL tutors, principals and vice-principals, school office staff, and classroom teachers. Taken together, the two 2009 publications suggest that a priority or need at that time for HDSB schools was the creation of professional learning materials providing an overview of a wide range of ELL-related topics, including pedagogy (e.g., differentiating instruction), school organization, and the promotion of cultural awareness. The inferred theory of action underpinning these documents was that the availability of (or exposure to) information about ELLs would guide or prompt changes in practice. Many MOE resource documents were already available for HDSB staff at the time HDSB’s publications were developed in 2009 (e.g., MOE, 2005; 2007d; 2008c; 2008d). These MOE publications covered a range of ELL-related issues, such as adapting instruction for ELLs in elementary schools and teaching ELLs with limited prior schooling. The added value of the two HDSB publications from 2009 may have been that ELL-related information was collated for HDSB staff into two documents rather than distributed among a variety of MOE documents as well as third-party publications.

The subsequent HDSB publication, ELLS with Possible Special Education Needs (2010), was much shorter than the two 2009 publications. It was only eight pages in length and it focused solely on the issue of ELLs who might have special education needs. References cited in the 2009 publications had included experts external both to the board and to the MOE; the 2010 document, on the other hand, drew primarily from MOE sources as authoritative voices, including the 2007 policy document, ELL Policies and Procedures. The reliance on MOE sources may have served to emphasize to
HDSB’s principals, teachers, Learning Resource Staff, and tutors that the *ELLS with Possible Special Education Needs* document was consistent with MOE expectations.

Unlike the two 2009 documents produced by the board, the 2010 HDSB document was prescriptive in nature. It included a two-page flowchart outlining a step-by-step process to be followed by classroom teachers, Learning Resource staff, and school administrators in determining whether an ELL might have special education needs (HDSB, 2010, p. 4–5). The flowchart appeared to be addressing the system-wide problem Lydia discussed in her first interview with me; namely, classroom teachers, at a loss as to how to program for and assess ELLs, were initiating resource-intensive processes that were not designed for students acquiring a second language but rather were intended to identify and support students with special education needs. The 2010 document represented the efforts of Lydia and Claire to address a system-level ELL issue through providing professional learning for school-level staff. This is consistent with authorship by the two consultants themselves rather than a wider committee of teachers, administrators, or other employees of HDSB.

The board’s *ELLS with Possible Special Education Needs* (HDSB, 2010) document included a one-page chart listing observable behaviours of ELLs and how these behaviours might be interpreted in either a language learning context or a special education context (p. 3). The inclusion of the observable behaviours chart was consistent with the emphasis both consultants placed in our interviews on encouraging teachers to observe ELLs closely and to use such observations as a basis for programming and instructional decisions. The inferred theory of action underpinning this document was that a delineated process (i.e., the flowchart) would help bring about changes in teachers’ and administrators’ practice, specifically, changes in patterns of the unwarranted inclusion of some ELLs in special education procedures.

I recorded in my field notes that printed ELL-related professional learning publications (both board-produced and MOE-produced) were in all the schools I visited. However, some classroom teachers and tutors reported feeling overwhelmed by the volume of print material available to them.
across all subjects or grades; they said they were unlikely to seek out or use ELL-related materials unless a specific need arose. Phoebe (Classroom Teacher 4) commented, “There’s so much going on as a teacher. Really, you don’t have time to sit down and really look at all of these things [i.e., MOE and HDSB documents]. And maybe you need to, but we just don’t have the time anymore” (P7, 072).

Both Lydia and Claire acknowledged the limitations of print resources as a vehicle for professional learning, even when those materials were produced by HDSB itself. First, they acknowledged that such resources might become dated. Second, they had also recognized that the location and accessibility of print resources—including publications offering instructional guidance to classroom teachers of ELLs as well as teaching materials designed to be used with ELLs—varied from school to school. Lydia said that a request she and Claire frequently made during school visits was the following:

Please build a little ESL library. Just one little shelf in your resource room. Have all your ESL documents, your resources, anything that’s been dropped off, there so that when people are looking for it they have somewhere to go. It doesn’t get spread out. (Lydia, P1, 0452)

The consultants knew that the mere availability of printed resources did not mean that these resources would be used by teachers and ELL tutors. Lydia and Claire therefore appeared to accept that the uptake of printed ELL-related professional learning resources would vary within and across schools. My analysis of interview and field note data found that, although they acknowledged a role in professional learning for publications produced by their school board, the ESL consultants prioritized the incremental building of relationships with school staff over the mass distribution of printed material as a vehicle for ELL-related professional learning in HDSB.

Summary of the first theme. As key initiators and providers of most of the ELL-related professional learning in HDSB, the two ESL consultants expressed views about professional learning that were congruent. They implemented professional learning in HDSB through building relationships with staff at individual schools. In the course of building these relationships, the consultants did not
position themselves as experts. School-level staff, however, uniformly acknowledged the consultants’ ESL-related knowledge. Another means through which the consultants implemented ELL-related professional learning was through the provision of ELL-related printed resources to schools, although the consultants had observed that the uptake of these resources by school staff was variable.

Theme Two: The ESL Consultants as Learners

In addition to providing ELL-related professional learning in HDSB, the ESL consultants reported being engaged in ongoing learning processes themselves. I characterize these processes as dual track. First, both Lydia and Claire noted that they were continuing to learn about second language teaching and learning. Second, Lydia and Claire were learning about managing ESL programming in HDSB’s elementary and secondary schools.

Learning about second language teaching. Both Lydia and Claire had completed all three of the Ontario College of Teachers’ approved additional qualification courses in ESL and had earned the most advanced possible Ontario additional teaching qualification (AQ) of “ESL Specialist.” Claire commented, however, “I find it funny that . . . the AQs go to Part Three, and then that’s it. [Laughing] You’re supposed to be ‘all learned up’?” (Claire, P3, 293); for Claire, her learning was ongoing.

One of the learning opportunities which Lydia and Claire valued most was attending an MOE Sharing Day in Toronto each year. The Sharing Days provided two types of learning opportunities. First, Lydia and Claire met representatives from other school boards who were participating in MOE-funded ESL policy implementation projects; this gathering was a forum in which the participants discussed the outcomes of their annual projects. Second, Lydia and Claire attended presentations from Canadian ESL researchers, including Hetty Roessingh and Jim Cummins. These presentations afforded the consultants information about current research into second language teaching and learning. Lydia had also attended ESL conferences in Toronto. The MOE provided an additional form of support for the consultants’ learning: mentorship. For the past three years, both Lydia and Claire had had access to a mentor in the form of a semi-retired ESL teacher from an urban Ontario school
board with large numbers of ELLs in its schools. This mentor attended some of the workshops in HDSB organized by Lydia and Claire.

Claire remarked that an important vehicle for her ongoing learning over the previous two years had been spending time in classrooms observing ELLs. This occurred at the request of classroom teachers who were seeking advice about how to plan instruction or assessment for particular ELLs. On these occasions, Claire was simultaneously providing professional learning for teachers and engaging in professional learning of her own. Claire reported, however, that she was unable to be in classrooms as often as she would have liked; she estimated that about 5% of her time was spent in this activity.

Both Lydia and Claire supplemented formal professional learning opportunities (such as the annual Sharing Day) with self-directed learning. They reported reading widely about issues in second language learning. One example they gave was the reading they did in order to prepare HDSB’s publication about ELLs with possible special education needs. In my field notes, I recorded that Lydia brought to our first interview an array of ESL-related material, primarily in print but also in DVD format. She was knowledgeable about these resources and expressed a clear rationale for including or excluding them from discussions with or presentations to school staff. Lydia and Claire modeled a commitment to ongoing learning about second language teaching.

**Learning about managing ESL programming.** The second track of Lydia and Claire’s learning involved increasing their knowledge and skills in managing HDSB’s ESL programming in both the elementary and secondary school panels. Of the consultants’ two learning tracks, this second track was the one about which I gathered the most data. This was because of the interconnectedness of ESL programming delivery in HDSB with the ELL-related professional learning provided by Lydia and Claire.

On the managerial learning track, Lydia and Claire had learned largely through experience and observation. Together they identified programming issues, such as the need to revise and
streamline schools’ registration forms for new ELLs as well as the need to provide schools with a format for intake interviews with newly arrived ELLs. Through their own experiences as teachers and as consultants, and consistent with their understanding of the *ELL Policies and Procedures* (MOE, 2007b) and *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) documents, they identified that the original HDSB model of ESL programming delivery primarily through ELL tutors was no longer the optimal one. While ELL tutors continued to be part of HDSB’s ESL programming model, Lydia and Claire were working towards programming through school-based ESL teams. As Lydia noted:

> When I first started in 2009, if we had a gathering, we would have brought together the ELL [tutors]. A lot of focus was put on training them. . . . But the tutors might only see these [ELLs] an hour a week. So what’s happening the rest of the time? So we’re trying to put our focus on what’s in the classroom. (Lydia, P2, 172)

The concept of a school ESL team was evident in the documents I analyzed as well as in interview data. For example, HDSB’s own publication about welcoming new ELLs stated that schools needed “to have a designated school team which could include teachers, educational assistants, English language learner (ELL) [tutors], office administrators, school administration and members of parent council available to welcome ELLs and their families into the school community” (2009b, p. 3). Both Lydia and Claire endorsed the goal of a school team to oversee not only welcoming ELLs but also the provision of school-level ESL programming as a whole. They widened their professional learning targets in accordance with that goal, because they viewed a team as offering more stability in ESL programming and as benefitting ELLs through shared responsibility for fostering ELLs’ language acquisition.

Lydia framed the issue of responsibility for school-level ESL programming as one of ownership. She stated:

> . . . it always comes down to the “Who owns this?” at the school. That seems to be a central question. “Who owns this? Who does the intake interview? Who shares that information with
the teachers?” . . . It’s not owned by anybody right now. So what was happening was the ELL tutor was owning it . . . And so what we’re trying to encourage [now] is building . . . a school ESL team. It could be the LRC [i.e., Learning Resource Coach], the ELL tutor, a classroom teacher, and hopefully an administrator. And let’s sit down and look at these [ELL] kids specifically. (Lydia, P2, 544)

Claire’s perspective was congruent with Lydia’s; that is, the ELL tutor-based model of ESL programming delivery was no longer adequate and was inconsistent with MOE policy. Claire stated that tutor-centred support for ELLs in elementary schools had been the “fix” (P3, 151) in the late 1990s when significant numbers of immigrant families began arriving in Region B of HDSB; with the addition of the international education program in HDSB and with policy direction from the MOE; however, the old model of ESL programming delivery was “fractured” (P3, 152). As Claire said, “We need to . . . help everyone understand that everyone is an ESL teacher . . . and that it’s the teacher [rather than the ELL tutor] who’s responsible for the reporting . . . and the program” (Claire, P3, 151:152).

There was also a strategic dimension to the inclusion of a wider range of recipients of ELL-related professional learning. Learning Resource staff were teachers in HDSB’s elementary and secondary schools who worked primarily with students with special education needs. Lydia commented that she and Claire had come to realize that Learning Resource staff in elementary schools could meet more easily than classroom teachers with the ESL consultants during regular school hours. This obviated the need for school principals to provide and pay for release time for classroom teachers to attend professional learning activities. However, the response from Learning Resource staff about including ELLs in their mandate had been mixed. Lydia reported that some of the Learning Resource staff were supportive of the ESL consultants’ attempts to build school teams. They had previously overlooked the ELLs in their schools but were receptive to being members of an ESL team. Other Learning Resource staff, however, had said to Lydia, “That’s not part of my job. . . . I don’t take care
of ELLs. I’m not taking that on. I’m already overwhelmed with what I have to do with special education and with kids who are just struggling” (Lydia, P1, 368:372).

In spite of this mixed response from Learning Resource staff, Lydia characterized them as potential links between the ESL consultants and individual elementary and secondary schools. All teachers who were designated as Learning Resource staff were therefore potential recipients of ELL-related professional learning, and Lydia and Claire had begun inviting them to HDSB workshops. The two ESL consultants had also identified that Student Engagement Teachers with responsibility for families of schools within HDSB were potential links to schools; Student Engagement Teachers were therefore invited to participate in ELL-related summer workshops led by Lydia and Claire in August, 2011. Lydia commented that part of her learning had been “just finding out who your key people are” (Lydia, P2, 191) with respect to building teams. In other words, identifying potential members of ESL teams was integral to the program management dimension of the ESL consultants’ learning.

Lydia and Claire also learned from initiatives that did not achieve the success for which they had hoped. In 2011, for example, ELL tutors working in HDSB’s international education program went to Toronto to take a training course in TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). The purpose was for the tutors to be able to help international ELLs prepare for the TOEFL examinations that were used for university admission purposes. Elaine (ELL Tutor 2), who worked that year as an ELL tutor at a secondary school international education site in HDSB, participated in that training. However, she, Claire, and Lydia all reported that this had not proven to be a fruitful exercise because they later learned that most of HDSB’s international students would be writing a different English proficiency examination—namely the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examination.

Another less-than-successful professional learning initiative involved learning circles for teachers at one school in Claire’s region. The teachers’ interest was not sustained and the circles disbanded. These initiatives suggested a trial-and-error aspect to the consultants’ own learning. In my
field notes, I recorded that both consultants appeared to be comfortable acknowledging missteps. They framed these as learning opportunities.

Administrative processes in HDSB required that schools submit a summary form every year that listed the names of their ELL students. Lydia and Claire, as part of their 2012–2013 MOE-supported ESL policy implementation project, went from school to school to gather more accurate data about ELLs in HDSB. They examined student files for individual ELLs and consulted when necessary with ELL tutors and classroom teachers. The consultants identified that schools were including ELLs on the summary forms without assessing ELL’s current language learning needs. With Canadian-born ELLs in elementary schools, the consultants realized that an exit strategy was required once these students no longer needed language support. This was another instance of learning on the part of the consultants—one that they felt had positive outcomes for ELLs and for school staff. Targeting ELLs in need of language support and reducing or withdrawing that support for ELLs who no longer required it, aligned resources with the students who needed it the most. As Lydia commented:

So we’re taking these big [school-generated] lists of ELLs, we’re finding out through research, who are the kids who actually need targeted ESL support. Now we’ve got a big list, and we’re turning it into a smaller, more manageable list. Now we’re putting those kids on a STEP [language assessment continuum], and we’re figuring out, “Okay, how do we be responsive in a classroom?” So it’s been quite effective, I would say, rather than just having these kids identified in a cohort and just sometimes nothing being different for them in a classroom. (Lydia, P2, 152)

Claire agreed with Lydia about the importance of targeting language support where it was most needed. Claire discussed this targeted support from an accountability perspective, commenting that, “There’s a lot of money being spent [on ESL programming]. . . . We need to make better sense of who actually needs support” (Claire, P3, 238). For these consultants, their own learning and the ELL-
related professional learning they provided for school staff intersected with ESL programming priorities as well as with accountability for programming delivery.

The management-related learning in which Lydia and Claire were involved was not always straightforward. Claire characterized decisions about how to build school-level ESL programming capacity as a struggle. My analysis of interview data as well as data from the presentation slides from a workshop in May, 2013 found that establishing school-based ESL teams was priority for the consultants. The struggle to which Claire referred involved the complexity for the consultants in navigating school-level differences in ESL experience, roles of tutors and classroom teachers, and the types of ELLs in attendance at individual schools. Providing ELL-related professional learning that responded to these differences and promoted a team approach to ELLs’ language acquisition needs was a significant challenge.

**Summary of the second theme.** The two ESL consultants engaged in ongoing learning that I characterized as dual track. The consultants continued to learn about second language teaching through a combination of learning that was self-directed and learning which occurred through such venues as the annual MOE Sharing Day. The other learning track related to the consultants’ role as managers of ESL programming in HDSB. Learning on this track was largely through on-the-ground experience. As part of this learning, the consultants identified issues in ESL programming and articulated programming priorities, including building school-level ESL teams with shared responsibility for ESL programming.

**Theme Three: Variability in School-Initiated ELL-Related Professional Learning**

A third theme which emerged from my analysis of the interview data, documents, and field notes was that there was variability from school to school in terms of ELL-related professional learning initiated by ESL teachers and by ELL tutors. This variation was evident in both elementary and secondary schools in the study. I first describe findings relating to ESL teachers and ELL tutors. I then comment on the role of school principals in ELL-related professional learning. Next, I describe
HDSB’s participation in piloting *STEP* (MOE, 2011) and how the participants reported piloting to have been a professional learning experience. This is followed by a description of the differences in perspectives about professional learning between those of the consultants and school-level staff.

**ESL teachers.** Three secondary school ESL teachers from three of HDSB’s international education site schools participated in this study; there were no ESL teachers working in HDSB’s elementary schools. There was a marked contrast in the data between the involvement of Victoria (ESL Teacher 3) in professional learning for her colleagues and that of Tyler (ESL Teacher 2) and Sandra (ESL Teacher 1). Victoria had taught ESL courses since 2011 at Secondary School 3 in Region A. She had also taught international exchange students (ELLs) in her mainstream English classes for five years before then (i.e., before her school was formally designated as international education site school). She had Ontario AQ certification in ESL (Part One). She reported giving ELL-related presentations at staff meetings, usually at the beginning of the school year. At these meetings she discussed the ESL publications produced by HDSB; she also distributed a one-page, printed list of “Top Ten Tips for Mainstream Teachers Working with English Language Learners.” These tips covered a range of topics, from avoiding using idiomatic language in the classroom to using visuals in order to illustrate discipline-specific academic vocabulary. Not unexpectedly, this one-page list distributed by Victoria focused on particular strategies rather than on any theoretical constructs relating to second language acquisition. In addition to making presentations at staff meetings, Victoria described meetings with individual or small groups of teachers that could be characterized as ELL-related professional learning opportunities for her colleagues. For example, having attended a *STEP* (MOE, 2011) workshop, Victoria shared *STEP* tracking results for one of her ELLs with another teacher in the school; together, the teachers tracked the ELL’s progress over the semester. Victoria also reported that she had been

… working with the principal at the beginning [of the year]. … This was a new principal this year. So generally working with the principals to keep them informed about some progress
[with ESL programming]. A bit of monitoring in the early days for sure, about levels of staff frustration and concern. Definitely teachers will meet and talk with me informally, or they’ll email me about concerns. You know, a string of emails where teachers are trying to work with students. Some teachers will ask me for some specific strategies, so [I’m] a sounding board.

(Victoria, P11, 246)

In Secondary School 2, Tyler, the ESL teacher, had taught ESL overseas prior to working for HDSB. Tyler had informal conversations with classroom teachers in his school about cultural awareness issues but he did not otherwise report providing professional learning for his colleagues. In Secondary School 1, Sandra, the ESL teacher, was teaching the ESL course for the first time; she did not report providing professional learning opportunities to her colleagues, either formally or on an ad hoc basis. She did not have ESL certification or experience relating to teaching ELLs upon which to draw, and she said that she had found it difficult to plan instruction and assessment for her ESL class in spite of some support from Lydia (ESL Consultant 1) through email. According to the data provided by Claire (ESL Consultant 2) and Lydia as well as by Warren, the principal of Secondary School 1, Sandra’s situation was not unusual. There were few secondary school teachers in HDSB with ESL certification and, with only one ESL course offered per semester in secondary schools involved in the international education program, there was little immediate prospect of ESL teaching becoming a full-time position in any of HDSB’s secondary schools. Given this set of circumstances, Lydia commented that teachers would prioritize earning additional teaching certifications in subjects other than ESL. Furthermore, she was sympathetic to teachers’ hesitation in gaining ESL credentials: “I’ve had conversations with people, ‘You might want to take ESL [certification] Part 1.’[But] it’s hard for them to take time and money if they’re not guaranteed a job in [ESL]. … And I understand that” (Lydia, P1, 1248). Victoria, Tyler, and Sandra therefore represented a wide spectrum of training and experience in working with ELLs, and their roles as providers of school-level ELL-related professional learning also varied widely.
**ELL tutors.** The ELL tutors were paraprofessionals working under the direction of classroom teachers to provide support for individual ELLs. These tutors worked in both elementary and secondary schools in HDSB. In most instances, Lydia reported, the support model for ELLs was one hour per week of ELL tutor support for each ELL. The exception was in international education site secondary schools, to which one fulltime ELL tutor was assigned per school irrespective of the number of ELLs in attendance.

As was the case with ESL teachers, there was variation from school to school in the roles played by tutors in ELL-related professional learning. Some ELL tutors took an active role in providing some types of ELL-related professional learning for classroom teachers at their schools, while other tutors did not. Two of the elementary school tutors (Elaine and Delia) were former teachers who chose to work in HDSB as ELL tutors after having left the teaching profession many years earlier for family reasons. In my field notes, I recorded the observation that both Elaine and Delia appeared to navigate their relationships with classroom teachers carefully: the tutors offered occasional suggestions and provided resources for classroom teachers, but Elaine and Delia commented that they were careful not to overstep their role as tutors even though they had once been teachers themselves.

In Elementary School 2, where more than a quarter of the students were ELLs, Rosemary (ELL Tutor 3) had made presentations at staff meetings after returning from board-wide ELL-related workshops that had at one time been available to HDSB’s ELL tutors. Rosemary also highlighted sections of MOE ESL documents to make them more accessible to classroom teachers. In my field notes, I recorded seeing these highlighted documents in Phoebe’s (Classroom Teacher 4) classroom. In addition, Rosemary emailed teachers at her school, informing them of new ESL-related instructional resources or reminding them about cultural issues (such as culturally-related food restrictions for some of the school’s ELLs). In her conversations with classroom teachers, Rosemary emphasized that strategies that were effective with ELLs were also effective for other students in the class. Iris (ELL
Tutor 4), who worked in Elementary School 2 with Rosemary, had prepared a list of ELL-related within-school classroom resources for teachers at the school as well as a list of online resources.

Approximately one half of the students attending Elementary School 3 were ELLs. Delia (ELL Tutor 7) and Gabriella (ELL Tutor 8) had not made formal presentations at staff meetings as had Rosemary in Elementary School 2. However, Delia and Gabriella were very knowledgeable about the MOE policy, curriculum, and resource documents released by the MOE. Delia commented, “We get the documents and we pore over them. My documents are all highlighted, the same with Gabriella, with little notes in there” (Delia, P19, 146); as was the case with Rosemary, Delia and Gabriella were therefore able to give classroom teachers information from all of these MOE documents if teachers asked.

Elaine (ELL Tutor 2), an itinerant tutor, pointed out resources (such as the board’s own ESL publications) to teachers from time to time in the elementary schools where she worked. In her previous job as an ELL tutor at an international education site school in HDSB, Elaine provided classroom teachers with information from MOE documents about accommodations and modifications for ELLs.

Other tutors, including Kaitlin (ELL Tutor 1), Iris (ELL Tutor 4), and Zoe (ELL Tutor 9), spoke of giving classroom teachers small, specific tips for dealing with ELL-related issues. Such tips included simplifying vocabulary on assessments, for example, or checking for ELLs’ understanding of teacher instructions or curriculum expectations. Nina (ELL Tutor 6) worked in Secondary School 2, a school that was part of HDSB’s international education program. She, too, reported giving tips to classroom teachers. In addition, Nina reported being consulted by a teacher about how to assess the written work of an ELL in the international education program. Such tips and strategies, while of potential help to individual teachers, were ad hoc and intermittent; they did not rise to the level of ELL-related professional learning reflected in such activities as Rosemary’s presentations at staff meetings in Elementary School 2. Indeed, Rosemary’s role in ELL-related professional learning was
an unusually active one that may have developed through a combination of factors. She was a long-time tutor at her school; she had earned TESL qualifications; and she was an active learner herself, engaging in self-directed ELL-related professional learning through reading articles or, (along with fellow tutor Iris) taking an online course about technology and software that supported ELLs.

In schools where there were several ELL tutors, the tutors who had joined staff most recently (Iris, ELL Tutor 4; Michelle, ELL Tutor 5; and Zoe, ELL Tutor 9) reported being mentored by tutors with more ESL experience (Rosemary, ELL Tutor 3; Delia, ELL Tutor 7, and Gabriela, ELL Tutor 8). Tutors who were newer to their roles also reported learning from their established tutor colleagues about ESL resources and about potentially useful tutoring strategies. Thus it appeared that some of the ELL tutors contributed to ELL-related professional learning in their schools through tutor-to-tutor mentoring.

**School principals.** All school-level participants in the study described their school principals as supporters rather than initiators of ELL-related professional learning. Warren, the principal at Secondary School 1, reported that his primary role in professional learning across all subjects was allocating funds for release time for teachers attending professional learning activities. Warren and Lydia (ESL Consultant 1) both stated that principals also forwarded information about professional learning opportunities to staff: according to HDSB procedures, school principals were the formal conduit for all such information. Most participants described principals as being supportive of ELL-related professional learning activities (forwarding emails; providing release time) but not involved directly in providing professional learning. Principals were often unable to attend ELL-related workshops, but sometimes sent a representative (e.g., a vice-principal) instead. When principals initiated contact with the board ESL consultants, according to Lydia, it was generally because of questions or concerns about accommodations for ELLs with respect to EQAO testing. My interview with Warren, the principal of a secondary school in Region A, revealed the number of policies and initiatives with which he was involved in his role as principal: the Safe Schools Act, the Healthy
Schools Act, the Tobacco Enforcement Act, Success to 18 legislation, and HDSB’s multi-year, multi-faceted strategic plan in which all principals played a role. In addition to these, Warren noted, “There’s the regular management role of the principal. Just making sure the building’s running” (Warren, P12, 048).

Turnover was another issue which affected the degree of participation by principals in ELL-related professional learning. In Secondary School 3, Victoria (ESL Teacher 3) commented on the fact that there had been three different principals at her school since 2009. The principal who was at the school in 2009 had participated in ELL-related professional learning opportunities. For the most part, these were meetings at the school with the ESL consultant. The newest principal, however, had had to oversee the transition of Secondary School 3 from a grade 9 to 12 school to a grade 7 to 12 school. While he was supportive of the international education program and the concept of an ESL team at his school, the new principal had not initiated ELL-related professional learning activities in his school.

**STEP piloting and professional learning.** There was an “institutional memory” on the part of a number of participants who had participated in a piloting program several years before the release of the MOE’s *STEP* document in 2011. Olivia (Classroom Teacher 2), Claire (ESL Consultant 2, but a secondary school ESL teacher at the time of the pilot), Victoria (ESL Teacher 3), Rosemary (ELL Tutor 3), Delia (ELL Tutor 7), and Gabriella (ELL Tutor 8) had all participated in the piloting phase of *STEP*. Delia characterized her two-year involvement with STEP piloting as “a great learning experience” (P19, 078). Olivia found the pilot project to be instructive: she felt she benefitted from the emphasis in the piloting process on listening closely to her Kindergarten ELLs, so that she could “get them to where they need to go by really listening to what words they’re using, and whether they’re able to be understood, and whether they’re able to comprehend your questions” (Olivia, P5, 094).

The other participants in the pilot study (Claire, Victoria, Rosemary, Delia, and Gabriella) expressed views which were congruent with Olivia’s; that is, that the board’s decision to participate in the piloting project had provided a professional learning opportunity for them, particularly with
respect to observing individual ELLs closely. A part of this experience that they particularly valued was meeting and collaborating with staff from other school boards who were also involved with piloting the tracking forms.

Therefore, in at least two schools in Region B and one school in Region A, staff members (i.e., teachers or tutors) had familiarity with the concept of tracking ELLs’ language acquisition, potentially providing a basis on which further professional learning could occur. Lydia and Claire spoke in only positive terms about the relationship between HDSB and the MOE. Although this was not stated explicitly by the participants, involvement in the STEP (MOE, 2011b) piloting program may have contributed to a good working relationship between HDSB’s ESL consultants and the staff at Ontario’s MOE with responsibility for ESL policy implementation.

**Differences in perspectives between school staff and ESL consultants.** I found that there were differing perspectives on ELL-related professional learning on the part of school-level staff (i.e., teachers and tutors) versus the two ESL consultants. Lydia and Claire described the incremental establishment of school-level ESL teams as a goal towards which they were working. Both consultants noted that the role of the ELL tutor was changing, with tutors currently working with ELLs in mainstream classrooms rather than, as formerly, withdrawing ELLs from classrooms for one-on-one instruction and support. Both consultants also noted that, in a parallel and equally incremental process, classroom teachers were expected to play a greater role in tailoring instruction for ELLs rather than delegating responsibility for second language acquisition to ELL tutors or, in secondary schools, to ESL teachers.

School-level staff did not have access to the broader context in which the two consultants functioned (i.e., a view of ESL programming as a whole). ELL tutors who had worked in their role for some time commented on a lack of professional learning opportunities in the two- or three-year period before this study was undertaken. Unaware of the consultants’ work with a variety of educators within the board, these tutors reported a significant decline in their own access to professional learning
opportunities over several years prior to their interviews with me. The tutors viewed this as a loss. Iris, an elementary school ELL tutor, commented that the first opportunity she had to attend a workshop was in May, 2013 even though she began working as a tutor in 2010. Elaine (ELL Tutor 2) had participated in a workshop offered for tutors in 2008 and was enthusiastic about what she had learned there. Currently, she reported, the ESL consultants made her aware of professional learning opportunities offered by third-party providers, but these were outside school hours and involved travelling to a city outside the board’s boundaries. Elaine said that at times she felt isolated. As an itinerant tutor, she had no other ELL tutors with whom she could share strategies, learning, or experiences.

In addition to feeling isolated, some tutors expressed the concern that decreased numbers of opportunities for professional learning for tutors signaled that the board was assigning a lower priority to ESL programming than previously. Gabriella was a long-time ELL tutor who had noted a sharp decline in the provision of ELL-related professional learning for ELL tutors. Gabriella, in discussing professional learning, expressed regret about this decline and linked it to a change for the worse in her role as a tutor: she said that professional learning

… has started up again, but … it’s just not like it used to be. They—and I don’t want to sound negative. I know there’s lots of reasons for the way the board handles things. But I just don’t feel that they put the emphasis on ESL the way they used to. … [Tutors] used to be highly regarded. Our opinion counted for a lot. We sat in on parent-teacher interviews … When I first started, I wrote report cards, anecdotal report cards that went into the OSR … And it [i.e., ESL programming] has evolved, and I just feel like it’s—I hate to say it, but I feel like it’s just watered down somewhat. (Gabriella, P20, 098:110)

Although their perspective about ELL-related professional learning was not as long term as that of Gabriella, Delia, and Rosemary, some of the newer ESL teachers and ELL tutors also noted that there were few formal professional learning activities available to them.
While HDSB’s ESL consultants had identified the need to build school-level ESL teams with shared responsibility for ELLs’ acquisition of English, some of the classroom teachers who participated in this study voiced perspectives that differed from those of the consultants. Brenda and Phoebe, for example, worked in Elementary School 2 where ELLs (predominantly Canadian-born) accounted for approximately 25% of the school’s student population. Brenda and Phoebe both reported that ESL issues rarely arose in their classrooms. This may have been because Brenda and Phoebe taught Grades 7 and 6 respectively, and Canadian-born ELLs had spent a number of years immersed in an English language environment before arriving in their classrooms. Although ELL tutors were assigned to several students in their classes, neither Brenda nor Phoebe expressed a wish for professional learning focused on supporting ELLs in mainstream classes; for the most part, they did not view information about second language learning as relevant to their teaching practice.

Frances, a Grade 4/5 French Immersion classroom teacher in Elementary School 2, was concerned about the presence in her class of an ELL who had arrived in Canada only recently and who was acquiring two new languages (English and French) simultaneously. Frances stated that she would welcome professional learning opportunities addressing this particular instructional challenge. Julia, a Grade 1/2 teacher at Elementary School 1, had actively sought information from Lydia (ESL Consultant 1) about supporting an individual ELL with possible special education needs. The classroom teachers in the study therefore varied not only from school to school but within individual schools with respect to their perceptions about the need for ELL-professional learning as well as about the particular ESL-related topics most relevant to their instructional practice. This variation underscored the complexity of the consultants’ task in providing ELL-professional learning that supported the consultants’ overall ESL programming goals while also addressing differing teacher perceptions about their own ELL-related professional learning needs.

**Summary of the third theme.** There was variation from school to school with respect to ELL-related professional learning initiated at the school level. In some schools, an ESL teacher or
ELL tutor provided ELL-related professional learning for other staff. At times, however, this learning was at the level of tips and strategies or related to issues of cultural awareness rather than focused on deeper knowledge about second language acquisition. Principals were described by the participants as supporting rather than initiating ELL-related professional learning. An additional finding was that the perspectives of the two ESL consultants differed from those of school-level staff. The ESL consultants viewed ELL-related professional learning from a board-wide perspective in which professional learning was linked to the goals of building school-level ESL teams and implementing the use of the STEP (MOE, 2011b) tracking forms. At the school level, some of the ELL tutors had both observed and regretted a decline in the number of ELL-related professional learning opportunities provided for them in the few years prior to this study. Another finding relating to school-level staff was that classroom teachers varied in their perceptions of their need for ELL-related professional learning: some teachers sought such learning, while others did not see it as relevant to their practice.

**Theme Four: ELL-Related Professional Learning Was Parallel to Rather Than Integral to Collaborative Inquiry**

The fourth theme that I elicited from the data was that ELL-related professional learning initiatives in HDSB were parallel to, rather than integral to, HDSB’s board-wide professional learning model of collaborative inquiry. In presenting this theme, I begin by discussing the board’s use of the collaborative learning model of professional development across all grades and subjects. I note that the collaborative learning model as it was used in HDSB was not a good fit with ELL-related professional learning about instructional support for ELLs. Second, I describe specific ELL-related professional learning activities organized or supported by the board’s ESL consultants. I comment on the trajectory of the ELL-specific professional learning activities that took place in HDSB during the time frame of this study. Third, I describe the finding that STEP (MOE, 2011b) was the driver of recent ELL-related professional learning in HDSB. Fourth, I present the finding that support from Ontario’s MOE was vital to the provision of ELL-related professional learning in HDSB.
HDSB’s current model for professional learning across all subjects. The board’s written policy regarding professional learning was short and very general in nature, stating little more than the board’s commitment to continued professional learning for “staff” (HDSB, 2005, p.1). Specifics were articulated at the level of board procedures that prioritized some forms of professional learning activities over others. At the time of this study, the specific procedure used by the board to provide professional learning opportunities centred on the use of a collaborative learning model; this represented a change from the board’s previous model in which large-group workshops were provided for principals, teachers, and paraprofessionals. During the 2012–13 school year, the collaborative inquiry projects in HDSB involved mathematics instruction. The collaborative inquiry hubs, as these activities were called in HDSB, brought together school board staff (including Lydia and Claire, as part of their non-ESL portfolio responsibilities), school principals, and three or four teachers from each of the schools in a “family” (i.e., a secondary school and its feeder elementary schools). The hubs met six times per year. The hub meetings began with observations in a host classroom. Warren, the secondary school principal who was a participant in this study, described a typical daylong hub meeting: “We pose an inquiry question based around what kids are learning at the time. We formulate a hypothesis about it. We go in and we try it [in the classroom] and we debrief it” (Warren, P12, 060:064). The hub session would conclude with a return to the host classroom to do a follow-up activity with the students. Lydia noted that while the board still organized some targeted workshops, the collaborative inquiry model of professional learning had replaced workshops as the primary format for professional learning in HDSB:

So I would say before 2009, the model of PD in our board would have been “the workshop”, [for example] “ELL Tutor Training Day” in December, 2009. So I helped organize that. . . . [With] those kinds of workshops everyone feels good when they leave, everyone loves learning something new but the implementation is pretty low when they leave. . . . What has replaced it is the idea of collaborative inquiry [that] involves deep observation of students and
really understanding where they are right now, . . . looking at the curriculum or understanding what your learning goal is, figuring out where that gap is and then addressing it from there, determining a course of action, testing out instructional approaches, monitoring the results, reflecting and adjusting and then going back again. (Lydia, P1, 122:150)

It was Lydia’s view that HDSB’s use of the collaborative learning model of professional learning had begun changing “the way we look at students and instruction” (P1, 1168) as well as moving professional learning “into schools” (P1, 151). I had commented in my field notes that both Lydia and Claire valued the close observation of individual ELLs as the foundation for instructional planning. This aspect of the collaborative learning model was congruent with the task that was integral to implementing STEP (MOE, 2011b), namely observing ELLs, placing them on the language continua on the tracking forms, and using the STEP assessments to inform instruction. For Lydia and Claire, then, there were connections between the collaborative inquiry model, STEP, and classroom instruction.

HDSB’s adoption of the collaborative inquiry model of professional learning connoted a change in the delivery of professional learning that teachers in the study had noted, albeit not always positively. Brenda, a classroom teacher from Elementary School 2, said,

When I first started teaching nine years ago, there was a lot of professional development I went to. . . . And then maybe over the last four or five years, I don’t think I’ve really had anything in terms of professional development. Recently, the past couple of years, they’ve had these math hub groups. . . . I feel the way it’s set up is there’s a table of all these people, and the majority of them are not teachers. And so then we leave, and it [i.e., funding for professional learning] stays there. (Brenda, P6, 116:132)

Brenda did not see the same connections between her experiences at the hubs and classroom practice as Lydia and Claire did. Brenda was not convinced about the value of the collaborative inquiry hubs. She commented that the professional learning opportunities she valued the most involved meetings
with other teachers at her school who were teaching in the same division as she was. These opportunities, however, were rare.

When I asked the consultants how often ELL issues arose at the collaborative inquiry hub sessions, both Lydia and Claire admitted that it was seldom. Lydia said that she might bring to the attention of the group that the wording of a mathematics prompt (i.e., a question for students) could be difficult for an ELL, but she noted, “But that doesn’t come up much” (Lydia, P1, 902). Olivia, a Kindergarten teacher who had attended collaborative inquiry hubs, also reported that ELL-related issues had not arisen at the sessions she attended. The collaborative inquiry model and ELL-related professional learning did not appear to fit well together in HDSB. This may have been largely because of the uneven distribution of ELLs across HDSB: in host classrooms for the collaborative inquiry hubs, there may have been few, if any, ELLs present. Another feature of collaborative inquiry as it was applied in HDSB was that it did not involve ELL tutors. Only teachers were given release time to attend the hubs; for the ELL tutors, these hubs were neither a learning opportunity nor a venue in which they themselves might raise ELL-related issues. Even though Lydia and Claire linked some aspects of the collaborative learning model to ELL-related professional learning, in my analysis of interview, document, and field notes data I found that ELL-related professional learning activities did not intersect with collaborative inquiry but rather ran parallel to it in HDSB.

**Specific ELL-related professional learning initiatives.** The time frame of this case was from 2007, when the MOE’s ELL Policies and Procedures document was released, to the conclusion of data collection in June, 2013. As noted earlier, there was turnover in board-level staff overseeing ESL programming in HDSB; the ESL consultants from 2007 to early 2009 were not available for data collection. The data I collected related primarily from Lydia’s appointment as a consultant in the fall of 2009 to the end of data collection in June, 2013; the data from the time of Lydia’s appointment onwards were therefore more robust than the data from 2007 to the middle of 2009. I was able to gather some retrospective data about ELL-related professional learning 2007 to 2009 from Gabriella
Table 9

**Targets of ELL-Related Professional Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Target(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007 February &amp; 2008 October</td>
<td>Software training</td>
<td>ELL Tutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 - 2009</td>
<td>STEP pilot project: workshops and meetings</td>
<td>ESL Teachers, ELL Tutors, Classroom Teachers at selected schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 February</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>ELL Tutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 November</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>ELL Tutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 April</td>
<td>Plenary sessions and workshops</td>
<td>ELL Tutors (primarily); some classroom teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 October</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>ELL Tutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 November</td>
<td>Plenary sessions and workshops</td>
<td>ELL Tutors (primarily); some classroom teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 June</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>ELL Tutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 August</td>
<td>Presentation and workshops</td>
<td>ELL Tutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 Fall</td>
<td>Short presentation</td>
<td>Learning Resource Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 December</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>ELL Tutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>School visits by ESL consultants</td>
<td>All school staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 Winter-Spring Semester</td>
<td>Training in TOEFL</td>
<td>ELL Tutors from international education hub schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 March - June</td>
<td>Presentations within meetings</td>
<td>ELL Tutors from international education site schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 Spring</td>
<td>Hardware and software training</td>
<td>All ELL Tutors &amp; ESL Teachers invited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 April</td>
<td>Short presentation</td>
<td>Classroom Teachers new to HDSB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 August</td>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>ESL Teachers, Classroom Teachers, Student Engagement Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 Fall</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>ELL Tutors and Classroom Teachers from selected schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 Fall or 2012 Winter</td>
<td>Presentation at staff meeting</td>
<td>All school staff at Elementary School 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 Winter &amp; Spring</td>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>Two Classroom Teachers from each of four schools (two schools from each region; one elementary and one secondary school from each region)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 Summer</td>
<td>Short presentation</td>
<td>Teachers taking Kindergarten AQ course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 Fall</td>
<td>Learning circles</td>
<td>Classroom Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 Fall</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Classroom Teachers at Secondary School 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 May</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>One Principal or Vice-Principal, ELL Tutor, and Classroom Teacher from two families of schools (i.e., elementary and secondary schools) in Region B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 June</td>
<td>Meeting and workshop</td>
<td>Classroom Teachers, ELL Tutors, administrators from individual school(s) involved in May 2013 day; school-based follow-up to workshop earlier in May</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ELL Tutor 8). Gabriella had kept a written list of all of the professional learning activities in which she had participated during the course of her 17-year employment in HDSB as an ELL tutor. As ELL tutors with six or more years of tutoring experience in HDSB, Delia, Elaine, and Rosemary provided
Table 10

*Topics of ELL-Related Professional Learning*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Initiative/Activity</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007 February</td>
<td>Software training</td>
<td>Using “Tell Me More” (language acquisition) software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 October</td>
<td>Software training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 - 2009</td>
<td>STEP pilot project: workshops and meetings</td>
<td>Piloting STEP and the Observable Language Continua; debriefing about experiences with the OLB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 February</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>“The Successful Classroom for ESL Students”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 November</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>Scaffolding strategies for ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 April</td>
<td>Plenary sessions and workshops</td>
<td>Foci: vocabulary; content learning; writing; “Grab bag” activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 October</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>“Diversity”; “Working in a Multicultural Environment”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 November</td>
<td>Plenary sessions and workshops</td>
<td>Foci: acculturation &amp; culture shock; stages in second language acquisition; welcoming ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 June</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Introduction to board-produced publications: (a) Meeting ELLs’ Needs Across the Curriculum: A Reference Guide (b) Welcoming ELLs: A School Guide; (c) a publication for parents/families of ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 August</td>
<td>Presentation and workshops</td>
<td>Activities for welcoming ELLs; language acquisition and cultural considerations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 Fall</td>
<td>Short presentation</td>
<td>Overview and distribution of three board ELL-related publications: (a) Meeting ELLs’ Needs Across the Curriculum: A Reference Guide; (b) Welcoming ELLs: A School Guide; (c) a publication for parents/families of ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 December</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>Welcoming ELLs; first-language cultures of board’s ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>School visits by ESL consultants</td>
<td>“Stages for Language Acquisition” (Hill &amp; Flynn): pre-STEP tool for assessing language acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 Winter or Spring</td>
<td>Training in TOEFL</td>
<td>Preparing ELLs for the TOEFL (English proficiency) examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 March - June</td>
<td>Presentations within meetings</td>
<td>Piloting of after-school Program for ELLs in International Education program: sharing activities deemed valuable by ELLs in each site school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 Spring</td>
<td>Hardware and software online training course</td>
<td>Using technology to assist language learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 April</td>
<td>Short presentation</td>
<td>Brief introduction to ELLs in HDSB new teacher induction program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 August</td>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>Supporting ELLs with possible special education needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011 Fall</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Introduction to board publication about ELLs with possible special education needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011 Fall or 2012 Winter</td>
<td>Presentation at staff meeting</td>
<td>Introduction to STEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 Winter &amp; Spring</td>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>STEP: tracking ELLs using OLB continuas; using STEP to identify ELLs’ learning needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012 Summer</td>
<td>Short presentation</td>
<td>Culture shock</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012 Fall</td>
<td>Learning Circles</td>
<td>Activities for ELLs</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012 Fall</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Introduction to STEP</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013 May</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>Learning About ELLs/STEP</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013 June</td>
<td>Meeting and workshop</td>
<td>Identifying ELLs/STEP</td>
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</table>
data confirming the accuracy of Gabriella’s list.

Professional learning specific to ELLs followed twin trajectories in HDSB in the time frame of this case. First, as displayed in Table 9, there was a broadening of targets (i.e., recipients) of ELL-related professional learning within the board. Professional learning concurrent with the release of *ELL Policies and Procedures* (MOE, 2007b) focused primarily on ELL tutors. ELL tutors were still the primary targets of professional learning activities when Lydia began working as a consultant in 2009. Subsequently, and concurrent with annual funding from the MOE to support ESL policy implementation from 2009 onwards, the ESL consultants reported widening their list of professional learning targets to include classroom teachers, principals and vice-principals, school-based Learning Resource staff, and Student Engagement Teachers (who worked with families of schools and who were part of HDSB’s Student Engagement Department as shown in Figure 1).

Lydia and Claire linked this expanding list of participants in ELL-related professional learning to their recognition that responsibility for programming for ELLs needed to be shared by a school-based ESL team rather than being seen as the responsibility of ELL tutors. This team approach was consistent with *ELL Policies and Procedures* (MOE, 2007b) and *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) because both documents emphasized that responsibility for ELLs’ acquisition of English was to be shared by teachers of all subjects and supported by school administrators.

There was a practical as well as a policy dimension to the focus of the two consultants on building ESL teams: ESL programming capacity at the level of individual schools was threatened at times by staff turnover. The creation of ESL teams addressed turnover-related fragility to at least some extent by involving greater numbers of staff than in the former programming model predicated on the delivery of ESL programming primarily through ELL tutors and ESL teachers. There were, however, no professional learning activities that focused specifically on how members of the ESL teams might work together to provide ESL programming. In other words, school-level staff were not provided with opportunities to discuss or learn about what a team-based model of ESL programming might look like.
in operation and exactly how school staff reflecting a variety of roles might contribute to ELLs’ acquisition of English.

A second trajectory that I identified in the data relates to the topics of ELL-related professional learning provided by HDSB. Here the focus narrowed at the same time as the list of recipients of professional learning expanded. This is seen in Table 10. Before 2009, ELL-related professional learning addressed a variety of issues. Workshops for tutors addressed issues relating to cultural awareness or were multi-topic in scope. In analyzing documents, I found that a breadth of topics was still being addressed in HDSB’s own publication in 2009 about Meeting ELLs’ Needs Across the Curriculum: A Reference Guide, including information about acculturating new ELLs; language acquisition; the use of tiered questions; differentiating curriculum; collaborative lesson planning; and adapting programming for ELLs. This was also the case with HDSB’s other 2009 publication, Welcoming ELLs: A School Guide, which contained information ranging from school orientation for ELLs and their families to community resources to cultural awareness. Subsequent ELL-related professional learning topics were narrower in focus: ELLs with possible special education needs (2010–2011); STEP (2011–2012); and identifying ELLs (2012–2013).

The narrowing focus of activities was reported by the consultants as being shaped by the MOE menu of supported topics for ESL policy implementation projects; the consultants chose one of these topics each year. The two wide-ranging HDSB publications in 2009, however, were also the result of an MOE implementation project, suggesting that this was not the only factor shaping the focus of professional learning in HDSB. As Lydia commented, “. . . instead of [Claire and I] trying to get to all those schools all the time, in my view, we’re trying to address system needs. And then implement stuff system-wide” (Lydia, P1, 269).

Thus the consultants’ learning about particular system-wide issues also contributed to increasingly focused topics for professional learning in HDSB. As noted earlier in this chapter, these issues included a tendency by schools to mistake second language acquisition needs for special
education needs as well as schools’ blanket designation of students as ELLs without assessing whether individual ELLs still required language support.

Lydia referred to a goal of implementing more aspects of the 2007 ESL policy document year-by-year, but noted that full implementation of all policy mandates had not been possible to date in HDSB. The hallmark of ESL policy implementation and ELL-related professional learning in HDSB was incrementalism. As Lydia commented, “I would say, year-by-year our goal is to have more of the [ESL] policy implemented. … My thought has been, how much closer to the policy can we move from year to year?” (Lydia, P1, 1156:1160). Lydia also stated that she believed that the MOE was aware that HDSB did not have the capacity to implement all aspects of MOE ESL policy in the short term.

Both Lydia and Claire reported that the implementation of the STEP (MOE, 2011b) forms to track ELLs’ progress in acquiring English was their policy implementation focus and the driver of current ELL-related professional learning within the board.

*STEP* implementation right now for us is huge. … We really want to be working with teachers to show them the observable language behaviour continua. We want some teachers to start using it, and using it to address the language needs of their students in the classroom. (Lydia, P1, 268:268)

Lydia and Claire reported welcoming *STEP* (MOE, 2011b); they acknowledged *STEP*’s accountability dimension, but generally framed *STEP* as a springboard for conversations with school staff and a useful tool for classroom teachers in planning instruction. The consultants indicated that they wanted *STEP* to be implemented as envisaged by the MOE; that is, with the tracking forms completed by teachers, not by ELL tutors. Lydia spoke about the potential of *STEP* to shape or change teachers’ instruction practices:

So what we’re trying to do is move away from just tagging them as ELLs … just creating this cohort of students … to saying, “Let’s look individually at all of these students. Figure out who actually still needs language support and then once we have that list, now let’s take a
look at *STEP* and find out where they are on a *STEP* and then have conversations about how we’re going to address those needs in the classroom.” (Lydia, P1, 0774:0778)

The need for close observation of ELLs in the classroom was a recurring motif in my interviews with Lydia and Claire: both consultants reported this as the first step in aligning teachers’ instruction with the actual learning needs of ELLs in their classes. Another benefit of *STEP* (MOE, 2011b), according to Claire, was that it moved teachers from focusing on deficit models of ELLs to a focus on what ELLs *could* do.

Both Lydia and Claire described professional learning initiatives that they characterized as small but which they believed offered the best possibility of grassroots implementation. Workshops relating to *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) in 2012 and 2013, for example, were small-scale and involved only a few schools at a time. The goal was for workshop participants to go back to their schools, where it was hoped by the consultants that participants would have conversations with colleagues about identifying and meeting ELLs’ learning needs through using the *STEP* tracking forms. The ESL consultants were using a strategy of leveraging their limited opportunities for providing formal ELL-related professional learning within HDSB.

While a leveraging strategy might be considered implicit to professional learning in general, there was evidence in Elementary School 1 in Region A that the strategy had resulted in teachers implementing *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) assessments as envisaged in the MOE document. The process had begun when Julia, a Grade One classroom teacher, had contacted Lydia with an ELL-related question. Having expressed an interest in ELL-related issues, Julia and her teaching partner were invited to attend two daylong professional learning days organized by Lydia and Claire in 2012. Julia and her teaching partner returned to Elementary School 1 ready to share and implement what they had learned during their two days of ELL-related professional learning. Julia and her teaching partner made a short presentation at a staff meeting at Elementary School 1, providing a brief overview of *STEP* to teachers and informing them that teachers would soon be completing tracking forms for each of the school’s
ELLs. With release time provided by the school principal, Julia and her teaching partner subsequently met individually with classroom teachers who had ELLs in their classes. As Julia described those meetings,

That’s when we were able to put [the \textit{STEP} document] in everyone’s hands. And we had highlighters, we had everything near so that when teachers left that day, it was done [i.e., the \textit{STEP} forms for individual ELLs were filled in]. It wasn’t something to put away or tuck away on a shelf. (Julia, P8, 107)

Julia and her teaching partner had spearheaded their school’s implementation of the \textit{STEP} (MOE, 2011b) tracking forms; Elaine, the school’s ELL tutor, said she was aware of this process but did not participate in filling out the forms themselves. Lydia had provided Elaine with information about \textit{STEP} but Elaine reported, “So the teachers actually do the testing [i.e., \textit{STEP} assessments]. I don’t do the assessment, but I was involved with sharing the information with the teachers because I work with the students one-on-one” (P14, 135). The role of the school’s Learning Resource staff member, Julia explained, was to remind classroom teachers to complete the forms in subsequent years.

In many respects, this was a vignette of successful implementation of an ESL policy requirement and the professional learning accompanying it. However, Julia herself commented on the fragility of her school’s capacity with respect to ELLs. While the use of the \textit{STEP} tracking forms had been implemented in her school, Julia had no ELLs in her classes during the 2012–2013 school year. She would therefore not be seeking new MOE or HDSB publications or information about ELLs. She identified this as a challenge for Lydia: when classroom teachers do not consistently have ELLs in their classes, “How do you keep resources in the right hands?” (Julia, P8, 207).

In tandem with small-scale workshops, the consultants visited schools to introduce \textit{STEP} (MOE, 2011b) to individuals or small groups. These school visits did not happen as often as the consultants would have liked; in addition, the consultants were not able to provide multiple visits as follow-up with individual schools. Both consultants expressed acceptance of incremental
implementation of the *ELL Policies and Procedures* (MOE, 2007b) document and the use of the *STEP* tracking forms. Claire commented explicitly that changes in staff instructional strategies or beliefs about teaching ELLs took place in small increments. She characterized these changes as occurring in “little baby steps, just in conversation [with teachers]” (Claire, P3, 166:166). It was the view of Lydia and Claire, however, that these conversations were the most effective professional learning tool in their toolkit.

**MOE support for ELL-related professional learning in HDSB.** Both Lydia and Claire reported that MOE support was critical to the provision of ELL-related professional learning in the board (see Table 11 for an outline of the support given to HDSB by the MOE). The MOE’s support came primarily through ESL policy implementation projects. These implementation projects were optional and were available to any school board in Ontario. The MOE distributed a list of topics for the projects; school boards chose one topic each year upon which to focus, according to local needs and priorities. HDSB had applied for and received funding annually from 2009 onwards to support particular ESL policy initiatives.

The MOE’s support for ESL policy implementation took several forms, including funding, mentoring, and providing opportunities for Lydia and Claire to meet ESL consultants from other school boards. In HDSB, MOE funding was used in 2011–12 and 2012–13 for small-scale workshops; the amount of the MOE’s funding for HDSB for the school year 2012–2013 was $8,000. Claire stated that programming costs for ELLs in HDSB exceeded the ELL-specific grant money HDSB received from the MOE; therefore, she said, there was no money in HDSB’s budget for ELL-related workshops in the 2012–2013 year. It was MOE funding that made it possible for Lydia and Claire “to go at least to this next point, this one day of [ELL-related] professional development” (Claire, P3, 264). The MOE-supplied mentor, who was described earlier in this chapter, attended the *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) project-related workshops that Lydia and Claire organized in HDSB. Claire commented that the mentor lent an MOE presence to the workshops. In my field notes, I noted that the presence of this
mentor was seen by Claire and Lydia as indicating to those attending workshops that the MOE actively supported the implementation of ESL policy. The mentor’s presence can also be seen to have conferred authority on the consultants; that is, the mentor’s presence established a visible link between MOE goals and the actions of the consultants in implementing those goals.

**Table 11**

MOE Support for ESL Policy Implementation in HDSB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>MOE Support for ESL Policy Implementation in HDSB</th>
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| 2009 | • Funding for production of publications for distribution within the board:  
|      | o “Meeting ELLs’ Needs Across the Curriculum”, directed at classroom teachers and ELL tutors (56 pages);  
|      | o “Welcoming ELLs: A School Guide”, directed primarily at ELL tutors (53 pages) |
| 2010 | • Funding for production of a publication about ELLs with possible special education needs, directed primarily at classroom teachers, teachers working with students with special needs, and school administrators (8 pages) |
| 2011 | • Funding for workshops introducing *STEP* and the *STEP* tracking forms to classroom teachers at four schools from Regions A and B  
|      | • Provision of materials for teachers to use for *STEP* assessments |
| 2012 | • Funding for workshop directed at teachers, tutors, and administration of four schools in Region B – topics: identifying ELLs and implementing *STEP* and the *STEP* tracking forms  
|      | • Provision of a mentor |

The annual Sharing Day for boards participating in the ESL implementation projects was another form of support from the MOE. The consultants characterized this event as a valuable opportunity to network with other boards and to look at ELL-related print resources that were on display. Another form of support offered by the MOE was the provision of materials for teachers to use when assessing ELLs for placement on the *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) continua. Lydia noted that a rural school board such as HDSB would have found it time-intensive, difficult, and costly to prepare its own set of assessment materials.

**Summary of the fourth theme.** The board’s model of professional learning centred on collaborative inquiry hubs that convened at the family of schools level. ELL-related issues rarely arose at these hubs, suggesting that the collaborative inquiry model was not a good fit with the uneven
distribution and low numbers of ELLs across HDSB. Professional learning activities specific to ELLs from 2007 to 2013 in HDSB included a variety of workshops and presentations that were primarily, though not exclusively, consultant-led. These activities were parallel to, rather than integral to, the collaborative inquiry hubs. I characterized ELL-related professional learning activities in HDSB as including a wider range of participants but also a narrower set of topics during the time frame of this study. Support from Ontario’s MOE played a vital role in the provision of ELL-related professional learning in HDSB.

**Theme Five: Challenges Relating to the Uneven Distribution of Small Numbers of ELLs across HDSB’s Large Geographical Footprint**

The consultants faced the challenge of supporting or initiating ELL-related professional learning in a complex environment. Several aspects of HDSB’s setting were identified by Lydia and Claire as well as by other participants as challenges to the provision of ELL-related professional learning. These challenges were the small numbers of ELLs compared to the total number of students in HDSB; the large geographical footprint of the board; and, the uneven distribution of ELLs within the board. I describe each of these in turn before describing the complexity of implementing ELL-related professional learning in HDSB.

**Small numbers of ELLs.** ELLs formed a small cohort relative to the overall student population in HDSB. One impact of these small numbers of ELLs was seen on board-wide Professional Development days for teachers. The classroom teachers and ESL teachers participating in this study stated that ELL-related issues were not specifically addressed during their designated Professional Development days. The only exception I found to this was a presentation about STEP (MOE, 2011b) made by Lydia to teachers at Secondary School 2 on a Professional Development day in 2012. Tyler (ESL Teacher 2) had welcomed the information Lydia provided when she met with him at the beginning of his semester teaching an ESL credit course, but he also commented: “There have been no professional development activities that have popped up … I’ve not seen any of those
professional development activities where we can go and sit down and learn specifically about ESL” (Tyler, P10, 202).

The ELL tutors uniformly reported that there were no ELL-related professional learning opportunities associated with their board-wide Professional Activity days either. Such opportunities as were offered for tutors saw the ELL tutors mixed with Educational Assistants for general sessions on topics such as well-being. ELL tutors generally worked on their own during Professional Activity days or, if they were in an elementary school with a high proportion of ELLs, with their fellow ELL tutors. The full day ESL-focused workshops led by Lydia and Claire, therefore, generally involved small groups of teachers and tutors whose principals had released them from their classroom responsibilities on days that were not Professional Development or Professional Activity days. For the most part, small numbers of ELLs did not appear to warrant attention to ELL-related professional learning on Professional Development or Professional Activity days in HDSB.

In addition to designated Professional Development days, the board’s other potential venue for ELL-related learning was that of the collaborative learning hubs. This was a potential venue for teachers only, because tutors were not included in the hubs. However, as discussed earlier, the small proportion of ELLs in HDSB meant that ELL-related issues were rarely alluded to in the course of the collaborative inquiry hubs. Two formal mechanisms for professional learning in HDSB (i.e., Professional Development or Professional Activity Days and the collaborative inquiry hubs) therefore did not serve as vehicles for the delivery of ELL-related professional learning.

Credentials and staff turnover were two other challenges associated with the small number of ELLs relative to HDSB’s overall student population. The ESL consultants and Warren, the secondary school principal, reported that the low numbers of ELLs combined with declining overall student enrolment in HDSB made it difficult to find and keep school-level ESL staff with credentials or experience in English as a second language. Of the seven elementary school ELL tutors in the study, two (Elaine and Rosemary) had TESL certification; of the two secondary school tutors, one (Nina) had
TESL certification. Among the three ESL teachers who participated in the study, Victoria was the only one with ESL teaching credentials. The implication for Lydia and Claire, as has been discussed earlier, was that it presented the consultants with ELL-related learning needs that varied widely from one individual and school to the next. There was no shared foundation of second language learning knowledge upon which the consultants could build.

Participants who did not have ESL or TESL certification frequently reported that they learned about working with ELLs through doing. This was particularly the case with the participants who were ELL tutors: “I’ve been learning as I go,” stated Kaitlin (P13, 360), who was in her second semester as a tutor. Kaitlin also said with reference to the Grade 10 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test that she had learned “just by being there [in the classroom]. ... Like nobody sat me down and taught me anything. But just listening and being a part of it” (P13, 384). Her conclusion about her role as an ELL tutor in an international education site school was that “it’s turning out to be a lot of common sense. A lot of common sense, just meeting the needs of the child at that moment” (P13, 496). This was also the case with Sandra, ESL Teacher 1, who noted of her lesson planning and assessment, “I just kind of just did it” (Sandra, P9, 117). A strategy several participants reported using was leveraging their previous work experience, either as an Educational Assistant (Kaitlin, ELL Tutor 1; Iris, ELL Tutor 4) or, in the case of Tyler (ESL Teacher 2), as an ESL teacher in Asia.

Staff turnover posed another challenge for the ESL consultants because it made ELL-related professional learning a moving target. Declining enrolment across the board meant that Warren, the secondary school principal in the study, could rarely hire or keep younger teachers on staff. It had been his experience that younger teachers were more likely than their older colleagues to have taught ESL overseas. Even if they did not have formal Ontario ESL teaching credentials, their experience teaching ELLs was viewed positively by Warren in the context of an international education secondary school. Established teachers, for the reasons Lydia outlined earlier, were unlikely to seek additional teaching qualifications in ESL until such time as there was a greater likelihood of such
qualifications being of benefit to their careers. Tyler, the secondary school ESL teacher in a different school than Warren’s, illustrated the issue Warren highlighted. Hired for a single semester to teach one ESL as well as two English courses, Tyler was a teacher at the beginning of his career in HDSB. He did not have Ontario ESL teaching credentials, but he had taught ESL in Asia for two and a half years immediately following his graduation from a faculty of education and before beginning work in HDSB. Tyler had been told around the time of our interview that he was surplus; that is, because of declining enrolment, he did not have a teaching position at Secondary School 3 for the following school year. An indication that ESL teacher turnover was an issue in HDSB was that Nina, the ELL tutor at Secondary School 3, reported having worked alongside four different ESL teachers in her school over the previous two years.

Both Lydia and Claire were aware that the low overall numbers of ELLs in secondary schools posed instructional challenges for the ESL teachers assigned to teach them. The greatest instructional challenge identified by the ESL teachers in this study involved multi-level ESL classes. The Ontario curriculum (MOE, 2007a) included five different ESL courses for which ELLs could earn credits towards an Ontario high school diploma. In HDSB, with low numbers of ELLs, all three of the ESL teachers in the study were teaching ESL courses at several levels within one classroom and one time block. Sandra had neither ESL credentials nor previous teaching experience, but her ESL teaching assignment was one in which four ELLs were earning three different ESL course credits within the same class. Sandra commented, “What I would like to know is how to take one lesson and vary it so it can be appropriate for each student. And how to evaluate each student appropriately for that lesson” (Sandra, P9, 197:205). Instructional complexity for Sandra was further compounded by the inclusion in the same classroom of non-ELLs who were in need of literacy instruction. Tyler’s ESL class of 13 ELLs included students taking five different ESL courses. Victoria, an experienced ESL teacher, had coped with teaching multi-level classes by adopting a project-based approach to instruction and assessment. Nonetheless, she identified a gap in her own professional learning opportunities:
The one priority is teaching the multi-level classroom. …I would love to see that addressed. And I know that in talking with different teachers [from other school boards], that it’s an issue in any of the areas where you’re say, not directly in Toronto . . . any of the rural communities where you’ve got limited numbers and real ranges [of ELL proficiency levels] . . . I think there’s definitely a need for more training and development of resources there. (Victoria, P11, 377)

In HDSB, staff turnover was not only an issue among ESL teachers but among ELL tutors as well. Kaitlin (ELL Tutor 1) and Michelle (ELL Tutor 5), for example, were both uncertain about their futures as ELL tutors. As beginning ELL tutors, they could be bumped by other tutors with more seniority. This possibility made Kaitlin unwilling to invest in earning formal TESL credentials because of the possibility of being bumped out of her role as an ELL tutor altogether. At the time of our interview, Michelle’s work hours at Elementary School 2 had been reduced and she was waiting to hear whether she would be assigned the equivalent of full-time hours as an itinerant ELL tutor in the following school year.

**HDSB’s geographical footprint.** Two issues emerged from the participants’ discussion of the direct effect on their professional learning of being in a rural board with a large geographical footprint. One issue was access. Several ELL tutors noted the distance and time involved in attending formal professional learning workshops that were offered by external providers outside the board. Other tutors commented on the travel time to professional learning activities even within the board’s boundaries. The effect of distance was to throw many of the participants back onto their own resources when addressing ELL-related challenges. As Delia, ELL Tutor 7, commented, “You learn a lot by trial and error, because there aren’t a lot of courses” (P19, 146). A second issue was that the board’s rural setting was noted by several participants to be associated with a lack of awareness of other cultures; such awareness was identified by several participants as an important aspect of their professional learning. Zoe (ELL Tutor 9), in her first year as a tutor, commented that she was still learning about
cultural issues as well as about useful tutoring strategies. Tyler, ESL Teacher 2, drew on his experiences living and teaching English in Asia when approached by colleagues with questions about the behaviour or actions of international ELLs in their classes. Elaine (ELL Tutor 2) noted that the “excitement” of multicultural cities was lacking in a rural board.

The possible advantages of rural boards mentioned by the participants did not relate directly to professional learning. Olivia and Phoebe (Classroom Teachers 2 and 4 respectively) liked living and working in a rural setting. Lydia and Claire, the two ESL consultants, commented that the needs of ELLs in elementary schools might be more evident (and, in their view, attended to) than in an urban setting.

Technology was seen as a support for professional learning but not as a sufficient solution or response to the challenges of distance and the feelings of isolation alluded to by many participants. HDSB had a virtual learning website which included ESL resources for teachers; as discussed earlier, this site was in the development stage and it was not identified by participants in the study as a source upon which they depended for knowledge about working with ELLs.

The use of email and access to online ELL-related professional learning materials might be viewed as means of offsetting professional learning-related issues arising from a geographically large board. However, there were two issues with email. First, the participants generally cited a lack of time for extended discussions via email. Emails were viewed by most of the school-level participants in utilitarian terms (e.g., for announcements; for asking or answering specific questions) rather than as a vehicle for professional learning. Nina, an ELL tutor in a secondary school, said:

I don’t have time to read my emails … and I don’t even open the attachments half of the time.

It doesn’t work for me, I’ll just say that. … But there’s no other real option, because of the rural schools, so we’re all over the place. (Nina, P18, 552:560)

The second limitation of email was that it did not provide the type of venue for learning which a number of participants in the study valued. These participants stated a preference for face-to-face
professional learning activities over email exchanges. Tyler (ESL Teacher 2) commented, “I would love the opportunity to sit down and see what other people have done, but speak face-to-face with them” (P10, 209). Rosemary, an ELL tutor in an elementary school, also spoke positively about face-to-face professional learning opportunities. There were few professional learning activities for elementary school ELL tutors for several years before this study was undertaken; Rosemary indicated the importance to her of “having that time to get together with other ELL tutors. Get together and be given information or new findings, new research” (Rosemary, P15, 71). In describing the consultant-led workshop she attended in May, 2013, Rosemary said it was wonderful to participate in a learning opportunity along with staff from other schools.

A dissenting voice about a preference for meeting colleagues from other schools in person came from Olivia (Classroom Teacher 2), who was comfortable with accessing information through websites. Olivia’s comment was the exception. My analysis of data from interviews and field notes revealed that “sharing” was a recurring motif in comments made by many ELL tutors and ESL teachers. Many participants placed a high value on professional learning opportunities in which they could meet face-to-face with their counterparts from other schools. ELL tutor Gabriella, for example, characterized such opportunities as validating because they generally confirmed “that we are on the right track. … But as well, you don’t want to get yourself into a rut and be using the same thing year after year. And [so] take their ideas and it’s a nice, fresh perspective” (Gabriella, P20, 483). During my second interview with Lydia (ESL Consultant 1), I asked her about her understanding of participants’ frequent references to sharing as an integral aspect of ELL-related professional learning. Lydia’s perspective differed somewhat from that of the ELL tutors and ESL teachers, likely because it reflected her role as a manager of ESL programming. From Lydia’s perspective, workshops in HDSB were a costly format for professional learning and therefore to be used in a targeted fashion and on a small scale. In addition, Lydia believed that recent enhancements to HDSB’s computer systems would allow for blended learning opportunities in which school staff could meet online through video
conferring. Thus while Lydia acknowledged that some staff felt isolated, she stated that sharing needed to be productive: “Let’s identify [through sharing] what the challenges are. … But then let’s move beyond that and use some of the tools that are in existence, like STEP” (Lydia, P2, 597).

**Uneven distribution of ELLs.** I did not collect as much data about a third challenge for ELL-related professional learning relating to HDSB’s rural setting as I did for the challenges posed by low numbers of ELLs and the geographical size of the board. Nonetheless, a finding emerging from data from the two ESL consultants was that the uneven distribution of ELLs across HDSB had implications for implementing ELL-related professional learning. An outcome of small numbers of ELLs distributed unevenly across HDSB was that ESL support was sometimes provided by itinerant tutors such as Elaine (Tutor 2), who worked at a total of five different elementary schools in Region A. In addition, the number of hours worked by ELL tutors varied greatly, ranging from just 1 or 2 hours per week to 30 hours weekly. ELL tutors as a group therefore had disparate schedules and working conditions; this variation presented a challenge for the provision of ELL-related learning.

There were different subpopulations of ELLs in HDSB’s elementary and secondary schools. The ELLs in HDSB’s elementary schools were predominantly Canadian-born; most of these ELLs were likely to remain in HDSB’s schools. Secondary school ELLs were predominantly fee-paying international students. Some of the international students were in Canada for just one year; their goal was to improve their English proficiency. Other international ELLs were working towards an Ontario high school graduation diploma, and they were attempting to acquire as quickly as possible the English proficiency necessary to accomplish this goal. The different subpopulations of ELLs within HDSB added to the complexity of aligning ELL-related professional learning with teacher and tutor learning needs that differed from elementary to secondary schools.

**Differing professional learning implementation tasks in HDSB.** My analysis of the data from interviews, documents, and field notes underscored the complexity of implementing ELL-related professional learning in HDSB. Lydia and Claire, as the ESL consultants and primary providers of
professional learning, had to attend to two distinct ESL programming environments. I found that the implementation task associated with ELL-related professional learning differed in these two environments.

In HDSB’s elementary schools, ESL programming was undergoing a process of *transition*. The original model of ESL programming in HDSB in the late 1990s had been centred on ELL tutors. This model was being replaced with a model of an ESL team composed of classroom teachers, ELL tutors, Learning Resource staff, and school administrators. The perceptions of the ELL tutors with many years of experience in HDSB (Rosemary, Delia, and Gabriella) were consistent with that transition: as discussed earlier, there were fewer professional learning activities for tutors than was the case in 2007 (at the outset of the time frame of this case). This was in part because the collaborative inquiry model of professional learning was being established across all subject areas in HDSB, and this model excluded tutors. However, the decrease in activities for tutors also reflected the consultants’ focus on increasing the types and numbers of other school-level participants in ELL-related professional learning with a view to building school ESL teams. In the secondary schools in this study, the process of ESL programming can best be characterized as being in *development*. The international education program was relatively new in HDSB, and, of the three secondary schools in this study, it was only in Victoria’s school that there had been stability in teaching assignments to the ESL credit course.

The goal of the consultants was the same for elementary and secondary schools: the establishment and maintenance of a team-based ESL programming delivery model. However, with elementary school ESL programming in transition and secondary school ESL programming in development, implementing ELL-related professional learning involved different tasks in the elementary versus secondary school panels. The two consultants had identified that the issue of ownership of responsibility for ESL programming was central in elementary schools; the task was to provide professional learning to accompany the redistribution of this responsibility and to support an
increased role for classroom teachers in delivering ESL programming. The emphasis on classroom teachers arose in part because *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) assessments were to be completed by teachers rather than by ELL tutors. More broadly, however, Claire stated that it was the classroom teachers (albeit with support from ELL tutors and, potentially, Learning Resource staff) who were ultimately responsible for providing appropriate instruction for ELLs. The roles of both ELL tutors and classroom teachers were therefore undergoing change in HDSB’s elementary schools.

In secondary schools, the greatest challenge for implementing ELL-related professional learning appeared to relate to the turnover of ESL teachers. While turnover of teachers and tutors was evident in both the elementary and secondary schools participating in this study, the issue emerged from the data as a particularly significant one in secondary schools. For Lydia and Claire, the implementation challenge was in addressing the professional learning needs of secondary school ESL teachers whose ESL credentials and experience varied from school to school as well as from one semester to the next within individual secondary schools. Allied with this finding was that for some secondary school ESL teachers such as Sandra, their assignment to an ESL course was a temporary one rather than part of a preferred career arc.

Another facet of the professional learning challenge for Lydia and Claire in secondary schools was addressing ESL teachers’ learning needs relating to teaching multi-level ESL classes in addition to HDSB’s priority of implementing the use of the *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) tracking forms board-wide. Given that Lydia and Claire worked only part-time as ESL consultants, implementing ELL-related professional learning was a complex undertaking involving different environments in elementary versus secondary schools.

The response of the ESL consultants to this complexity appeared to be an acceptance that implementing ELL-related professional learning would be an incremental process involving the building of relationships with individual schools over time. They did not report experiencing pressure from the MOE to implement ESL policy as quickly as possible.
Another response to the complexity of providing professional learning in HDSB was to prioritize topics and recipients. The consultants identified that building ESL teams and implementing the use of the STEP (MOE, 2011b) tracking forms were twin priorities. With respect to recipients of ELL-related professional learning, Claire stated that schools in Region B were invited to the May, 2013 workshops because there were more ELLs in Region B than in Region A.

**Summary of the fifth theme.** The low numbers of ELLs compared to the overall student population, the board’s large geographical footprint, and the uneven distribution of ELLs across HDSB contributed to the challenge of implementing ELL-related professional learning. A further difficulty confronted by the ESL consultants was that professional learning in HDSB was a moving target because of staff turnover. Moreover, there were differences between elementary and secondary schools with respect to subpopulations of ELLs. These differences made the provision of professional learning more complex, as did the finding that ESL programming in the board’s elementary schools was in transition while in secondary schools ESL programming was in development. The consultants responded to these challenges by implementing ESL policy and ELL-related professional learning incrementally as well as by prioritizing topics and regions or schools upon which to focus.

**Illustrating the Themes: Workshop in May, 2013**

The culmination of HDSB’s MOE ESL policy implementation project for the 2012–2013 school year was a full day workshop organized by Lydia and Claire. This event illustrated the themes that I identified through the analysis of interview data and the documents I collected; it therefore encapsulates many of this study’s findings about how the implementation of Ontario ELL-related professional learning policy was perceived in HDSB. I start with an overview of the event and then discuss how the workshop illustrates the five themes I elicited through data analysis.

**Overview of the workshop.** The May 2013 professional learning day was entitled “Learning More about Our English Language Learners.” Invitations were issued to two secondary schools and six elementary schools, all located in Region B of the board, which had higher numbers of ELLs than
Region A. Two of the elementary schools invited to participate were Elementary Schools 2 and 3 in my study. In addition to Lydia and Claire, 23 individuals from the invited schools attended. Invitations were sent to staff who worked in a variety of roles, consistent with this study’s finding that current ELL-related professional learning targeted a wider range of staff than in 2007. By role, the attendees included classroom teachers, ESL teachers, ELL tutors, vice-principals, Learning Resource staff, and the MOE-provided mentor for Lydia and Claire. The MOE provided funding for the event.

In our second interview in June, 2013, Lydia provided me with a printed copy of the PowerPoint slides (i.e., projected visual material) from the workshop. She also talked about her recollections of the day, as did Rosemary (ELL Tutor 3), Iris (ELL Tutor 4), Gabriella (ELL Tutor 8), and Zoe (ELL Tutor 9). I therefore had both documents and interview data as a basis upon which to analyze the event.

My content analysis of the PowerPoint slides revealed that the event had covered two major topics in roughly equal proportion: first, the identification of ELLs, and, second, *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) and the *STEP* tracking forms. Lydia and Claire led the workshop. While the mentor from the MOE was present throughout the day’s proceedings, Lydia characterized the mentor’s role as a supporting one; Rosemary (ELL Tutor 3) agreed with this characterization and said of this mentor, “As the two ladies [i.e., Lydia and Claire] were presenting, she would come in with an example” (Rosemary, P15, 108).

The workshop was a combination of the presentation of information to the participants and hands-on activities; time spent on the latter outweighed time spent by the participants listening to information from the consultants. The participants were grouped by school. Lydia commented that she and Claire intended for school representatives to leave the event with a written list of (a) what they had learned about identifying ELLs; (b) what information they needed to gather about ELLs in their own schools to provide ESL programming congruent with ELLs’ learning needs; and (c) a list of ELL-related action items for the end of the school year as well as for the following school year.
The first half of the day focused on the meaning of the term *ELL* and on board procedures relating to ELLs, such as school forms summarizing information about ELLs. Participants discussed, first, their own understanding of the term ELL; second, what they actually knew about the ELLs in their schools (e.g., language spoken at home by ELLs and their families); and third, what they needed to know about the ELLs in their schools in order to provide ESL support that was appropriate and timely. The consultants suggested to the participants that ELL should not be a term used “to identify a student whose first language (L1) isn’t English” (P26, 20). Instead, ELL should be a term used to describe “a student whose L1 is a language other than English and who requires focused educational supports to attain proficiency in English” (P26, 20). This operational definition of the term *ELL* may have served dual purposes. First, it called the attention of school staff to the need to identify the learning needs of individual ELLs, consistent with the consultants’ belief that instruction should align with and result from teachers’ observations of students. Second, this definition winnowed and potentially reduced the overall number of ELLs identified as needing support from ELL tutors.

*STEP* (MOE, 2011b) was the focus of the workshop’s afternoon activities, with participants being given background information about *STEP* and the tracking form associated with it. Participants were given anonymized writing samples from ELLs as well as information about these students’ EQAO results. Still grouped by schools, the participants then practiced working with the *STEP* tracking forms for the scenarios with which they had been presented. During the workshop, Lydia and Claire framed *STEP* and its tracking form as a resource for teachers rather than as an accountability measure instituted by the province. One slide, for example, listed ways in which *STEP* supported teachers in planning instruction for ELLs (e.g., guiding the selection of resources to use with ELLs; providing a common language for discussion with other teachers about ELLs’ progress in language acquisition). Although Lydia and Claire asked participants to read part of an article by Canadian researcher Jim Cummins about ELLs and reading, most of the resources used during the day were produced by the MOE and its affiliated secretariats.
Claire followed up the May, 2013 workshop with as many visits to individual participating schools in Region B as scheduling would allow. Delia, Gabriella, and Zoe (ELL Tutors 7, 8, and 9 respectively) confirmed that Claire had been to their elementary school (Elementary School 3) in June to help prepare school staff to implement the use of the STEP (MOE, 2011b) tracking forms in the fall of 2013.

**Illustrating the themes from the study.** HDSB’s workshop in May, 2013 reflected the five themes which emerged from my analysis of the data I collected during the study. The first way in which this particular activity linked to the themes from the larger data set related to the issue of who initiated the workshop. This workshop was consultant-organized and consultant-led, consistent with the theme that the board’s ESL consultants were the primary initiators of ELL-related professional learning within HDSB.

The second theme, namely that the two consultants characterized themselves as learners, was also evident in the May, 2013 workshop. The slides from the presentation included a summary of the MOE ESL policy implementation projects in which Lydia and Claire had participated; the two consultants highlighted what they had learned from these projects. A specific example of the consultants’ learning was the creation of a new form on which schools summarized information about ELLs. The new form and its rationale were presented to the workshop participants.

The third theme that arose from this study’s data was that there was variability from school to school with respect to the roles of school-level staff in initiating ELL-related professional learning. Rosemary, an ELL tutor from School 5, and Gabriella, an ELL tutor from School 6, both attended the workshop. As was discussed earlier, the roles of these tutors in ELL-related professional learning within their respective schools varied. Although both tutors were experienced and knowledgeable, Rosemary’s role in initiating some ELL-related professional learning for teachers was a more active one than Gabriella’s. More fundamentally, however, the workshop underscored the limited ability of individual schools to initiate ELL-related professional learning. As Lydia commented,
we were talking about things that in the ESL world are common, but when people haven’t had the chance to sit for a day and actually think about it, they all of a sudden—I think—were looking at their [English language] learners differently and saying, “You know what? We’ve got these kids in our class. They’re on some list. We have very, very little information about them. We really don’t know a lot about them at all.” . . . there seemed to be a bit of a call to arms to review what the support model looked like in schools. Because they were recognizing that maybe there needs to be some changes. (Lydia, P2, 080)

The data collected in this study indicated that a workshop of this scope could not have been led by school-level staff, even those experienced in working with ELLs. It was only the ESL consultants who had the system-wide perspective and ESL expertise to guide ELL-related professional learning for school staff.

The fourth theme emerging from the data was that ELL-related professional learning initiatives were parallel rather than integral to HDSB’s model of collaborative inquiry hubs. The May, 2013 workshop was an initiative which was entirely separate from the collaborative inquiry hubs. In addition, as the culmination of an MOE ESL policy implementation project, the workshop was funded by the MOE, relied primarily on MOE-produced resource documents as sources of information for school staff, and included the participation of a mentor provided by the MOE. These data suggest that there was greater alignment between the May, 2013 workshop and the MOE than between the workshop and HDSB’s board-wide primary model of professional learning via collaborative inquiry hubs.

The workshop in May, 2013 also reflected the fifth theme, namely that HDSB’s large geographical footprint and uneven distribution of ELLs affected the implementation of ELL-related professional learning. Consistent with their approach of prioritizing targets and topics for ELL-related professional learning, Lydia and Claire invited staff from Region B to the workshop because Region B had higher number of ELLs than Region A. In order to build school-level ESL programming capacity
in a board where there was turnover of staff working with ELLs, the consultants included a range of participants from each school with the goal of establishing school-level ESL teams.

Summarizing the Findings: The Study’s Four Research Questions

I now summarize the findings I have discussed in this chapter by returning to the four research questions that guided the study. One research question related to the policies, procedures, and activities initiated or supported by HDSB with respect to ELL-related professional learning. I found that ELL-related professional learning procedures were parallel to rather than integral to HDSB’s current professional learning model of collaborative inquiry. I compiled a lengthy list of specific ELL-related professional learning activities that had taken place in the board from 2007 onwards. I characterized these activities as becoming narrower in scope over time (i.e., focused on a narrower range of topics) but simultaneously broader in terms of the types of school staff participating in them. I also found that ELL-related professional learning included a combination of planned, structured activities (such as workshops and presentations) and informal interactions between the ESL consultants and school staff or, in some instances, among staff within a particular school.

In answer to the research question about who was involved in providing ELL-related learning, I found that the two ESL consultants were the key initiators of most of the ELL-related professional learning which occurred in HDSB. Additionally, I found that the MOE played an important role in professional learning in HDSB through the provision of funding and a mentor for the consultants. The ESL consultants described themselves not only as providers of professional learning but also as learners themselves, and I noted that their learning followed two tracks. First, they continued to learn more about second language teaching; and second, they learned about overseeing ESL programming in HDSB. I found that there was variation from school to school in terms of school-initiated ELL-related professional learning. In some schools, ESL teachers or ELL tutors contributed to the learning of their colleagues, but these efforts were modest ones in comparison to the role played by the two ESL consultants.
In answer to the research questions about the influence of HDSB’s rural context and the challenges associated with implementing the MOE’s directive to provide ELL-related professional learning, the participants reported that HDSB’s rural and small communities context shaped the implementation of this policy directive. Features of HDSB’s context affected implementation processes and posed a number of implementation challenges. There were small numbers of ELLs compared to the overall student population in HDSB, and ELLs were distributed unevenly across the board. There were different subpopulations of ELLs within the board, and teachers varied in their perception of the need for ELL-related professional learning as well as in the issues they identified as relevant to their practice. The turnover of ESL teachers and ELL tutors as outlined by the participants posed a challenge for the provision of ELL-related professional learning, as did variation from school to school with respect to teacher and tutor credentials and experience working with ELLs. Because of these contextual features, ELL-related professional learning emerged from the data as a moving target in HDSB. The ESL consultants were aware of the challenges associated with implementing ELL-related professional learning and adopted an incremental approach in response, focusing on the gradual formation of school-level ESL teams with shared responsibility for providing ESL programming within individual schools, and on providing the professional learning associated with implementing the use of the *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) tracking forms. The consultants articulated a common understanding of current ESL capacity within the board as well as shared goals for the development of ESL programming in HDSB. They also expressed congruent views about approaches to ELL-related professional learning they considered effective.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

In Chapter 5, I relate the findings of this case study to its conceptual framework (i.e., to each of the three dimensions identified in Honig’s (2006) framework for education policy implementation). This is followed by a discussion of how ELL-related professional learning in HDSB can be characterized relative to the empirical and conceptual literature reviewed in Chapter 2. This chapter concludes with a description of the study’s significance, its limitations, and its implications for further research.

Three Dimensions of ELL-Related Professional Learning in HDSB

Honig (2006) conceptualized education policy implementation processes and outcomes as contingent upon the interactions among three dimensions, namely places, policies, and people. In this section of the chapter, I discuss each of these dimensions in turn. While I foreground the places dimension because of the study’s focus on a rural school board, all three dimensions interacted to shape an understanding of how HDSB implemented the provision of ELL-related professional learning.

Places. My analysis of the influence of the places dimension (Honig, 2006) on the implementation of ELL-related professional learning includes three foci. These are implementation structures in HDSB; the historical and organizational context of ESL programming in HDSB; and the influence of HDSB’s rural setting on how ELL-related professional learning was implemented within the board.

Implementation structures in HDSB. The policy implementation literature characterized public policy implementation processes as potentially mediated at each layer of bureaucratic systems (Fowler, 2009; Pal, 2010; Weinbaum & Supowitz, 2010). Implementation structures and relationships in HDSB, however, differed from those typically outlined in the research literature. The traditional implementation paradigm was flattened in HDSB with respect to the provision of ELL-related professional learning for teachers and support staff. This was evident in two ways: first, with respect
to the relationship between the ESL consultants and the MOE, and, second, with respect to the role of school principals in ELL-related professional learning.

The two ESL consultants were the policy actors within HDSB with primary responsibility for ESL programming in elementary and secondary schools. The relationship of the consultants to the MOE as well as to schools had few intervening layers. In contrast to empirical studies in larger school boards where implementation involved negotiations across board units and departments (e.g., Coburn et al., 2009), there was no formally-designated and separate ESL department in HDSB with its own vertical or horizontal layers of policy actors nested within the larger HDSB board structure. Another unit of the board was responsible for recruiting international education students, but it was the two ESL consultants who oversaw ESL programming; prioritized types, targets, and topics for ELL-related professional learning; and visited schools. The MOE was not located at several removes from the policy implementation-related activities and efforts of the ESL consultants. Rather, the MOE had a direct influence on the consultants’ actions with respect to ELL-related professional learning. This influence was evident in several ways. The MOE-developed menu of policy implementation projects directed the consultants’ attention to particular topics; although HDSB’s ESL consultants chose an annual project from this menu, the topics themselves may be inferred to have reflected issues or topics prioritized by the MOE. Another influence of the MOE was seen in the annual Sharing Day for school boards participating in the implementation projects. These events were organized by the MOE, which also determined the format and the topics addressed in presentations by ESL researchers. Further evidence of the MOE’s influence was the MOE’s provision of a mentor to work with HDSB’s two ESL consultants.

HDSB’s ESL consultants also had a direct relationship with teachers and ELL tutors in the board. There were no individuals (such as itinerant ESL teachers) forming an intervening implementation layer between HDSB’s ESL consultants and schools themselves. In addition, school principals, who were part of the traditional paradigm of cascading implementation layers within
education systems (Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010), were not described by any of the participants in this study as mediators and interpreters of ESL policy. Instead, principals appeared to play two roles: first, as gatekeepers of the flow of information about ELL-related professional learning opportunities; and second, as providers of financial support via the provision of release time for school staff participating in ELL-related professional learning activities. While these were significant roles and the consultants alluded to the importance of their working relationships with principals, it did not appear that HDSB’s principals worked extensively with ESL policy documents and mediated them before discussing them with school-level staff. This finding needs to be qualified because only one principal participated in the study; nonetheless, the role of the school principal as described by other participants was congruent with this finding.

Thus the relevant implementation structure in HDSB appeared to be MOE > board ESL consultants > teachers and tutors. The flattened nature of the structure involved in implementing ELL-related professional learning may have arisen from the board’s context in which there were few ELLs compared to the board’s overall student population. Victoria (ESL Teacher 3) had described HDSB’s ESL consultants as middlemen; this characterization captured the consultants’ position as intermediaries between the MOE and HDSB’s schools.

The flattened implementation structure involved in ELL-related professional learning appeared to have resulted in more tightly coupled (i.e., closer) relationships between consultants and the MOE and between the consultants and teachers or tutors than in implementation systems typically described in the implementation literature (Levin, 2001; Fowler, 2009). The effect of these more tightly coupled relationships was twofold. First, the two ESL consultants were able to present their interpretations of STEP (MOE, 2011b) to teachers and ELL tutors without mediation of policy by principals and, in secondary schools, potentially by department heads as well. Second, the close relationship between the ESL consultants and the MOE gave the ESL consultants multiple opportunities to discuss and construct interpretations of MOE ESL policies that were congruent with
MOE policy goals. While the relative independence of the ESL consultants gave them scope to implement ESL policies without mediation by other policy actors at the board level and by principals at the school level, the flattened implementation structures in HDSB also constrained the ESL consultants in one respect. This was the consultants’ strategy of widening of targets of ELL-related professional learning to include Learning Resource staff. The ESL consultants characterized the role of school-level Learning Resource staff in implementing STEP as voluntary, and did not report there being board-level structures or mechanisms in place at the time of this study to require the Learning Resource staff to learn about and help implement STEP at the school level.

Peck and 6 [sic] (2006) noted that controversy in the policy studies literature about the relative benefits of adopting a top-down versus bottom-up approach to the study of policy implementation subsided and that both were seen to have benefit. Given the flattened implementation structure for ELL-related professional learning in HDSB, analyzing this structure in either a top-down or bottom-up, level-by-level manner does not contribute to an understanding of how implementation processes unfolded in HDSB. However, the finding that the board ESL consultants and some of the school-level staff (in particular, some of the ELL tutors and classroom teachers) had different perspectives about ELL-related professional learning suggested that differing perspectives about implementation are elicited from policy actors at different layers of implementation systems. A less nuanced picture of implementation in HDSB would have resulted from gathering data solely from the implementation layer involving the ESL consultants or from the layer involving teachers and ELL tutors.

**HDSB’s historical and institutional context.** The historical context of ESL programming influenced the provision of ELL-related professional learning in HDSB, as did the placement of ESL programming within HDSB’s organizational structures. As discussed earlier, HDSB’s initial response to an influx of refugee students was to create the position of ELL tutor. Responsibility for ESL programming was initially vested primarily in these tutors. The provision of ELL-related professional learning in 2007 (the outset of this study’s time frame) was focused for the most part on a target group
that was readily identifiable—ELL tutors. Workshops were often used as a vehicle for professional learning in all subject areas at that time in HDSB, and, accordingly, board-wide workshops for ELL tutors were offered on a regular basis. The implementation task for the provision of ELL-related professional learning involved a clear target (tutors) and a model (workshops) that was congruent with the model used throughout the board.

This relatively straightforward implementation task became more complex over the time frame of this study. First, the ESL consultants identified the need to distribute responsibility for ESL programming across a wider range of school-level staff; the establishment of ESL teams within individual schools became a goal of the consultants. Second, HDSB changed its primary model for providing professional learning from workshops to collaborative inquiry, but ESL issues rarely arose within the new collaborative inquiry hubs and ELL tutors did not participate in them. Third, the introduction of an international education program brought about a rapid increase in the number of ELLs attending HDSB’s schools during this study’s time frame. Accordingly, the implementation task with respect to ELL-related professional learning involved increased numbers of staff who represented a greater variety of roles (classroom teachers, ESL teachers, Learning Resource staff, and school administrators) and who worked with an increasingly diversified ELL population. The complexity of the task to be undertaken by two half-time consultants was reflected in the finding that ELL-related professional learning in HDSB was being implemented incrementally and, in terms of targets and topics, in accordance with specific priorities determined by the two ESL consultants.

Organizational structures within HDSB played a role in the implementation of ESL policy and of ELL-related professional learning. The ESL consultants were part of HDSB’s program department rather than HDSB’s separate department with responsibility for special education (see Figure 1). The placement of ESL departments within programming rather than special education divisions of school boards was found in empirical work to improve the possibility of comprehensive and cross-curricular support for teachers of ELLs (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). A finding of this study was that the ESL
consultants’ views about professional learning were congruent with and shaped by their non-ESL work within HDSB’s program department, namely the consultants’ responsibility for providing and participating in the board-wide collaborative inquiry model of professional learning. In spite of the constraints faced by the consultants because of low numbers of ELLs relative to HDSB’s overall student population, and in spite of the complexity of the task itself, the organizational structure of the board was a factor that facilitated the implementation of ELL-related professional learning in HDSB. This underscores that there were competing factors at work in this implementation context; that is, there were factors present that both constrained and facilitated the implementation of ELL-related professional learning.

The board’s collaborative inquiry model of professional learning did not fit well with the provision of ELL-related professional learning. This left the consultants to identify other avenues for providing learning specific to teaching ELLs. There was evidence nonetheless of the consultants approaching the problem of providing ELL-related professional learning at least in part through the lens of concepts from the collaborative learning model as it was used in HDSB. For example, the ESL consultants believed that teachers’ willingness to incorporate changes in practices arose primarily when teachers themselves identified an issue to be addressed or a problem to be solved. The consultants reported meeting with individual classroom teachers who had contacted them with concerns about instructing or assessing ELLs; by incorporating these individual meetings with teachers into their schedules, the ESL consultants were aligning ELL-related professional learning with teacher-identified needs in a manner consistent with the consultants’ own beliefs about teachers’ readiness to learn.

**Implementation and HDSB’s rural context.** The development of ESL programming in HDSB was consistent in many respects with Zehler et al.’s (2008) framework describing how rural school districts build capacity to address the needs of emerging ELL communities. The creation of the role of ELL tutor was an ad hoc response on the part of HDSB’s board to an influx of ELLs from refugee and
immigrant families; this was consistent with the framework’s first stage of development. In HDSB, this stage appeared to be an attenuated one that lasted for a decade until 2008, when an ESL credit course taught by an ESL teacher was first offered in HDSB. This change was on a very small scale, involving one ESL teacher (Claire, who was to become ESL Consultant 2) working with a single class of ELLs in one secondary school in the board. While there is technically a fit with Zehler et al.’s second stage of consistent procedures and services in which boards assign specialist teachers to work with ELLs, the addition of a single ESL teacher in HDSB could be characterized at best as a modest growth of ESL programming. In this second phase of development, most ESL programming in HDSB continued to be provided by ELL tutors. With the addition of the international education program, HDSB demonstrated some characteristics of Zehler et al.’s third stage—namely, program development. This was seen in HDSB’s secondary schools, where international education site schools uniformly offered one ESL course per semester and provided a full-time ELL tutor to support ELLs in mainstream classes. HDSB’s ESL programming when this study was conducted in 2013 appeared to fit best with Zehler et al.’s third stage of development. While HDSB’s ESL consultants envisioned a comprehensive model of K–12 ESL programming consistent with Zehler et al.’s fourth stage of expanded perspectives, this had not yet been realized.

The utility of Zehler et al.’s (2008) framework with respect to characterizing the narrower subject of professional learning is less evident than with respect to ESL programming as a whole. Professional learning was not associated with the first stage of Zehler et al.’s framework, but it was offered regularly to ELL tutors from 1998 onwards (i.e., during the first stage of ESL programming development in HDSB). There was ongoing professional learning for ELL tutors during the second stage, but the ESL teacher (Claire, later Consultant 2) reported that her learning was self-directed; that is, professional learning for ESL teachers and for classroom teachers of ELLs was not in place. Consistency of professional learning was not evident in HDSB at this stage, as would be expected according to Zehler et al.’s framework. During the third phase of program development, professional
learning in HDSB was undergoing change. ELL tutors reported that fewer professional learning opportunities were available to them, although their reports need to be balanced against the broader, board-wide perspective in which professional learning grew to include more categories of personnel. The provision of ELL-related professional learning in HDSB did not rise to the level of the regular initiatives across grade levels as conceptualized in Zehler et al.’s framework.

Differences between Zehler et al.’s (2008) framework and empirical findings in HDSB may be accounted for by the framework’s focus on growth of ELL populations through immigration as well as migration from urban centres. While Zehler et al. noted that some rural boards experienced significant annual growth in ELL populations, there were three distinct drivers of increased numbers of ELLs in HDSB: first, the arrival of a large number of refugee families at once; second, immigration (and the subsequent phenomenon of Canadian-born ELLs in elementary schools); and, third, the international education program. The first and third drivers of higher numbers of ELLs resulted in sudden spikes in HDSB’s ELL population rather than year-by-year growth. Zehler et al.’s framework was useful nonetheless in describing many aspects of the evolution of ESL programming in HDSB.

A number of features of the HDSB context were consistent with the rural education literature and had an impact on the provision of ELL-related professional learning. There was difficulty finding or retaining teachers with ESL certification (Fries, 2012), although, as the principal in this study reported, this did not result in HDSB from an unwillingness of teachers to work in rural boards but rather from the impact of declining enrollment and teachers’ seniority rights as specified in collective agreements. ESL teachers taught only one class of ELLs; thus they were teaching multiple subjects as part of their teaching assignments in HDSB’s secondary schools. This situation was consistent with research findings (Barley & Brigham, 2008) and had implications for ELL-related professional learning because there was, according to the consultants, a lack of motivation for these teachers to invest in learning about ELLs. ESL programming delivery via uncertified staff also had an impact on the ELL-related professional learning provided by HDSB’s ESL consultants, because the consultants
could not assume that either teachers or tutors had an ESL-related base upon which new knowledge could be scaffolded or from which new understandings about second language learning might emerge.

Because of the consultants’ half-time role in ESL and the large geographical regions for which they had responsibility, ELL-related professional learning activities in HDSB were intermittent and sometimes limited to one-time sessions. The professional learning literature included findings that changes in teachers’ instructional practices were likely only after sustained learning opportunities (Desimone, 2009). When they spoke of the limitations of “pop-ins” as a type of professional learning opportunity for school staff, HDSB’s ESL consultants were identifying as problematic the intermittent nature of the professional learning they were able to provide. To the extent they could, they mitigated the lack of sustained ELL-related professional learning opportunities by following up professional learning activities such as the May, 2013 workshop with visits to the individual schools participating in the workshop. Extended opportunities for the ESL consultants to provide deeper learning about second language acquisition were limited to summer institutes (where the attendance of teachers was voluntary) or, occasionally, to a set of two or more workshop sessions such as the set attended by Julia (Classroom Teacher 5) that were available only to small numbers of school staff. In relying on workshop participants returning to schools with new knowledge and skills, the ESL consultants made use of the leveraging strategy described by Hansen-Thomas et al. (2013) as training the trainers.

**Policies.** The policies dimension of implementation of Honig’s (2006) framework focused attention on how the characteristics of policies and the instruments accompanying them might influence implementation processes. I begin by examining the role played in the implementation of ELL-related professional learning by policy instruments. This is followed by a discussion of the role of policy design in influencing HDSB’s implementation of the MOE’s directive to provide this learning.

**Policy instruments and the implementation of ELL-related professional learning.** Policy studies researchers identified that policies are accompanied by instruments intended to further
implementation (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). The MOE used a number of instruments to encourage the implementation of its ESL policy document (2007b) and the use of the STEP (2011b) tracking form. Mandates were one such instrument and were associated with both the 2007 document and the STEP tracking form. In Chapter 4, I characterized HDSB’s implementation of the directive to provide ELL-related professional learning as incremental. This incrementalism may be accounted for by McDonnell and Elmore’s typology in which implementation was conceptualized as constrained when policy mandates required greater institutional capacity than was available when at the outset of implementation. With the equivalent of just one full-time consultant overseeing ESL programming throughout the 2007-2013 time frame of this study, HDSB did not have the institutional capacity to provide a vigorous program of ongoing ELL-related professional learning for all school staff working with ELLs.

Inducements were another type of policy instrument identified by McDonnell and Elmore (1987) and in evidence with respect to MOE ESL policies. Funding for ELLs was given to all Ontario school boards with ELLs attending their schools. Additional funding came in the form of the ESL policy implementation projects for which HDSB applied annually. Much of the ELL-related professional learning provided by HDSB occurred through these projects, either directly (through the provision of workshops in 2012 and 2013) or indirectly (through the production of ELL-related publications by HDSB for schools within its boundaries). Inducements were vital to the ability of HDSB’s ESL consultants to provide ELL-related professional learning.

Capacity building was central to this study; it was both an instrument accompanying the MOE’s ESL policies and an activity in which the two board ESL consultants engaged in order to implement ESL policy and help build ESL teams at the school level. The MOE’s capacity building actions in support of ESL policy implementation have been outlined earlier, including the provision of resource documents (MOE, 2005; 2007d; 2008c; 2008d; 2011c) and STEP (MOE, 2011b) testing materials; and ESL policy implementation projects. The provision of a mentor to the ESL consultants
in HDSB was another example of capacity building on the part of the MOE. McDonnell and Elmore (1987) identified that capacity building as a policy instrument implicated a long time horizon, i.e., policy formulators did not expect rapid implementation. Given that the *ELL Policies and Procedures* document was released in 2007 and the ESL policy implementation projects for school boards were ongoing at the time of data collection for this study in 2013, it appeared that the MOE accepted that implementation of its ESL policies would occur gradually and would require its active support.

The finding that the two ESL consultants were the primary initiators and providers of ELL-related professional learning was consistent with research literature findings that school boards play a key role in building instruction-related capacity (Coburn et al., 2009; Massell & Goertz, 2002). HDSB’s ESL consultants were engaged in a process of developing the knowledge and skills of school staff with respect to ELLs; this was consistent with the first of three strategies in Massell and Goertz’s conception of how school boards build instructional capacity. However, likely because Massell and Goertz’s conceptualization of capacity building related to instructional changes on a large scale, the activities of HDSB’s ESL consultants did not map precisely onto it. For example, Massell and Goertz’s second strategy involving school board alignment of policies, curricula, and resources was evident to a very limited extent in HDSB through the publication of the board’s document about ELLs with possible special education needs. This was an attempt to align ELL-related procedures with the HDSB’s procedures for all students with possible special education needs; the publication was also a professional learning initiative. The third aspect of school board capacity-building in Massell and Goertz’s model involved the use of data to guide decision-making. Again, there was evidence of this activity only on a very limited basis in HDSB. The consultants engaged in a form of data gathering focused on determining whether ELLs previously identified as such by schools really needed continuing language support. This gathering of data occurred partly out of administrative concerns (i.e., having accurate statistics about the number of ELLs in HDSB) and partly for programming purposes (i.e., providing services for ELLs in most need of language support). It can best be
characterized as a small-scale initiative tied to an MOE ESL policy implementation project. ELL-related professional learning was an outcome of this data gathering initiative because the ESL consultants included information and activities about identifying ELLs in the May, 2013 workshop described in Chapter 4. Nonetheless, data gathering as described by the HDSB ESL consultants did not have the goal of assembling a board-wide picture of ELL-related achievement as in Massell and Goertz’s model, nor was it an activity that was part of a board-wide initiative to increase student achievement (Levin & Fullan, 2008; Rorrer et al., 2008). The gathering of data by the HDSB ESL consultants, in other words, did not appear to be an ongoing activity driving the choice of targets or topics for ELL-related professional learning with an overall goal of increasing student achievement as conceived by Levin and Fullan and Rorrer et al.

HDSB’s consultants reported that building relationships was fundamental to their efforts to implement both ELL-related professional learning and MOE ESL policy generally. Evidence of the consultants’ use of relationship building to further implementation was found in interactions with school staff that were consistently characterized as conversations, both by the consultants themselves and by school staff such as Victoria (ESL Teacher 3). In addition, the consultants’ deliberate selection of the volume and type of written material to distribute to school staff reflected an awareness of and attention to the multiple policy demands placed on school staff; avoiding overwhelming school staff with too much ELL-related information was another strategy used by the consultants to build relationships. Further evidence of the consultants’ focus on building relationships with school-level staff was the consultants’ refusal to describe or present themselves to school staff as experts, thereby (in the consultants’ view) avoiding a perception of a divide between school staff and the board. This reliance on relationship building may have been a response to the very practical issue of the ESL consultants’ lack of authority to mandate school-level participation in professional learning activities; at the same time, relationship building was consistent with core beliefs about professional learning expressed by the consultants, including the belief that optimal learning occurred through bidirectional
discussions that addressed problems or issues identified by teachers or tutors themselves. The ESL consultants’ focus on building relationships was another factor contributing to the incremental implementation of ELL-related professional learning in HDSB.

Accountability measures have been identified by education policy researchers as an instrument used by policy formulators to promote implementation (Honig, 2006). The MOE instituted the use of the *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) tracking forms as an accountability measure, and this influenced HDSB’s consultants’ actions and priorities with respect to ELL-related PL. As the consultants commented several times in their interviews, upon its release, *STEP* became the driver of HDSB’s ESL consultants’ actions with respect to implementing ESL policy. In tandem, *STEP* also became the focus of the ELL-related professional learning provided by the consultants, even though the consultants did not focus on *STEP*’s accountability aspect in workshops for school staff. It appeared that the consultants preferred using the vehicle of relationship building to framing *STEP* to school staff as an accountability measure.

**ESL policy design.** Policy researchers conceptualized implementation as facilitated when there is coherence across and within policy documents (Desimone, 2002; Fuhrman, 1993b). While *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) was not itself a policy document, it was the reification of an accountability measure promised in the MOE’s 2007 *ELL Policies and Procedures* document and the two documents were therefore allied. As I discussed in Chapter 1, coherence across the 2007 policy document and *STEP* was evident in a common emphasis on all teachers sharing responsibility for ELL’s language acquisition and in the use of consistent terminology. Perhaps in part because of this coherence across the documents, the two consultants expressed clear and congruent interpretations of how *STEP* was to be implemented; that is, the tracking forms were to be completed by teachers rather than by ELL tutors. Coherence in MOE ESL documents therefore contributed to the implementation of the tracking forms in accordance with MOE expectations. This was evident in the implementation of the *STEP* tracking forms in Elementary School 1. Although this represented implementation on a small scale,
the professional learning provided by the ESL consultants to two teachers from Elementary School 1 enabled these teachers to assist their teacher colleagues in completing the tracking forms for the school’s ELLs.

I noted in Chapter 2 that the conceptualization of coherence as articulated by Honig and Hatch (2004) differed from Fuhrman’s (1993b). In Honig and Hatch’s conceptualization, coherence was not an attribute of policy. Rather, it was a process of negotiation between a school board and its schools, focused on balancing external policy demands with the circumstances and capacity of individual schools. There was evidence of this conceptualization of coherence in operation in HDSB. The consultants expressed awareness of within-school factors (such as staff turnover or a lack of teachers with ESL credentials) that might constrain the implementation of the STEP (2011b) tracking forms. This implementation was the consultants’ highest priority at the time this study was conducted. The consultants used professional learning opportunities such as workshops and presentations at staff meetings to introduce STEP; however, the consultants both reported and accepted that actual implementation of STEP-related professional learning would occur over time and with small groups of teachers, administrators, Learning Resource staff, and ELL tutors. Although their goal was for the eventual implementation of STEP throughout HDSB, the consultants balanced this goal with their knowledge of variation in ESL capacity at the level of individual schools. Thus two conceptualizations of coherence (i.e., that of Fuhrman and subsequently that of Honig and Hatch) were evident in ESL policy implementation as it occurred in HDSB.

McDonnell and Elmore (1987) had theorized that implementation is constrained if policy mandates did not delineate the consequences of non-compliance. Although STEP (MOE, 2011b) was explicitly characterized by the MOE as an accountability measure, there were no timelines given to school boards for full implementation. Thus HDBS’s ESL consultants were able to implement STEP and the professional learning associated with it over time without fear of MOE sanctions. Policy design, in other words, gave the consultants the discretion to implement STEP in a manner consistent
with school board context. Similarly, the 2007 ESL policy document’s reference to professional learning was not prescriptive; that is, it did not mandate the form, duration, or content of the ELL-related professional learning to be provided by school boards. This, too, gave the ESL consultants in HDSB discretion in implementing ELL-related professional learning according to local needs and current capacity (both fiscal and human).

The ESL consultants identified the implementation of the use of the *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) tracking forms as a priority, but findings from the implementation research literature offered conflicting perspectives about the implementation processes associated with this endeavour. On one hand, specificity was identified as facilitating implementation (Desimone, 2002). The *STEP* document outlined a specific implementation task (i.e., the completion by teachers of a specific form as prescribed by the MOE). On the other hand, the change required by *STEP* was close to the core of schooling because it required classroom teachers to assess ELLs through multiple observations and to differentiate instruction accordingly. This type of change was theorized to pose greater implementation challenges than changes at a distance from the classroom (Honig, 2006; Levin, 2001). Further, HDSB’s consultants identified that there was a gap between current and required capacity with respect to classroom teachers using the *STEP* form; according to the implementation literature (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987), this, too, would be expected to pose implementation challenges. Arguably, then, there was tension between *STEP*’s specificity (which in the literature was conceptualized as facilitating implementation) and the nature of the change it required (which was conceptualized as making implementation tasks more complex). This tension may have been one of several factors contributing to the incremental fashion in which *STEP* and the professional learning associated with it were being implemented in HDSB.

The primary targets named in the *STEP* document (MOE, 2011b) were teachers; secondary targets in a supporting role were school board staff and school principals. The *STEP* document did not reflect HDSB’s model of ESL programming in which ELL tutors played a significant role; nor did the
document address the specific issue of international students, some of whom attended HDSB schools for as little as a semester or a year. Thus, in spite of the apparently specific and prescriptive nature of the *STEP* document, it did not map well onto several aspects of the HDSB setting. This, too, may account for the incremental implementation of *STEP* and its associated professional learning in HDSB. This incrementalism reflected processes characterized by McLaughlin (1990) as mutual adaptation; that is, the ESL consultants were implementing both *STEP*, in particular, and aspects of the MOE’s 2007 *ELL Policies and Procedures* document (including its directive to provide ELL-related professional learning) in a manner reflecting their perceptions of HDSB’s context and capacity. The MOE, for its part, appeared to recognize that ESL policies would be implemented over time in particular contexts; this was evident in the support provided to school boards by the MOE’s implementation projects that were ongoing at the time this study was undertaken.

**People.** Honig’s (2006) conceptualization of education policy implementation included the dimension of people. Two aspects of this dimension were reflected in the findings of this study. The first related to opportunities for implementer learning and sense-making, while the second involved the normative aspects of policy implementation in HDSB.

**Implementer learning and sense-making in HDSB.** This study’s findings were consistent with empirical work into individual and collective sense-making processes (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Leithwood, 2010; Spillane et al., 2002). These studies emphasized that implementers need opportunities to learn about policy goals and to construct understandings about the changes in their practice required by new policies. In HDSB, the two ESL consultants were the implementers of ESL policy, including the requirement to provide ELL-related professional learning. Their congruent views relating to ESL policy and ELL-related professional learning may have arisen from their collegial relationship and frequent communication; that is, the two consultants were a community, if only a small one. Establishing priorities for ESL programming (school-based ESL teams) and for ELL-related professional learning (implementing the use of the *STEP* [MOE, 2011b] tracking forms) can be
inferred as outcomes of the consultants’ frequent interactions with each other.

The MOE Sharing Days were another venue for HDSB’s ESL consultants to co-construct understandings of ESL policy, as were discussions with the mentor provided by the MOE. Furthermore, the apparently close links the consultants had with the MOE may have reinforced the consultants’ knowledge of the first principles (McLaughlin, 2006) underlying *ELL Policies and Procedures* (MOE, 2007b) and *STEP* (MOE, 2011b). Additional reinforcement of the consultants’ understanding of the *STEP* tracking forms may have come from their shared, pre-*STEP* experience with the use of observable language continua in assessing ELLs and planning instruction. Finally, the other half of their roles with the board involved working within the collaborative learning model of professional learning. This, too, may have given the consultants opportunities for co-constructing understandings of professional learning in general. All these opportunities and venues for learning and discussion may account for the consistent views about ELL-related professional learning expressed by the two consultants as well as the consultants’ congruent actions as they implemented ELL-related professional learning in HDSB.

In a school board where distance between schools constrained travelling to professional learning activities at a given site, technology may have offered practical alternatives. As discussed in this study’s findings, however, many of the school-level participants expressed a decided preference for face-to-face meetings over the use of email or virtual gatherings. While the two consultants formed their own small community in which they could discuss and interpret ESL policy, other study participants in HDSB either did not have this opportunity on a regular basis or did not value the potential of technology to provide a venue for sense-making.

Honig (2007) identified school board staff as engaged in their own learning while simultaneously providing professional learning for school-level staff. These simultaneous processes were in evidence in HDSB, where both the ESL consultants spoke openly of their own learning processes while at the same time providing and guiding most of the ELL-related professional learning
that occurred in HDSB.

**Normative aspects of implementing ELL-related professional learning in HDSB.** In the literature review in Chapter 2, I discussed researchers’ identification of normative aspects of policy implementation. McLaughlin (2006) stated that a benefit of implementation studies employing qualitative research approaches was in identifying the role of implementers’ beliefs, experiences, and interactions in implementation processes and outcomes. Several aspects of the implementation of ELL-related professional learning in HDSB reflected the normative aspects of implementers’ decisions, actions, and views.

The active and ongoing role played by the ESL consultants in ELL-related professional learning in HDSB may be accounted for by Brain et al.’s (2006) typology of teacher responses to education policies. Although the two ESL consultants were not acting in the role of teachers, the typology’s conception of implementer actions arising from the acceptance or rejection of either policy goals or means is useful. Both consultants reported accepting the goals of the *ELL Policies and Procedures, K–12* (MOE, 2007b) and *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) documents. This acceptance was captured succinctly in Lydia’s stated expectation that HDSB staff would have what she characterized as “the same access to understanding of ELLs as any other board” (P1, 0260); it was also seen in the consultants’ stated goal of increasing the involvement of classroom teachers in ESL programming and in the consultants’ prioritizing of *STEP*-related implementation. Further, both consultants accepted that professional learning was central to growing school-level ESL capacity and implementing the use of the *STEP* tracking form. Consistent with Brain et al.’s typology, the acceptance by the ESL consultants of policy goals as well as means appeared to facilitate the implementation of ESL policies and ELL-related professional learning in HDSB. The consultants viewed the goals of creating school-level ESL teams and implementing *STEP* as involving incremental processes; these were goals, in other words, that the consultants accepted would be achieved gradually in the HDSB context. Implementing *STEP* involved two phases for school staff: first, completing *STEP* tracking forms for
ELLs; and second, using information from the tracking forms to guide classroom instruction. At the time this study was undertaken, and consistent with the incremental implementation of ESL policy, the ESL consultants’ focus was on the first phase.

Another normative aspect of implementation was evident in how the ESL consultants framed STEP (MOE, 2011b) to school staff in the course of ELL-related professional learning activities (Coburn, 2006). As discussed earlier, the ESL consultants acknowledged STEP’s accountability aspect in their interviews with me but they did not emphasize it in workshops for school staff. Rather, HDSB’s consultants focused on the utility of the STEP tracking forms to school staff. While this emphasis by the consultants may have been a strategy to convince teachers to invest in learning about STEP, the consultants’ promotion of STEP’s purpose and value in planning instruction may also have reflected STEP’s congruence with the ESL consultants’ previous experience with and support for the use of observable language continua even before STEP’s release.

The literature I reviewed in Chapter 2 did not allude to the potential for professional learning to have symbolic value. Yet in HDSB, the perceived absence of professional learning opportunities appeared to have significant symbolic value for some participants. As I reported in Chapter 4, some of the ELL tutors linked the reduction in their formal professional learning opportunities to a change for the worse in HDSB priorities with respect to ESL programming. For some of the participants in this study, then, the provision or absence of ELL-related professional learning opportunities carried significance beyond the practical issue of acquiring new knowledge or skills. How and with whom ELL-related professional learning was being implemented in HDSB was interpreted by at least some school-level staff as either an indication of the value placed on their work by the school board or a worrying potential trend in ESL programming.

Related to the symbolic aspect of where, how often, and with whom ELL-related professional learning opportunities took place was the concept of sharing. Repeated references to sharing by many school-level ELL tutors and ESL teachers appeared to represent more than a desire for social
interactions with peers. Professional learning gatherings were sites where participants’ experiences and perspectives could be validated, as Gabriella (ELL Tutor 8) commented. In her role as ESL consultant, Lydia acknowledged this view but made implementation decisions based on priorities she and Claire had identified for the system as a whole—namely, implementing professional learning that would support the goal of building ESL teams and instituting the use of the STEP (MOE, 2011b) tracking forms.

All three dimensions of Honig’s (2006) framework interacted to produce the processes associated with the implementation of ELL-related professional learning in the specific context of HDSB. For example, the hallmark of the implementation of ELL-related professional learning in HDSB was incrementalism. This incrementalism reflected ELL-related professional learning that was parallel to rather than integral to collaborative inquiry (places); a changing model of ESL program delivery from tutor-led to ESL team-based (places); an implementation task made complex by staff turnover and variation in staff ESL credentials and experience (places); the discretion allowed to implementers by policy (policies); the long time horizon for the implementation of ESL policies that the consultants recognized and accepted (people); and the consultants’ beliefs about professional learning (people).

Honig’s (2006) framework conceptualized the dimensions of policies, people, and places as interacting in a bidirectional manner. In this study, for example, flattened implementation structures (i.e., the places dimension) allowed for ELL-related professional learning policy to be implemented by the ESL consultants without mediation by other policy actors such as principals or department heads; concurrently, absent the authority of principals or senior members of the board, the ESL consultants (i.e., the people dimension) used their knowledge of the local setting to build direct relationships with school staff that were founded on goodwill. Indeed, while all three dimensions of Honig’s framework played a role in the implementation, findings from this study suggest that the ESL consultants’ priorities, beliefs, and decisions were central to how ELL-related professional learning was
implemented in HDSB.

**Characterizing ELL-Related Professional Learning in HDSB**

McLaughlin (2006) conceptualized education policy implementation processes as dependent upon local implementation structures, norms of action, and capacity. The influence on ELL-related professional learning of HDSB’s implementation structures was discussed earlier in this chapter. Local norms of action of particular relevance to implementation in HDSB have also been identified; these included the extensive use of ELL tutors as part of ESL programming, the inclusion in ESL programming of some teachers of ESL classes and ELL tutors without ESL training or credentials, and a collaborative inquiry model of professional learning with which ELL-professional learning was parallel rather than integral. In this section of the chapter, I focus on capacity; more particularly, on how capacity building in the form of ELL-related professional learning in HDSB can be characterized in light of empirical findings and conceptualizations from the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

The two ESL consultants characterized themselves as learners as well as providers of learning for others in HDSB. Their learning was consistent with continuing professional learning (CPL) as conceptualized by Webster-Wright (2009) because the consultants’ learning was ongoing and woven into the fabric of their daily work rather than centred primarily on discrete activities or events. The consultants’ learning resulted not only from the experiences they had as overseers of ESL programming but also from discussions with each other in which they co-constructed an understanding of how to administer ESL programming and implement ESL policy in the context of their own school board. Further, the consultants deepened their knowledge of second language acquisition through such shared projects as preparing HDSB’s publication about ELLs with possible special education needs (2010). The situated, constructed aspects of workplace learning from Webster-Wright’s conceptualization of CPL were evident in the consultants’ learning.

Several of the ELL tutors and one of the ESL teachers (Sandra, ESL Teacher 1) reported having learned about working with ELLs through on-the-ground learning or through transferring
knowledge and skills from previous work experience. An example of the latter was the report from several ELL tutors that they leveraged their previous work experience as Educational Assistants in their current roles with ELLs. These participants’ characterizations of their professional learning differed from the ESL consultants’ continuing professional learning. On-the-ground learning and drawing on knowledge from previous types of work experience were in most respects strategies these participants reported using in the absence of other opportunities to learn about working with ELLs; the participants did not characterize these as supplemental to other forms of professional learning or as arising from a foundation of theoretical knowledge about second language learning. Among the ESL teachers and ELL tutors participating in the study, only two reported experiences and perspectives that approximated Webster-Wright’s (2009) conceptualization of CPL. These participants were Victoria (ESL Teacher 3), whose descriptions of attending summer institutes and accessing MOE-supported websites merged with the experience she gained in her stable position as an ESL teacher; and Rosemary (ELL Tutor 3), an experienced and credentialed ELL tutor who took advantage of ELL-related professional learning opportunities outside work hours and who supplemented these opportunities with reading articles and documents at home.

The MOE (2007c) conceptualized professional learning as encompassing three components: training, staff development, and professional development. There was a training component to the STEP-related (MOE, 2011b) professional learning workshops provided by HDSB’s consultants in 2012 and 2013: workshop participants worked with sample tracking forms and anonymized data relating to ELLs and practiced completing the forms. This STEP training was atypical in HDSB: most of the ELL-related professional learning activities described by the participants did not reflect a component that was consistent with the MOE’s conceptualization of training. The second component of the MOE’s conceptualization of professional learning (i.e., staff development) was equated by the MOE with system-wide learning activities. Not surprisingly, given the low numbers of ELLs relative to the board’s overall student population, none of the data I collected suggested that there had been
ELL-related staff development from 2007 to 2013 involving all of HDSB’s teachers and principals. Board-wide workshops at the beginning of the time frame of this study were provided only to ELL tutors, and even these opportunities had been replaced over time in HDSB by workshops involving staff in various roles from a few selected schools rather than for a whole region or for the entire board. Characterizing recent initiatives as staff development would therefore not be consistent with the MOE’s conceptualization. The third component of the MOE’s conceptualization (i.e., professional development) involved activities or action research projects chosen by individual teachers or groups of teachers. Because ELL-related professional learning was predominantly board-led rather than teacher-initiated in HDSB, the MOE’s third component involving teacher-initiated professional learning was in evidence primarily in the meetings the consultants had with individual or small groups of teachers who had invited the consultants to provide information about specific ESL-related issues. Additional evidence of a professional development component of ELL-related professional learning included the consultants’ description of some of their own learning as self-directed. There were similar reports from several other participants about their own self-directed learning, most notably Victoria and Rosemary. Generally speaking, however, the tripartite conception of professional learning as outlined by the MOE did not fit well with ELL-related professional learning in HDSB. This may be in part because the model of ESL programming in HDSB included ELL tutors as well as teachers, while the MOE’s conceptualization focused on the latter group. The poor fit may also have been because the MOE’s conceptualization applied less well in contexts where professional learning relates to students who, as was the case with HDSB’s ELLs, are few in number relative to the general student population.

Focusing specifically on professional learning for ESL teachers, Crandall (1993) had argued that ELL-related professional learning as actually implemented often incorporated elements of three conceptually distinct models: mentorship; theory to practice; and inquiry and reflection. These three models are consistent with different facets of the ELL-related professional learning of HDSB’s two ESL consultants themselves. They were mentored by an experienced ESL teacher; they had learned
about second language acquisition theory through ESL courses accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers as well as through self-directed reading; and MOE implementation projects as well as local ESL programming issues prompted the consultants jointly to identify issues of relevance to the HDSB context, to make observations, and, after reflection, to decide on courses of action. All three models were reflected at one time or another in their own learning as the consultants described it; no particular model appeared to have been used consistently or to have been prioritized by the consultants. Instead, it seemed that they valued and reported benefitting from a variety of models of ELL-related professional learning.

Further, the ELL-related professional learning provided by the two ESL consultants to HDSB staff did not map neatly onto the three models described by Crandall (1993). *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) workshops, for example, included references to concepts about second language learning (theory to practice) but were at times structured to provide those in attendance with the opportunity to discuss and reflect upon ELL-related concerns in their own schools (inquiry and reflective practice). While Lydia (ESL Consultant 1) did not want to be viewed as an ESL expert, the description given by Tyler (ESL Teacher 2) of his meeting with her incorporated a dimension of mentorship but was also an opportunity for him to reflect on the instructional approaches he used in his ESL class. Their use of different models of professional learning can be interpreted as reflecting adaptability on the part of HDSB’s ESL consultants. Although there were concepts (e.g., just-in-time learning) that were at the core of the consultants’ beliefs about professional learning, they appeared able to be flexible in their approach to providing ELL-related professional learning. A finding that was presented in Chapter 4 was that the vehicles for ELL-related professional learning in HDSB changed over the time frame of this study; that is, from large-group workshops led at times by external providers to a mix of smaller, ESL consultant-led workshops, presentations, and meetings with individual teachers. These changes may have been driven in part by the budget constraints alluded to by Claire (ESL Consultant 2), but arguably they were also evidence of the ESL consultants’ flexibility in using a variety of professional
learning models and vehicles.

Guskey (2002) and Desimone (2009) proffered different conceptualizations of the theory of action underpinning teachers’ professional learning. Although in Chapter 4 I identified differing theories of action in HDSB’s printed publications, there was not enough data in this study to identify whether a particular theory of action was predominant in animating the ESL consultants’ approach to the provision of professional learning. HDSB’s ESL consultants did not link ELL-related professional learning to improvements in ELLs’ achievement; this link was integral to the theories of action conceptualized by both Guskey and Desimone. Massell and Goertz (2002) did not advocate a particular conceptualization of professional learning, but had found that school boards varied in how they defined the problem of building teachers’ knowledge and skills (i.e., whether boards focused on building disciplinary knowledge or on providing particular vehicles for learning). The latter was not the emphasis of HDSB’s consultants: they used a variety of vehicles for ELL-related professional learning and, with ELLs forming a small proportion of the board’s student population, may have had little influence over the board’s decisions about preferred professional learning vehicles. Instead, it appeared that the consultants focused on areas and issues over which they did have influence—namely, on small-scale activities and opportunities to build the ESL knowledge and $STEP$-related (MOE, 2011b) skills of ESL teachers and classroom teachers as well as tutors, school administrators, and Learning Resource staff.

Some researchers found that structured professional learning activities across all subject areas needed to be differentiated in order to reflect such implementer variables as years of experience (Grossman & Thompson, 2004). Such differentiation within structured professional learning activities posed a challenge for HDSB’s ESL consultants. The ELLs in HDSB did not represent a single cohort; similarly, the classroom teachers, ELL tutors, and ESL teachers presented with a wide range of credentials and experience related to second language instruction. This range was evident not only across groups but also within groups: for example, the work backgrounds, credentials, experience, and
motivation to learn about working with ELLs varied greatly within the group of ELL tutors who participated in this study. Yet representatives from all these groups were brought together in the workshops that took place towards the end of the time frame studied in this case. The consultants were aware of these differences in participants’ backgrounds and roles, but had a limited ability to tailor ELL-related professional learning that occurred through workshops. With little funding, they prioritized bringing together staff with the potential to form school-based ESL teams over offering separate workshops to sub-groups of staff working with ELLs. Where it seemed the consultants did differentiate professional learning was in the context of the meetings and conversations they had with individuals or small groups; this was evident in Lydia’s comment about the type or nature of ELL-related material she would leave with individual teachers.

Researchers studying teachers’ professional learning found that teachers needed both subject-specific disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical knowledge if they were to make changes in their instructional approaches (Grossman & Thompson, 2004). In the case of a discipline such as second language teaching, which had very few practitioners across HDSB, there was evidence that second language teaching knowledge had at times been distilled into a series of strategies or tips for classroom teachers. A focus on strategies was seen in the literature as reductionist with respect to the second language teaching discipline (Arkoudis, 2006). The consultants were aware of deficit conceptions of ELLs and of second language learning; they welcomed STEP (MOE, 2011b) at least in part because it focused teachers’ attention on ELLs’ strengths rather than on language deficits. The consultants also viewed STEP as a platform for drawing teachers’ attention away from strategies to deeper discussions about aligning instruction with the needs of individual ELLs. In HDSB, the learning provided by the ESL consultants is best characterized as a mixture of strategies and deeper knowledge about working with ELLs. The former was discussed by Lydia (ESL Consultant 1), who said that sometimes a list of strategies was the most appropriate form of learning to offer to busy classroom teachers; an example of deeper learning included the May, 2013 workshop into which the
consultants incorporated group discussion about how to identify ELLs and how *STEP* (MOE, 2007b) assessments have the potential to inform instructional planning for individual ELLs. Similarly, Victoria, the only ESL teacher who described providing some ELL-related professional learning for her secondary school colleagues, included both strategies and deeper constructs relating to second language learning. She distributed a list of tips for classroom teachers, but she also made an annual presentation to school staff using information from HDSB’s 2009 publication about teaching ELLs across the curriculum. While both strategies and deeper constructs relating to second language learning were therefore included in the ELL-related professional learning that occurred in HDSB, the constructs introduced to school staff in HDSB did not (and, given the small numbers of ELLs in HDSB, likely could not) approach the breadth and depth of the knowledge base that McGraner and Saenz (2009) identified as relevant for classroom teachers of ELLs.

Collaboration between ESL teachers and classroom teachers was found in the literature to be a potential vehicle for professional learning (Davison, 2006; Fu et al., 2007), although some researchers found that, even when collaboration occurred, it was associated with challenges of bridging differences in subject-specific disciplinary perspectives (Arkoudis, 2003). Not surprisingly, I did not find evidence of collaboration between inexperienced or uncredentialled ESL teachers and their colleagues who taught other subjects. Of the three secondary school ESL teachers who participated in this study, only one (Victoria, ESL Teacher 3) reported working in collaboration with her teacher colleagues. With her experience and her ESL teaching credentials, Victoria was able to work collaboratively on a *STEP* (MOE, 2011b) assessment with a classroom teacher and participate in discussions about choosing curriculum materials for ELLs in Secondary School 3’s international education program. While some ESL teachers and classroom teachers reported having positive working relationships with ELL tutors, these did not involve sustained collaboration. Researchers found that there were gaps in professional learning opportunities relating to how teachers and paraprofessionals could work together to provide optimal programming for students (Keating &
O’Connor, 2012). This finding was apparent in HDSB: I did not find evidence in this study of professional learning centred on the nature and potential of teacher-paraprofessional collaboration. The most truly collaborative relationship in HDSB appeared to be between the two ESL consultants.

I have argued that interactions among all three dimensions of Honig’s (2006) framework for education policy implementation contributed to the processes associated with the implementation of ELL-related professional learning policy in HDSB; further, I have identified similarities and differences in participants’ perceptions of ELL-related professional learning. In the next section of Chapter 5, I discuss the significance of the study’s findings for research and practice; the limitations of the study; and the implications of the study for future research.

**Significance of the Findings**

This study contributes to the education policy implementation literature in several ways. First, in contrast to a characterization of implementation studies as “the dismal science of policy studies” (Pal, 2010, p. 205) that repeatedly found that implementers did not carry out the goals established by policy formulators (McLaughlin, 2006), this study confirmed that the implementation of ELL-related learning as required by MOE ESL policy (2007b) was occurring in HDSB, even if in an incremental manner. This suggested that education policy is not invariably refracted (Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2009) as it is implemented.

Second, this study contributes to the growing body of empirical implementation studies using a school board (rather than individual schools) as the unit of analysis. As I noted in the literature review in Chapter 2, some researchers (e.g., DeBray, 2005) have argued that the school is the most appropriate unit of analysis for implementation investigations. I identified in this study that the school board’s ESL consultants played a vital role in providing ELL-related professional learning. The finding that the board ESL consultants and some school-level staff had different perspectives about and experiences with ELL-related professional learning confirms the viability and significance of studying education policy implementation through the case of a school board rather than a school.
Third, through the selection of a methodological approach resulting in an in-depth portrait of the implementation processes underway in HDSB, this study answered the call of McLaughlin (2006) for qualitative, site-based implementation research to uncover the normative as well as technical aspects of education policy implementation. For example, this study described the ESL consultants’ beliefs about ELL-related professional learning, their interpretations of ESL policy goals, their implementation priorities, and their rationales for identifying topics and targets of professional learning. In addition, the study described the perceptions by HDSB school-level staff of ELL-related professional learning. These perceptions varied within and across categories of participants, reflecting diverse views about formats, topics, and relevance of ELL-related professional learning to their practice. These findings were as important in painting a portrait of implementation in HDSB as findings about the technical aspects of implementation, such as the collapsed nature of implementation structures in the study’s setting.

This study makes a contribution to empirical work at the intersection of rural education and second language teaching and learning. I applied Zehler et al.’s (2008) framework of ESL capacity-building in school boards with emerging ELL populations. This framework was developed in the context of American school boards; testing it in a Canadian context, I found the framework to be useful in characterizing the development of ESL programming generally in HDSB’s rural context and in identifying that HDSB was, in most respects, at Stage Three of Zehler et al.’s framework. I also identified a potential limitation of the framework—namely, that its assumptions about drivers of growth in emerging ELL populations did not include the possibility of sharp spikes in ELL populations through such mechanisms as the establishment of international education programs.

Through its inclusion of ELL tutors, this study addressed a gap in the professional learning literature with respect to the provision of professional learning for paraprofessionals and, more particularly, for paraprofessionals working with ELLs. Most of the tutors in the study regretted that they were not offered as many professional learning opportunities as they wished; at the same time,
the range of experience levels and disparities in TESL credentials among the tutors suggested that the provision of professional learning opportunities could present challenges for those designing professional learning. Furthermore, I did not find any evidence of professional learning centring on paraprofessional-professional relationships; this confirms a finding from empirical work relating to the area of special education (Keating & O’Connor, 2012; Williams, Brien, & LeBlanc, 2012) and suggests that the topic of these relationships warrants further empirical study.

This study also contributes to educational practice in several ways. First, the mismatch between the board’s primary model of professional learning (collaborative inquiry) and the learning needs of staff who worked with ELLs suggests that some board-wide models of professional learning may overlook instructional issues relating to certain groups of students such as ELLs who are present in classrooms in small numbers. Furthermore, the collaborative inquiry model of professional learning as enacted in this study did not include the participation of paraprofessionals (i.e., ELL tutors). In order to ensure equitable outcomes for all students, the implication for practice is the need for school boards to study the types of professional learning models in use in order to ensure that these models do not exclude consideration of the professional learning needs of classroom teachers of ELLs and that the professional learning needs of paraprofessionals are also taken into consideration.

Second, the introduction or scaling up of international education programs in boards with limited previous experience with ELLs has implications for capacity building. Introducing or growing these programs rapidly raises the question of the extent to which board and schools have (or can acquire) the resources necessary to support teachers and paraprofessionals in learning to work with international education students. This has implications for the well-being, academic achievement, and academic goals of ELLs in such programs.

A third way in which this study is significant for educational practice is in its finding that the MOE provided key support for ELL-related professional learning in HDSB’s rural context. This suggests that downloading of exclusive responsibility for ELL-related professional learning to school
boards with small numbers of ELLs is not feasible. School boards, teachers, and paraprofessionals require long-term support in multiple forms (e.g., funding, assessment materials, mentorship) from ministries or departments of education in order to build the capacity necessary to serve the instructional needs of ELLs in rural settings.

A fourth implication of this study for practice was that professional learning predicated on views of ELLs as a single cohort is not likely to meet teachers’ instructional needs. ESL policy, resource, and curriculum documents alluded to variation within ELL populations; the ESL consultants in this study recognized this variation and promoted the utility of observable language continua to teachers as an aid to designing instruction for individual ELLs. The finding that there were different sub-populations of ELLs within HDSB suggested that even in a school board with small numbers of ELLs, the professional learning that is provided for teachers and paraprofessionals needs to account for differences within a board’s ELL population.

Limitations of the Study

Coladarci (2007) noted the absence of a widely accepted definition by education researchers of the term rural. A limitation of this study was that I used a classification of rural that was based on the MOE’s rural and small communities index of school boards in Ontario. While HDSB was in the MOE’s top quartile with respect to this index, it was not a remote school board where the existence of fly-in communities might have posed additional challenges for the provision of professional learning.

A second limitation of this study was that only one participant from the category of school principals took part. Although perspectives about the role of school principals were offered by participants in other categories, the voices of school principals themselves did not appear in the study beyond the interview comments made by Warren, the principal of School 1.

A third limitation of the study was that the data were more robust from the fall of 2009 onwards than for the earlier time frame of this case study (i.e., from 2007 to the middle of 2009). The perspectives and experiences of HDSB’s ESL consultants were central to the portrait of ELL-related
professional learning that emerged from data relating to the latter part of the time frame of the study. Although I was able to collect data from other categories of participants who were working in HDSB between 2007 and the middle of 2009, a richer portrait might have emerged had HDSB consultants from 2007 to the middle of 2009 been available for interviews.

**Implications for Future Research**

Several issues arise from this study that might inform future empirical work. One such issue relates to the policy implementation literature. I found that relationship building was prioritized by the two ESL consultants used in order to implement ELL-related professional learning in HDSB. Future empirical work could investigate this vehicle and its use. For example, research questions might include whether the use of relationship building as a means of implementing education policy is seen in other rural school boards; if there are differences or similarities in the use of relationship building in rural versus urban school boards; and if relationship building plays a role in policy implementation in sectors other than education. In this study, relationship building as described by the ESL consultants required a considerable time horizon and ongoing investment of the consultants’ attention and time; yet, they found it to be central to their policy implementation efforts in the absence of their own authority to mandate ELL-related professional learning for school-level staff. This raises the additional question of whether and under which circumstances relationship building is used to further policy implementation in other research contexts. An additional question relates to the people dimension of Honig’s framework, i.e., whether the impact on implementation of this dimension is found to be predominant across many settings or whether all three dimensions of people, places, and policies can be characterized as contributing evenly to implementation processes and outcomes. These questions are likely to be best investigated through studies using qualitative approaches that allow for in-depth understandings of implementers’ decision-making to emerge. Studies in which data are collected over a time horizon greater than in the current study would also provide greater insight into implementers’ use of relationship building as well as the implementation outcomes associated with it. These
questions are relevant not only to the implementation research literature but also to policy formulators: in the current study, policy gave the ESL consultants the time and discretion they needed to identify and use relationship building as a means of implementing ELL-related professional learning and the gradual adoption of the STEP (MOE, 2011b) tracking forms.

The purpose of this study was to describe the perspectives of professional learning policy implementation for supporting ELLs in a rural school board. Future empirical work is needed to investigate specific professional learning strategies that lead to improved academic outcomes for ELLs in rural settings. Such investigations would make the link between professional learning and student achievement called for by researchers working within the professional learning field (e.g., Alton-Lee, 2011; Guskey, 2009). Investigations using quantitative methodologies could establish first, whether there is an achievement gap between ELLs and their English-speaking peers in rural areas in Canada; and, second, whether such gaps relate to ELLs generally, or to identifiable sub-populations within the ELL population in rural boards. Studies using quantitative approaches would also be helpful in investigating links between specific ELL-related professional learning strategies and changes in ELLs’ academic achievement in rural Canadian school boards. These studies could be accompanied by in-depth studies using qualitative methodologies to identify the context-specific factors (Guskey) that interact with professional learning and ELLs’ academic achievement.

A feature of HDSB’s ESL programming was the use of ELL tutors. While the role of the tutors was undergoing change during the time frame of this study, ELL tutors were still involved in the overall ESL programming model in use in HDSB at the end of this study’s time frame. Canadian school boards could be surveyed through a quantitative data collection instrument to establish whether and to what extent ESL programming models involve the use of paraprofessionals. Should survey data indicate that HDSB is not alone in delivering ESL programming in part through paraprofessionals, an issue for further study is whether and how other school boards provide ELL-related professional learning for paraprofessionals. An additional question for investigation, possibly through further
studies using qualitative methodologies, is whether school boards’ primary or prioritized models for professional learning include or (as in the case of the collaborative inquiry model in HDSB) exclude paraprofessionals. Studies investigating the professional learning of ELL paraprofessionals have relevance to the issue of equitable academic outcomes for ELLs.

**Concluding Remarks**

In the absence of over-arching, predictive theories or models of policy implementation, I have argued, as have other empirical researchers (Honig, 2006), that education policy implementation processes and outcomes are situated in particular contexts. The dominant feature of the research context in this study was its rural nature, and the key policy actors were the two ESL consultants. These consultants, given the discretion by policy to implement ELL-related professional learning in a manner reflecting local circumstances, were both leaders and learners whose knowledge and skills were respected by other participants in the study. As the primary mediators of MOE ESL policy in HDSB, the consultants were HDSB’s bridge between the MOE’s directives on one hand and, on the other, teachers and tutors whose schools varied in the numbers and characteristics of the ELLs attending them.

The consultants’ implementation of ELL-related professional learning reflected their understanding of the context in which, as “street-level bureaucrats” (Lipsky, 1980), they were functioning. Adapting to variation from region to region and from school to school within the board, the two consultants provided ELL-related professional learning that attempted to meet diverse school-level staff learning needs as the consultants understood them. The consultants’ shared core values about professional learning led to the provision of learning opportunities for teachers, tutors, Learning Resource staff, and administrators that were animated by similar goals for ESL programming in HDSB.

In tandem with their awareness of the challenges and constraints associated with HDSB’s rural context, the consultants accepted that the implementation of ESL policy and the professional
learning to support it would occur in an incremental fashion. While the perceptions of all participants in the study contributed to the portrait that I have provided of this case, the findings of this study underscore that, given discretion by policy and enabled by the board’s organizational structures, HDSB’s street-level bureaucrats implemented ELL-related professional learning in a manner that was well-suited to this rural implementation context.
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/ps/i.do?id=GALE|A209477041&v=2.1&u=queensulaw&it=r&p=AONE&sw=w


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Appendix A: Ontario Ministry of Education ELL-Related Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many Roots, Many Voices: Supporting English Language Learners</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in Every Classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>English Language Learners/ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development, Revised:</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ontario Curriculum, Grades9 to 12</td>
<td></td>
<td>(revised from 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting English Language Learners in Kindergarten: A Practical</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide for Ontario Educators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting English Language Learners with Limited Prior Schooling:</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators, Grades 3 to 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting English Language Learners: A Practical Guide for Ontario</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Resource</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educators, Grades 1 to 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>STEP: Steps to English Proficiency [framework for Assessing and</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monitoring language acquisition and literacy development of ELLs]</td>
<td></td>
<td>(with mandated tracking form)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. The cover of the *STEP Guide for Users* states that it was a 2012 document; however, the copyright date was 2011, and this date is used throughout the dissertation.
Appendix B: Ethics Clearance from Queen’s University’s GREB

September 24, 2012

Mrs. Terry Milnes, Ph.D. Candidate
Faculty of Education, Duncan McArthur Hall
Queen’s University
511 Union Street
Kingston, ON K7M 5R7

GREB Ref #: GEDUC-634-12; Romeo #: 6007389
Title: "GEDUC-634-12 Providing and Supporting Professional Learning for Teachers of English Language Learners in a Rural Ontario School Board: An Implementation Study"

Dear Mrs. Milnes:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GEDUC-634-12 Providing and Supporting Professional Learning for Teachers of English Language Learners in a Rural Ontario School Board: An Implementation Study" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen’s ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D 1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://services.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementations of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://services.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
General Research Ethics Board

cc: Dr. Elizabeth Lee, Faculty Supervisor
Dr. Don Klinger, Chair, Unit REB
Dr. Brian Wickham, c/o Graduate Studies and Bureau of Research
Appendix C: Interview Protocols

ESL Consultants.

[Biographical]
How long have you been an ESL consultant in this school board?
Please tell me about your teaching career prior to becoming a consultant.

Interview Questions Stemming From Research Questions:

1. I’d like to find out about ELL-related professional learning activities in your board for teachers of ELLs (both ESL teachers and classroom teachers) and for ELL tutors. What can you tell me about ELL-related professional learning activities and opportunities in your board since 2007, when the Ministry of Education released its ESL policy document?
2. What models or formats for ELL-related professional learning have been used in your board since 2007?
3. Who has participated in ELL-related professional learning activities in your board?
4. How often did these activities take place?
5. What was the duration of these activities?
6. How and why were topics for ELL-related professional learning chosen?
7. As you’re aware, the Ministry of Education has released a number of ELL-related policy, resource, and curriculum documents since the Many Roots document in 2005. I’m interested in two particular documents: the 2007 ELL Policies and Procedures, K-12 document and the 2011 STEP document. What effect have these documents had at the board and school level with respect to ELL-related professional learning in your board? [prompt: participant’s understanding of changes mandated by the 2007 and 2011 documents]
8. How is information about teaching or tutoring ELLs shared or disseminated across your board?
9. How, in your view, has the rural and small communities context of your school board influenced the provision of ELL-related professional learning?
10. How would you describe your role in providing or supporting ELL-related professional learning in the board?
11. Please tell me about any board staff apart from yourself who are involved in delivering or supporting ELL-related professional learning.
12. How would you describe the role of ESL teachers and ELL instructors in providing or supporting ELL-related professional learning in your board?
13. How would you describe the role of principals in providing or supporting ELL-related professional learning in your board?
14. What challenges, if any, has your school board confronted in implementing ELL-related professional learning?
15. How has your school board responded to these challenges?
16. Is there anything else about ELL-related professional learning you’d like to comment on?

Principals.

[Biographical]
How long have you been a principal at this school?
Please tell me about your career in school administration within this board.
Interview Questions Stemming from the Research Questions:

1. I’d like to find out about ELL-related professional learning activities in your board for teachers of ELLs (both ESL teachers and classroom teachers) and for ELL tutors. What can you tell me about any ELL-related professional learning activities and opportunities of which you’re aware?
2. Please tell me about school PD days and how your school’s ESL teacher and ELL tutor spend that time.
3. How would you describe your role in providing or supporting ELL-related professional learning for staff at your school?
4. How would you describe the role of the ESL consultants in providing or supporting ELL-related professional learning for staff at your school?
5. How, in your view, has the rural and small communities context of your school board influenced the provision of ELL-related professional learning?
6. What challenges, if any, has your school board confronted in implementing ELL-related professional learning?
7. Is there anything else about ELL-related professional learning you’d like to comment on?

ESL Teachers and ELL Tutors.
[Biographical]
How long have you been working at this school?
How long have you been an ESL teacher or ELL tutor in this board?
How many years of experience do you have working with ELLs?
What teaching or E.A. experience do you have outside the ESL discipline?

Interview Questions Stemming from the Research Questions:

1. I’d like to find out about professional learning experiences in your board for ESL teachers/ELL tutors. What can you tell me about ELL-related professional learning opportunities or activities that have taken place in your school board from 2007 onwards?
2. How often have these professional learning activities taken place?
3. What resources have been provided by your board or school to support your ELL-related professional learning?
4. How have decisions about topics for ELL-related professional learning been made?
5. Please tell me about any professional learning activities in which you’ve participated that relate to STEP.
6. Who has tended to initiate ELL-related professional learning at your school or within your board?
7. How would you describe the role of the ESL consultants in your ELL-related professional learning?
8. How would you describe the role of your principal in your ELL-related professional learning?
9. How would you describe your role in providing ELL-related professional learning for other staff at your school?
10. How, in your view, has the rural and small communities context of your school board influenced the provision of ELL-related professional learning?
11. What challenges, if any, has your school board or school confronted in implementing ELL-related professional learning?
12. Is there anything else about ELL-related professional learning you’d like to comment on?
Classroom teachers.
[Biographical]
Please tell me how long you’ve been working at this school.
How long have you been teaching in this board?
What subjects or grades have you taught?
How often have your classes included ELLs?

Interview Questions Stemming from the Research Questions

1. I’d like to find out about professional learning activities and opportunities in your board for classroom teachers whose classes include ELLs. What can you tell me about any ELL-related professional learning activities that have taken place in your board or at your school?
2. How often have these ELL-related professional learning activities taken place?
3. What topics have been the focus of these ELL-related professional learning activities?
4. What resources have been provided by your board or school to support your learning about teaching ELLs?
5. How would you describe the role of your school’s ELL tutor(s) or ESL teacher in providing or supporting ELL-related professional learning at your school?
6. How, in your view, has the rural and small communities context of your school board influenced the provision of ELL-related professional learning?
7. What challenges, if any, has your school board or school confronted in implementing ELL-related professional learning?
8. Is there anything else about ELL-related professional learning you’d like to comment about?
Appendix D: Invitation to Participate in the Study

Recruitment Invitation for Teachers and Tutors of ELLs

Have you had experience teaching English language learners in your classes? Are you an ELL tutor or an ESL teacher? My name is Terry Milnes, and I’m a former Ontario secondary school English and ESL teacher who’s now doing doctoral work in education at Queen’s University. I’m interested in learning about professional development and professional learning opportunities for teachers and tutors of English language learners in rural school boards.

I’d like to invite you to participate in the study I’m undertaking for my doctoral dissertation entitled “Providing and Supporting Professional Learning for Teachers and Tutors of English Language Learners in a Rural Ontario School Board: An Implementation Study”. Your participation would involve one 30 to 40-minute interview during which I would ask you questions about the types of ELL-related professional development opportunities you’ve experienced as well as any challenges you feel rural school boards and schools confront when providing or supporting ELL-related professional development. These experiences could include professional development activities or resources delivered through your school board or at your school. I’d also like to learn about formal and informal ELL-related professional learning activities initiated by tutors and teachers themselves, such as reading articles, searching online for information, or networking with other tutors or teachers.

Your participation in my research study would be voluntary and confidential. If you would consider participating, your principal will give you a letter of information outlining in more detail the purpose of the study and the nature of your participation in it. This research study has the approval of [name of school board] Research Steering Committee as well as your school principal.

Thank you very much for considering participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Terry Milnes, OCT
B.A. (Hons.), B.Ed., M.Ed.
Ph.D. Candidate,
Queen’s University,
Kingston, Ontario
Appendix E: Letters of Information

LETTER OF INFORMATION: BOARD ESL CONSULTANTS

**Project Title:** Providing and Supporting Professional Learning for Teachers and Tutors of English Language Learners in a Rural Ontario School Board: An Implementation Study

**Investigator:**
Terry Milnes  
Faculty of Education  
Queen’s University  
Kingston, Ontario, Canada  
613-533-6000  
E-mail: terry.milnes@queensu.ca

**Faculty Supervisor:**
Dr. Elizabeth Lee  
Faculty of Education  
Queen’s University  
Kingston, Ontario, Canada  
613-533-6000 ext. 77409  
E-mail: elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca

**Purpose of the Study**

You are invited to take part in this study on professional learning activities for teachers of English language learners (ELLs) working within a rural Ontario school board. I am conducting this research in order to complete a dissertation for my doctoral program in Policy Studies at the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University in Kingston. I want to describe how board-level and school-level staff, individually or in groups, initiate, support, or participate in professional learning related to teaching ELLs. The professional learning activities I hope to learn about may be formal (e.g., board or school-level professional development sessions) or informal (e.g., arising from collaboration between ESL and classroom/subject-area teachers). I would also like to learn about any challenges associated with ELL-related professional learning for teachers and tutors working in the context of a rural school board. This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines and Queen’s policies. It has also been granted clearance by the [name of school board] Research Steering Committee.

**Procedures involved in the Research/What will happen during the study?**

Your participation in this study will involve an interview in which I ask you questions relating to professional learning activities for teachers and tutors of ELLs. The interview will be approximately 90 minutes
in length and will be conducted in a public but quiet setting at a time which is convenient to you. If you prefer, we can meet for two shorter interviews, each approximately 45 minutes in length. The interview(s) will be audiotaped using a digital audio recorder. I will transcribe the recorded interview(s). I will offer you the opportunity to read your transcribed interview and to clarify, amend, delete, or add to any of the comments you made during the interview. You are not obliged to answer any interview questions which you find objectionable or discomforting.

**Are there any risks to doing the study?**

There are no known risks to your participation in this study.

**Are there any benefits to doing this study?**

This research will not benefit you directly; however, I hope that what is learned as a result of the study will contribute to educational practice through identifying and describing ELL-related professional learning activities currently in use for elementary and secondary school teachers and tutors. As well, this research may contribute to policymakers’ understanding of the challenges associated with initiating or supporting ELL-related professional learning in rural school boards.

**Remuneration**

There is no remuneration for participants in this research study.

**Confidentiality**

You are participating in this study confidentially. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. The transcribed interviews will not contain your name or the name of the school or school board for which you work. A pseudonym will replace your name on the data you provide, and pseudonyms will be used in place of the name of the school board for which you work. Pseudonyms will be used in the interview transcripts and in my dissertation. The results of this study may be disseminated in publications or at conferences; in all of these instances, I will continue to use pseudonyms for participants, schools, and the school board. If the data is used for secondary analysis, it will contain no identifying information.

No information pertaining to individual students will be asked for or collected, nor will any information from student files or records be asked for or collected. The results of the study will not appear in any school records.

Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data you provide. The digital audio recorder and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet for which I have the only key. In accordance with the Faculty of Education policy, the data you provide will be retained for a period of five years. I will destroy the data after five years.
What if I change my mind about being in the study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can decide to stop (withdraw) at any time, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

How do I find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to have this study completed by approximately December, 2013. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it to be sent to you.

Questions about the study

Any questions about study participation may be directed to Terry Milnes at terry.milnes@queensu.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Elizabeth Lee, at 613-533-6000 ext. 77409, e-mail Elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca
LETTER OF INFORMATION: PRINCIPALS

**Project Title:** Providing and Supporting Professional Learning for Teachers and Tutors of English Language Learners in a Rural Ontario School Board: An Implementation Study

**Investigator:**
Terry Milnes  
Faculty of Education  
Queen’s University  
Kingston, Ontario, Canada  
613-533-6000  
E-mail: terry.milnes@queensu.ca

**Faculty Supervisor:**  
Dr. Elizabeth Lee  
Faculty of Education  
Queen’s University  
Kingston, Ontario, Canada  
613-533-6000 ext. 77409  
E-mail: elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca

**Purpose of the Study**
You are invited to take part in this study on professional learning activities for teachers of English language learners (ELLs) working within a rural Ontario school board. I am conducting this research in order to complete a dissertation for my doctoral program in Policy Studies at the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University in Kingston. I want to describe how board-level and school-level staff, individually or in groups, initiate, support, or participate in professional learning related to teaching ELLs. The professional learning activities I hope to learn about may be formal (e.g., board or school-level professional development sessions) or informal (e.g., arising from collaboration between ESL and classroom/subject-area teachers). I would also like to learn about any challenges associated with ELL-related professional learning for teachers and tutors working in the context of a rural school board. This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines and Queen’s policies. It has also been granted clearance by the [name of school board] Research Steering Committee.

**Procedures involved in the Research/What will happen during the study?**
Your participation in this study will involve one interview in which I ask you questions relating to professional learning activities for teachers and tutors of ELLs. The interview will be approximately 30 to 40
minutes in length and will be conducted in a public but quiet setting at a time which is convenient to you. The interview will be audiotaped using a digital audio recorder. I will transcribe the recorded interview. I will offer you the opportunity to read your transcribed interview and to clarify, amend, delete, or add to any of the comments you made during the interview. You are not obliged to answer any interview questions which you find objectionable or discomforting.

**Are there any risks to doing the study?**

There are no known risks to your participation in this study.

**Are there any benefits to doing this study?**

This research will not benefit you directly; however, I hope that what is learned as a result of the study will contribute to educational practice through identifying and describing ELL-related professional learning activities currently in use for elementary and secondary school teachers and tutors. As well, this research may contribute to policymakers’ understanding of the challenges associated with initiating or supporting ELL-related professional learning in rural school boards.

**Remuneration**

There is no remuneration for participants in this research study.

**Confidentiality**

You are participating in this study confidentially. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. The transcribed interviews will not contain your name or the name of the school or school board for which you work. A pseudonym will replace your name on the data you provide, and pseudonyms will be used in place of the names of the school and school board for which you work. Pseudonyms will be used in the interview transcripts and in my dissertation. The results of this study may be disseminated in publications or at conferences; in all of these instances, I will continue to use pseudonyms for participants, schools, and the school board. If the data is used for secondary analysis, it will contain no identifying information.

No information pertaining to individual students will be asked for or collected, nor will any information from student files or records be asked for or collected. The results of the study will not appear in any school records.

Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data you provide. The digital audio recorder and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet for which I have the only key. In accordance with the Faculty of Education policy, the data you provide will be retained for a period of five years. I will destroy the data after five years.
What if I change my mind about being in the study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can decide to stop (withdraw) at any time, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

How do I find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to have this study completed by approximately December, 2013. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it to be sent to you.

Questions about the study

Any questions about study participation may be directed to Terry Milnes at terry.milnes@queensu.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Elizabeth Lee, at 613-533-6000 ext. 77409, e-mail Elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca
LETTER OF INFORMATION: ESL TEACHERS AND ELL TUTORS

Project Title: Providing and Supporting Professional Learning for Teachers and Tutors of English Language Learners in a Rural Ontario School Board: An Implementation Study

Investigator: Terry Milnes
Faculty of Education
Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
613-533-6000
E-mail: terry.milnes@queensu.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Elizabeth Lee
Faculty of Education
Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
613-533-6000 ext. 77409
E-mail: elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca

Purpose of the Study
You are invited to take part in this study on professional learning activities for teachers and tutors of English language learners (ELLs) working within a rural Ontario school board. I am conducting this research in order to complete a dissertation for my doctoral program in Policy Studies at the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University in Kingston. I want to describe how board-level and school-level staff, individually or in groups, initiate, support, or participate in professional learning related to teaching ELLs. The professional learning activities I hope to learn about may be formal (e.g., board or school-level professional development sessions) or informal (e.g., arising from collaboration between ESL and classroom/subject-area teachers). I would also like to learn about any challenges associated with ELL-related professional learning for teachers and tutors working in the context of a rural school board. This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines and Queen’s policies. It has also been granted clearance by the [name of school board] Research Steering Committee.

Procedures involved in the Research/What will happen during the study?
Your participation in this study will involve one interview in which I ask you questions relating to professional learning activities for teachers and tutors of ELLs. The interview will be approximately 60 minutes in length and will be conducted in a public but quiet setting at a time which is convenient to you. The interview
will be audiotaped using a digital audio recorder. I will transcribe the recorded interview. I will offer you the opportunity to read your transcribed interview and to clarify, amend, delete, or add to any of the comments you made during the interview. You are not obliged to answer any interview questions which you find objectionable or discomforting.

**Are there any risks to doing the study?**

There are no known risks to your participation in this study.

**Are there any benefits to doing this study?**

This research will not benefit you directly; however, I hope that what is learned as a result of the study will contribute to educational practice through identifying and describing ELL-related professional learning activities currently in use for elementary and secondary school teachers and tutors. As well, this research may contribute to policymakers’ understanding of the challenges associated with initiating or supporting ELL-related professional learning in rural school boards.

**Remuneration**

There is no remuneration for participants in this research study.

**Confidentiality**

You are participating in this study confidentially. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. The transcribed interviews will not contain your name or the name of the school or school board for which you work. A pseudonym will replace your name on the data you provide, and pseudonyms will be used in place of the names of the school and school board for which you work. Pseudonyms will be used in the interview transcripts and in my dissertation. The results of this study may be disseminated in publications or at conferences; in all of these instances, I will continue to use pseudonyms for participants, schools, and the school board. If the data is used for secondary analysis, it will contain no identifying information.

No information pertaining to individual students will be asked for or collected, nor will any information from student files or records be asked for or collected. The results of the study will not appear in any school records.

Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data you provide. The digital audio recorder and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet for which I have the only key. In accordance with the Faculty of Education policy, the data you provide will be retained for a period of five years. I will destroy the data after five years.
What if I change my mind about being in the study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can decide to stop (withdraw) at any time, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

How do I find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to have this study completed by approximately December, 2013. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it to be sent to you.

Questions about the study

Any questions about study participation may be directed to Terry Milnes at terry.milnes@queensu.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Elizabeth Lee, at 613-533-6000 ext. 77409, e-mail Elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca
LETTER OF INFORMATION: CLASSROOM/CONTENT-AREA TEACHERS

Project Title: Providing and Supporting Professional Learning for Teachers and Tutors of English Language Learners in a Rural Ontario School Board: An Implementation Study

Investigator: Terry Milnes
Faculty of Education
Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
613-533-6000
E-mail: terry.milnes@queensu.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Elizabeth Lee
Faculty of Education
Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
613-533-6000 ext. 77409
E-mail: elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca

Purpose of the Study
You are invited to take part in this study on professional learning activities for teachers of English language learners (ELLs) working within a rural Ontario school board. I am conducting this research in order to complete a dissertation for my doctoral program in Policy Studies at the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University in Kingston. I want to describe how board-level and school-level staff, individually or in groups, initiate, support, or participate in professional learning related to teaching ELLs. The professional learning activities I hope to learn about may be formal (e.g., board or school-level professional development sessions) or informal (e.g., arising from collaboration between ESL and classroom/subject-area teachers). I would also like to learn about any challenges associated with ELL-related professional learning for teachers and tutors working in the context of a rural school board. This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines and Queen’s policies. It has also been granted clearance by the [name of school board] Research Steering Committee.

Procedures involved in the Research/What will happen during the study?
Your participation in this study will involve one interview in which I ask you questions relating to professional learning activities for teachers and tutors of ELLs. The interview will be approximately 30 to 40 minutes in length and will be conducted in a public but quiet setting at a time which is convenient to you. The
interview will be audiotaped using a digital audio recorder. I will transcribe the recorded interview. I will offer you the opportunity to read your transcribed interview and to clarify, amend, delete, or add to any of the comments you made during the interview. You are not obliged to answer any interview questions which you find objectionable or discomforting.

**Are there any risks to doing the study?**

There are no known risks to your participation in this study.

**Are there any benefits to doing this study?**

This research will not benefit you directly; however, I hope that what is learned as a result of the study will contribute to educational practice through identifying and describing ELL-related professional learning activities currently in use for elementary and secondary school teachers and tutors. As well, this research may contribute to policymakers’ understanding of the challenges associated with initiating or supporting ELL-related professional learning in rural school boards.

**Remuneration**

There is no remuneration for participants in this research study.

**Confidentiality**

You are participating in this study confidentially. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. The transcribed interviews will not contain your name or the name of the school or school board for which you work. A pseudonym will replace your name on the data you provide, and pseudonyms will be used in place of the names of the school and school board for which you work. Pseudonyms will be used in the interview transcripts and in my dissertation. The results of this study may be disseminated in publications or at conferences; in all of these instances, I will continue to use pseudonyms for participants, schools, and the school board. If the data is used for secondary analysis, it will contain no identifying information.

No information pertaining to individual students will be asked for or collected, nor will any information from student files or records be asked for or collected. The results of the study will not appear in any school records.

Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data you provide. The digital audio recorder and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet for which I have the only key. In accordance with the Faculty of Education policy, the data you provide will be retained for a period of five years. I will destroy the data after five years.
What if I change my mind about being in the study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can decide to stop (withdraw) at any time, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

How do I find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to have this study completed by approximately December, 2013. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it to be sent to you.

Questions about the study

Any questions about study participation may be directed to Terry Milnes at terry.milnes@queensu.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Elizabeth Lee, at 613-533-6000 ext. 77409, e-mail Elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca
Appendix F: Consent Forms

CONSENT FORM
(For Board-Level ESL Consultants)

Project Title: Providing and Supporting Professional Learning for Teachers and Tutors of English Language Learners in a Rural Ontario School Board: An Implementation Study

I have read and retained the information presented in the letter of information about the study being conducted by Terry Milnes, of Queen’s University. I understand that the purpose of the study is to describe how board-level and school-level staff initiate, support, or participate in professional learning related to teaching English language learners (ELLs); and to identify challenges associated with ELL-related professional learning for teachers and tutors working in the context of a rural school board. I understand that my participation in this study will involve one or two interviews sometime between March 2013 and June 2013, with a total length of approximately 90 minutes. I agree that my interviews can be audiotaped.

I understand that this research has been approved by [name of school board]’s Research Steering Committee.

I understand that the researcher, Terry Milnes, will maintain confidentiality of the data I provide to the extent possible.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. I also understand that I may request the removal of all or part of my data from this study.

Samples of the questions I will be asked include: “I’d like to ask you about specific ELL-related professional learning activities in your board for which you’ve been responsible or with which you’ve been involved. What types of professional learning activities have taken place?” and “Have there been school-initiated ELL-related professional learning activities occurring within your board of which you’re aware?”

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I have read and retained a copy of this consent form.

Any questions about study participation may be directed to Terry Milnes at terry.milnes@queensu.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Elizabeth Lee, at 613-533-6000 ext. 77409, e-mail Elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca
Your participation in this research study is greatly appreciated.

Participant’s Name: ______________________________________________________

Participant’s Signature: _________________________________________________

Date: _______________________

____ I would like to receive a summary of the study’s results. Please send them to this email or postal address:

_______________________________________________________________________

Please sign one copy of this consent form and return to Terry Milnes. Retain the second copy for your records.
CONSENT FORM
(For Principals)

**Project Title:** Providing and Supporting Professional Learning for Teachers and Tutors of English Language Learners in a Rural Ontario School Board: An Implementation Study

I have read and retained the information presented in the letter of information about the study being conducted by Terry Milnes, of Queen’s University. I understand that the purpose of the study is to describe how board-level and school-level staff initiate, support, or participate in professional learning related to teaching English language learners (ELLs); and to identify challenges associated with ELL-related professional learning for teachers and tutors working in the context of a rural school board. I understand that my participation in this study will involve an interview which will be approximately 30 to 40 minutes in length and which will be held sometime between March 2013 and June 2013. I agree that my interview can be audiotaped.

I understand that this research has been approved by [name of school board]’s Research Steering Committee.

I understand that the researcher, Terry Milnes, will maintain confidentiality of the data I provide to the extent possible.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. I also understand that I may request the removal of all or part of my data from this study.

Samples of the questions I will be asked include: “How would you describe your role in organizing or supporting ELL-related professional learning activities?” and “How has the provision or support of ELL-related professional learning been affected by the rural context in which your board and school function?”

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I have read and retained a copy of this consent form.

Any questions about study participation may be directed to Terry Milnes at terry.milnes@queensu.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Elizabeth Lee, at 613-533-6000 ext. 77409, e-mail Elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca

Your participation in this research study is greatly appreciated.
Participant’s Name: ______________________________________________________

Participant’s Signature: ________________________________________________

Date: __________________________

____ I would like to receive a summary of the study’s results. Please send them to this email or postal address:

_______________________________________________________________________

Please sign one copy of this consent form and return to Terry Milnes. Retain the second copy for your records.
CONSENT FORM
(For ESL Teachers and ELL Tutors)

Project Title: Providing and Supporting Professional Learning for Teachers and Tutors of English Language Learners in a Rural Ontario School Board: An Implementation Study

I have read and retained the information presented in the letter of information about the study being conducted by Terry Milnes, of Queen’s University. I understand that the purpose of the study is to describe how board-level and school-level staff initiate, support, or participate in professional learning related to teaching English language learners (ELLs); and to identify challenges associated with ELL-related professional learning for teachers and tutors working in the context of a rural school board. I understand that my participation in this study will involve an interview which will be approximately one hour in length and which will be held sometime between March 2013 and June 2013. I agree that my interview can be audiotaped.

I understand that this research has been approved by [name of school board]’s Research Steering Committee as well as by the principal(s) at the school(s) where I work.

I understand that the researcher, Terry Milnes, will maintain confidentiality of the data I provide to the extent possible.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. I also understand that I may request the removal of all or part of my data from this study.

Samples of the questions I will be asked include: “I’d like to ask you about specific ELL-related professional learning activities in your board. What types of ELL-related professional learning activities have been organized or supported by your board?” and “How would you describe your own role in ELL-related professional learning for the content-area/classroom teachers in your school?”

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I have read and retained a copy of this consent form.

Any questions about study participation may be directed to Terry Milnes at terry.milnes@queensu.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Elizabeth Lee, at 613-533-6000 ext. 77409, e-mail Elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca

Your participation in this research study is greatly appreciated.
Participant’s Name: ______________________________________________________

Participant’s Signature: _________________________________________________

Date: _____________________________

____ I would like to receive a summary of the study’s results. Please send them to this email or postal address:

_______________________________________________________________________

Please sign one copy of this consent form and return to Terry Milnes. Retain the second copy for your records.
CONSENT FORM
(For Classroom/Content-Area Teachers)

Project Title: Providing and Supporting Professional Learning for Teachers and Tutors of English Language Learners in a Rural Ontario School Board: An Implementation Study

I have read and retained the information presented in the letter of information about the study being conducted by Terry Milnes, of Queen’s University. I understand that the purpose of the study is to describe how board-level and school-level staff initiate, support, or participate in professional learning related to teaching English language learners (ELLs); and to identify challenges associated with ELL-related professional learning for teachers and tutors working in the context of a rural school board. I understand that my participation in this study will involve an interview which will be approximately 30 to 40 minutes in length and which will be held sometime between March 2013 and June 2013. I agree that my interview can be audiotaped.

I understand that this research has been approved by [name of school board]’s Research Steering Committee and by the principal at the school where I work.

I understand that the researcher, Terry Milnes, will maintain confidentiality of the data I provide to the extent possible.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. I also understand that I may request the removal of all or part of my data from this study.

Samples of the questions I will be asked include: “Could you please describe the role of your school’s ESL teacher(s) in providing or supporting ELL-related professional learning opportunities for you?” and “How has the provision or support of ELL-related professional learning been affected by the rural context in which your board and school function?”

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I have read and retained a copy of this consent form.

Any questions about study participation may be directed to Terry Milnes at terry.milnes@queensu.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Elizabeth Lee, at 613-533-6000 ext. 77409, e-mail Elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca
Your participation in this research study is greatly appreciated.

Participant’s Name: ______________________________________________________

Participant’s Signature: _________________________________________________

Date: ______________________________

_____ I would like to receive a summary of the study’s results. Please send them to this email or postal address:

_______________________________________________________________________

Please sign one copy of this consent form and return to Terry Milnes. Retain the second copy for your records.
## Appendix G: Confirmatory Documents from Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Confirmation of Other Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Map of HDSB</td>
<td>ESL Consultant 1</td>
<td>Geographical footprint of HDSB; division of board into two regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-page handout: “Twenty-five Quick Tips for Classroom Teachers”</td>
<td>ESL Consultant 1</td>
<td>Strategy-focused PL material for classroom teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intake Interview Form for ELLs, Grades K to 12 (prepared by HDSB’s consultants)</td>
<td>ESL Consultant 1</td>
<td>Consultants’ managerial role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Factors to Consider When ELLs are Struggling”: three-page list of questions to ask parents and school staff (prepared by HDSB’s ESL consultants)</td>
<td>ESL Consultant 1</td>
<td>Consultants’ managerial role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOE List of ELL Policy and Program Implementation Projects, 2012-2013</td>
<td>ESL Consultant 1</td>
<td>Topics and issues supported by MOE implementation projects; role of MOE in ELL-related PL in HDSB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal for summer ESL workshops, including program</td>
<td>ESL Consultant 2</td>
<td>ESL Consultant-led workshops, Summer 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-page handout: “Top Ten Tips for Mainstream Teachers Working with English Language Learners”</td>
<td>ESL Teacher 3</td>
<td>ESL Teacher 3’s role in ELL-related PL in her school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed copies of email exchanges involving ESL Consultant 1, ESL Teacher 3, and classroom teachers at Secondary School 3</td>
<td>ESL Teacher 3</td>
<td>ESL Consultant 1 responding to concerns of classroom teachers about curriculum expectations for ELLs; Consultant arranging to meet several teachers to address concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course outline for web course: using technology and software with ELLs</td>
<td>ESL Teacher 3</td>
<td>Hardware and software training, Spring 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed email confirming registration</td>
<td>ESL Teacher 3</td>
<td>ESL Consultant-led workshops, Summer 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily schedule of activities from two daylong ESL workshops for ELL tutors</td>
<td>ELL Tutor 3</td>
<td>Workshops for ELL tutors in April and November, 2008; led by external provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handouts from presentation by ELL Tutor 3 at Elementary School 2 staff meeting in 2009: specific instructional strategies for ELLs; accommodations for ELLs; creating culturally responsive classrooms</td>
<td>ELL Tutor 3</td>
<td>Role of ELL tutor in ELL-related PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of web-based and in-school ELL-related teaching resources</td>
<td>ELL Tutor 4</td>
<td>Role of ELL tutor in ELL-related PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of ELL-related PL activities in HDSB in which Tutor 8 participated from 1998 to 2013</td>
<td>ELL Tutor 8</td>
<td>Topics, frequency of ELL-related PL opportunities for ELL tutors in HDSB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. PL = Professional Learning*