FACULTY MOTIVATION IN ACADEMIC PROGRAM ASSESSMENT: AN INSTRUMENTAL CASE STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF AN INQUIRY-BASED PROCESS

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Abstract

For many higher education administrators academic program assessment has become synonymous with compliance; to be conducted as efficiently as possible in order to meet external reporting requirements. Under these conditions, faculty have become disconnected from and even resistant to program assessment. A less utilized approach to assessment is to engage faculty in an inquiry-based process. Inquiry methods are widely understood to facilitate student engagement with learning, yet rarely mentioned in the literature when it comes to their potential use with faculty. The current study examines five faculty members at a single site to understand if their motivation is impacted by the use of an inquiry-based process for academic program assessment. Utilizing a Constructivism-Interpretivism paradigm, this qualitative instrumental case study produced five major themes: (1) Faculty see themselves as more than educators; with sub-themes: (a) program design; and (b) mentoring students; (2) Faculty use assessment to investigate their own ongoing questions; (3) Faculty valued their decision-making authority in the inquiry-based process; (4) Faculty shared ideas in the inquiry-based process; (5) Faculty connected the Inquiry Group Process to accreditation. To understand how faculty perceived their experience, an inductive analysis of interview transcripts and documents was conducted using Self-Determination Theory, to consider the question: “How does the experience of performing academic program assessment through an inquiry group process affect faculty motivation?”

Keywords: Assessment, accreditation, Self-Determination Theory, motivation, faculty, inquiry, teacher education, higher education administration
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Dedication

I dedicate this study in loving memory of my parents, Ted and Ruth Detjen. You are forever in my heart.
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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

For many higher education administrators academic program assessment has become synonymous with compliance; to be conducted as efficiently as possible in order to meet external reporting requirements (Farley et al, 2018). Under these conditions, faculty have become disconnected from and even resistant to program assessment (Ewell, 2009). Higher education administrators have a choice how to involve faculty. They do not have to subscribe to the “culture of compliance” (Kuh et al, 2015) that has been so divisive in higher education today. A less utilized, arguably more ambitious approach to assessment is to create time and space for faculty inquiry groups. Inquiry methods are widely understood as a way to facilitate student engagement with learning, yet rarely mentioned in the literature when it comes to their potential use with faculty (Craig, 2018; Hardy, 2018a).

The purpose of this single-site instrumental case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008) was to understand how faculty engagement and motivation is impacted by the use of an inquiry-based process for academic program assessment. Academic program assessment has been defined as a way to “gather, analyze, and interpret evidence” (Suskie, 2018, p. 8) of how well the program is meeting its stated goals for student learning. An inquiry-based process (IBP) has been generally defined as systematic and intentional discussions among faculty based on their own questions about their work with students (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 2009). The results of this case study are intended to help higher education administrators to consider ways to better engage faculty in assessment activities.

Statement of the Problem

Historically, educators have used assessments as part of their ongoing work with students, to understand student learning and the effectiveness of their instruction (Suskie, 2018).
In the past quarter of a century, there has been a shift from assessments being largely an educator-initiated practice, to assessments being used by external entities and accreditors as an evaluative tool to create pressures to improve the educational system (Farley et al, 2018). Alongside this, there has been increased scrutiny placed on the field of teacher education (Duncan, 2016; U.S. Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). These contextual changes have resulted in a situation in which teacher education programs are expected to perform programmatic assessment in order to comply with state, regional, and national reporting requirements (Wilson, 2014). While assessment was once largely a function of administrators and institutional researchers in higher education, today it relies heavily on faculty involvement for its success (Cain, 2015). In a survey of higher education administrators, it was found that more than half the faculty in public institutions are required to take part in programmatic assessment (Hutchings, Kinzie, & Kuh, 2015).

As administrators make sense of this shifting context for assessment and the unavoidable pressure for data, they may be left struggling in how to motivate faculty members without letting the work become tainted by the high stakes compliance atmosphere (Kuh et al, 2015). Unless faculty are engaged in academic program assessment, then the field of teacher education will remain trapped in a frenetic cycle of performing assessment solely to meet the demands of external evaluators, with little utility to the academic program or student experience (Hardy, 2018b; Sloan, 2014). Under these conditions, faculty may see the task of assessment as something that is being done for compliance, rather than something that can help them learn about their work with students (Ewell, 2009). When faculty are unmotivated, they miss out on a valuable opportunity to reflect on their work, and likewise the college misses out on the benefit of having engaged faculty members taking a fresh and honest look at their academic programs. It
is possible that an inquiry group process may offer faculty a more meaningful experience for programmatic assessment (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

The context for this case study was Westside College\(^1\) a small non-research, non-tenure, private graduate school of education in a large urban city in the northeast, with approximately 650 graduate students, 50 faculty members, and 30 academic programs leading to educator preparation. The school has a long history of progressive educational philosophy and in recent years has gone through a shift in its approach to working with faculty for programmatic assessment. The assessment approach at the institution in 2012 was highly quantitative and driven by external accreditation demands with multiple rubrics written with the language of national standards, while the current approach is a highly qualitative, faculty-designed inquiry group process. The study involved faculty members who have worked at the institution for at least one full academic year, since these individuals have had exposure to the division-wide inquiry approach to academic program assessment in this context. It was not clear how the faculty experience with inquiry is shaping how they perceive their role in assessment.

**Significance of the Research Question**

The rationale for this case study was to understand the faculty experience with academic program assessment and the conditions by which they feel engaged and motivated to do the work. All too often higher education administrators fall into the trap of designing assessment processes to meet accreditation requirements, with little involvement from the faculty members who teach in the programs (Farley et al, 2018). This study looked at the phenomenon of faculty motivation in programmatic assessment through engagement with an inquiry group process.

\(^1\) All names have been changed to protect the privacy of the participants and setting.
Taking an inquiry stance to assessment would require faculty involvement and could not be designed solely by administrators (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

This topic is important to research for several reasons. Higher education, and teacher education specifically, has fallen into the trap of letting the external demands for data to drive the assessment work with faculty members (Ewell, 2009). These circumstances have created a negative connotation for assessment, which has created a culture in which assessment is seen as oppressive and separate from the actual work that faculty members do with their students.

At a micro level, research on the faculty experience of using an inquiry group for assessment will help administrators to understand how to support faculty in their programmatic assessment work. Findings may help stimulate conversation between faculty members and administration on existing processes and how they relate to the culture of assessment. At a macro level, by opening up the conversation about the ways in which faculty become motivated to engage with programmatic assessment, this study may contribute to the field of teacher education by exploring how administrators work with faculty and how this may relate to the institutional climate for assessment. Finally, by taking a look at faculty motivation as an essential factor of program assessment, administrators would signal to their institution that faculty--regardless of the ever-changing external regulations--are an asset to the college, worthy of respect and understanding.

**Research Problem**

Across teacher education programs, there are demands for evidence of learning and effectiveness to meet the external reporting requirements for state departments of education, as well as national and regional accreditation (Cochran-Smith et al., 2017). Increasingly this assessment for accountability work has fallen on the faculty members to document evidence of
student outcomes in the academic programs they instruct, in addition to their regular responsibilities of teaching, advising, and research (Cain, 2015). Higher education administrators play a large role in setting the tone for the work by the choices they make in how to involve faculty. The issue of faculty motivation to perform academic program assessment is a problem that persists across many institutions of higher education (Caudle & Hammons, 2018). The purpose of this study was to understand how the conditions offered by an inquiry-based process may impact faculty motivation with program assessment.

**Research Question**

The primary research question guiding this dissertation thesis project was: “How does the experience of performing academic program assessment through an inquiry group process affect faculty motivation?”

**Definition of Key Terminology**

**Term 1-Program assessment** is the regular and systematic review of an academic body of study, for the purpose of evaluating student learning outcomes and administrative support needed.

**Term 2-Inquiry-based process** is a method for assessment that relies on one’s own questioning about practice as a starting point. An inquiry-based process involves collaborative and cooperative conversations, sustained over a period of time, in which group members study evidence together and develop their own understandings.

**Theoretical Framework**

In order to address the issue of faculty engagement with assessment, it was important to consider theories of motivation for individuals. While it may be that theories on organizational systems or leadership approaches could play a role in how faculty respond to an assessment
process, these categories of theory have a wide lens; perhaps wider than feasible for an initial study. Regardless of the organizational structure or the styles of leadership, what all institutions have in common is that they are made up of people. This study focused on understanding the lived experience of individual faculty members as a way to discover their interpretations of these experiences. Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2000) provided a framework to examine how autonomy, competence, and relatedness help to support a person’s intrinsic motivation. See Figure 1, Self Determination Theory, for a visual depiction of the theory.

Figure 1. Self Determination Theory

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation comes from within a person and is based on internal feelings and reasons to be motivated, while extrinsic motivation is externally located and is derived from rewards such as money, recognition, and grades. By using SDT, it became possible to tease out the faculty experience with program assessment and how they have experienced intrinsic motivation and/or extrinsic motivation. The three tenets of the theory: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, provided a structure to test how faculty relate to
assessment processes, with the goal of understanding how faculty motivation can be supported and sustained.

**Historical Trajectory**

SDT theory has its earliest roots in 1971 at the University of Rochester when Edward Deci published a study on intrinsic motivation, with the idea that people who engage in a task from their own interests are more likely to sustain their engagement for longer periods of time (Deci, 1971). This was a departure from the longstanding school of thought about motivation that focused on direction of behavior which was the idea that external factors could be introduced that would cause a person’s behavior to go towards an outcome or away from an outcome (Deci et al., 1991). In 1977 Deci partnered with fellow researcher Richard M. Ryan to develop the first report on SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985). As the authors described, people have a natural tendency to be motivated to engage with learning, when under circumstances that support their feeling of having decision-making power, understanding in the topic, and a connection with others (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

While SDT has been of interest in the psychology community, it has also been taken up by educational researchers interested in understanding the psychology of motivation to learn. Deci and Ryan are not only the seminal authors of the theory but are also among the scholars who are researching educational issues through the lens of SDT today. Most educational research that uses SDT focuses on student motivation. Some scholars are beginning to look at area of educator preparation, but again, from the perspective of how the instructor can help to encourage students in the classroom to be motivated to learn (Liu et al., 2016; Mills et al., 2018; Sergis et al., 2018). These studies focus on understanding what creates conditions for someone to feel motivated to learn within a compliance driven setting, which is a parallel theme to the current
study, which sought to understand how faculty can be motivated to assess and learn about their work with students within a compliance driven setting. In the case of students, the culture of compliance comes in the form of state mandated exams, and in the case of the current study setting, the culture of compliance came in the form of multiple external demands for assessing teacher education. The common problem across the two settings was understanding how to create the conditions for meaningful engagement with learning -- whether for students or for faculty members.

**Behaviorism as a Counterargument**

From its start, SDT faced opposition from researchers who subscribe to the theory of behaviorism. Behaviorism is the belief that human behavior can be predicted and controlled through positive or negative reinforcement. Perhaps the most widely known researcher in the field of behaviorism is Skinner (1948, 1953) with his studies on the importance of observable actions as scientific evidence for what motivates behavior change. To this day, the behaviorist view can be found across the literature in support of holding students accountable through testing and using rewards to increase grades (Rousseau et al., 2018; Tyner & Petrilli, 2018).

Behaviorism has its limitations, because it ignores the harder to measure internal thoughts of people. While it may be that the threat of punishment could motivate a student to study for a test, this kind of behaviorist view of motivation is limited because it does not account for the well-being of the student and it is less sustainable for the long-term. The current study looked beneath the surface of faculty behavior to explore their thoughts and feelings about their experience with the assessment, and through the application of the SDT framework to the findings, the researcher examined whether there was a connection to their motivation to engage with assessment.
Application to Educational Research

Within educational research, SDT has been used in studies on student engagement with learning. Deci and Ryan (2016) looked specifically at the importance of student autonomy when it comes to nurturing the motivation to learn, especially given the reality of high stakes standardized testing informing the curriculum. The authors found that when teachers support their students’ sense of autonomous motivation, they also feel an increased sense of motivation through the experience (Deci & Ryan, 2016). This idea of teachers feeling supported and motivated as a way to support student outcomes appears across the research. Cheon et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative study of 91 physical education teachers who participated in a one year “autonomy supportive intervention program” (p. 44) and found that as the teachers gained experience with the value of autonomy, they were able to support their students in this same way, thus creating a more motivating environment for learning. Similarly, Korthagen and Evelein (2016) followed 36 student teachers in a quantitative study on the effect that having their own basic needs met as outlined by SDT theory, would have on their effectiveness in the classroom. It was shown that those teachers who reported the highest levels of feeling supported, also had the highest achieving students.

While these educational studies show a connection between SDT and engagement with learning both for the student as well as for the teacher, limited existing studies have focused on program assessment in this context. However, Curry et al. (2016) used SDT to look at what happens when K-12 teachers shift their use of assessment data from a strictly summative approach to a formative approach. This change enabled them to have more autonomy over what was being discussed, as they were able to meet regularly throughout the year and self-direct the conversations based on their own emergent needs. Through these meetings, the teachers
experienced all three tenets of SDT: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and as a result developed a closer connection to assessment.

SDT provided a framework for thinking about faculty engagement with assessment that pays close attention to the intrinsic motivation that they experience, as opposed to the expectation that faculty engagement be measured by the production of data for reporting purposes. By expanding the view of faculty engagement from extrinsically motivated to intrinsically motivated, a critical change in the view of assessment took place. In this way, the conversation shifted from focusing on the limitations of the accountability movement, to that of the potential to support faculty involvement and growth through their role in assessment.

**Rationale**

The topic of faculty motivation in program assessment in higher education has been researched as a challenge caused by a culture in which assessment is done for compliance (Cochran-Smith et al., 2017; Farley et al., 2018; Hardy, 2018a). This has led researchers to take on the topic of program assessment as an educational policy problem, which places an emphasis on the laws regulating higher education. This study looked at how faculty gain motivation to participate in assessment. SDT offered a theoretical framework to study the individual faculty member experience, by looking at the evidence of their autonomy, competence, and relatedness with their assessment work. The idea of studying faculty members’ intrinsic motivation reframed the debate about the oppression of accountability to focus on what higher education administrators can do to support faculty to connect to this work.

**Applying Theory to the Study**

As Deci et al. (1991) describe, within the field of education SDT is concerned with promoting sustainable and satisfying learning opportunities. It is comprised of three basic tenets:
autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The first tenet, autonomy, is the belief that a person is responsible for their decision making. As Deci and Ryan (2000) put it, an autonomous person feels that they are the locus of causality for their experience and that they feel that they have decision making authority for their own situation. When a person feels that they are not the locus of causality, they feel a loss of autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Threats to autonomy can come in the positive form of praise such as grades, awards or money, or it can also come in the negative form of “threats, deadlines, directives, pressured evaluations, and imposed goals” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 70).

In a study of faculty involvement with an inquiry assessment process, it was important to explore how a sense of autonomy contributed to the faculty experience. The previous assessment process at Westside College was created by administration and a small number of faculty members to meet the demands of the national accreditation association at the time. The process required faculty to complete numerous rubrics that were written with the language of the national standards. In an effort to create cohesive data that could be reported to the accreditors, there was no choice given to faculty in how to design or customize the assessments for their program. The newer inquiry process deliberately allowed for faculty choice in selecting their own research questions about their program. This was a departure from the past practice, in that faculty were now tasked with the responsibility of designing their assessment work, including what evidence of student learning they would study.

The second tenet, competence, is a person’s feeling of ability to take on a task successfully. Together with autonomy, when a person feels that they have the skills to understand a piece of work and are also in control of their decision to choose to do it, then they have both competence and autonomy. Competence alone is not enough; a person must feel that
they have decision-making authority over their actions and that they are the “locus of causality” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 69).

In the current study, it was important to examine how faculty feel about their competence in the assessment processes. Assessment processes that rely heavily on the technical language of accreditors or technical expertise of an assessment management system may cause confusion for faculty (Bae, 2018; Blumberg, 2017). This lack of understanding may contribute to feeling a lack of competence in the externally focused assessment process. An inquiry process places an emphasis on sharing and discussing faculty work in a conversational manner, thereby repositioning faculty as the experts of the language used to describe their work. Given these circumstances, it was crucial to study competence as part of SDT.

The third tenet of SDT is relatedness. Relatedness connects to a person’s sense of security. In adults, relatedness can come from interactions with colleagues, family, and even a wider professional community. As Deci and Ryan (2000) describe, when a person is able to feel a sense of connection and support from others, then they feel related. When autonomy, competence, and relatedness are put together, it becomes apparent that SDT is a theory that is not only about motivation, but a sense of well-being for the person, and a sense of intrinsic motivation. This is the distinction that sets SDT apart from other theories of motivation such as behaviorism that is concerned only with extrinsically motivated observable actions.

The past assessment process at Westside College did not allow for many faculty conversations. The inquiry process was comprised mostly of group meetings, with faculty looking together at evidence of student learning. The groups included faculty from across the program areas. One of the aims of the study was to illuminate faculty feelings of relatedness -- to the extent that these feelings exist.
Conclusion

Through the application of SDT to the issue of faculty involvement with program assessment, this study sought to examine how higher education administrators influence faculty motivation. SDT provided the framework to expand thinking beyond faculty involvement, to that of understanding of faculty connection to their work. One goal for the study was to elevate the importance of faculty experience in program assessment, so that the approach to assessment could be viewed as essential as the assessment itself. It is important to acknowledge that SDT has limitations. Because it is focused on the personal experience, it did not necessarily provide data to measure whether program changes are identified or implemented. Research questions of this nature can be explored as a second step, after this study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Assessment is an essential piece of teaching and learning, because it allows for a pause to look at the effectiveness of the work (Knight et al., 2012). However, the approach to assessment in the United States education system tends to “prioritize compliance and avoiding punishment over continuous improvement” (Bae, 2018, p. 22). While there are many different participants involved in the education system at every level, there is a widely accepted belief that teacher preparation is the foundation upon which all educational outcomes are made possible (Stosich et al., 2018). To ensure that teacher preparation programs are producing the highest quality teachers, agencies such as national accreditors and the federal government have placed tremendous pressure on faculty to produce assessment data to monitor its success (Wilson, 2014). With all of these mandatory reports defined for teacher educators, it has become a struggle for faculty to find ways to assess their programs that go deeper than the “culture of compliance” (Kuh et al., 2015). One approach that may enable teacher education faculty to make
their program assessment practices more meaningful is to assume “inquiry as stance,” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) by engaging in a faculty inquiry process.

This literature review explores previous studies that have been done on assessment in teacher education programs, including barriers to faculty engaging with assessment. It also takes a look at the ways faculty experience an inquiry process in performing assessment in a teacher education program, as a possible response to the accountability movement. This literature review is organized in sections beginning with a look at teacher education programs and why they are important. It will move on to program assessment in teacher education, including why it is a priority that they are assessed and how they have been assessed. Next will be an overview of the assessment environment for teacher education and how it has changed over time. Here is where the inquiry approach will be explored, including what it is, how, when, where, and why it has been used, as well as the results. The review will move onto a look at program assessment practices in three high functioning educational systems: Hong Kong, Australia and Finland. Following this, the potential results that could come out of the inquiry process through its impact on relationship will be explored. Finally, the section will end with a summation that pulls together the implications derived from the research.

**Teacher Education Programs**

Teacher education is a field of higher education that prepares future teachers for their work with students, through a combination of academic grounding in courses and practical experiences in the field under the guidance of a faculty mentor (Peercy & Troyan, 2017). While many teacher education programs are based on a foundation of conceptual or theoretical knowledge provided in coursework, followed by fieldwork as student teachers, faculty members Peercy and Troyan (2017) found that the practice-based approach of logging a specific number
of hours in the field is only one part of the preparation needed for students in a teacher education program. Through a self-study of their work with English Language Learner (ELL) teacher candidates, Peercy and Troyan (2017) found that teacher education programs need to include many opportunities for students to make sense of their learning together. It is through this sharing of experiences and knowledge that the future teachers and faculty members gain the ability understand what they are facing in the classroom and why certain practices may be helpful over others. This study demonstrated that learning to teach happens over time and student teachers can benefit greatly from discussing their experiences together. While Peercy and Troyan (2017) make a great point about the value of group learning, their view of teacher education remained somewhat limited in that it centered on a very practical and basic idea of providing knowledge through coursework and experience through fieldwork, with little attention to anything else.

Teacher education programs are important not only because of the role they play in helping to future teachers to have the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to enter the classroom, but because of the role they play in helping to foster dispositions for teaching. Bair (2017) found in her study of a teacher education program’s process to define dispositions, that good teaching is more than just learning a technique, derives from the integrity of the teacher. The national accrediting agency for the field of teacher education, the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), provides the following definition for teaching dispositions: “The habits of professional action and moral commitments that underlie an educator’s performance” (InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards, p. 6.). While teacher education programs have a responsibility to deliver course content through academic programs, it is important to note that knowledge of course content does not in and of itself guarantee that the
future teachers will take positive actions. It takes dispositions such as empathy, patience, and curiosity on the part of the teacher to encourage students to use their education to become caring and engaged citizens in the world (Bair, 2017). Teacher education programs provide students with the opportunity to practice and develop their craft as beginning educators and develop their dispositions for their work with students. It is up to the faculty members of teacher preparation programs to offer experiences that will help future teachers to approach the complexity of the classroom. As Bae (2018) noted in her review of educational policy, schools are facing many changes, in part because of population shifts and advances in technology. It is becoming an increasingly challenging task for teacher education programs to prepare teachers for the complexity that they will encounter in the classroom (Bae, 2018).

**Program Assessment**

Given the fundamental role of teacher education in the overall education system of the United States, it follows that the programs would be assessed both for effectiveness so that teacher candidates know what program to choose (U.S. Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The current process of assessment for accountability defines a limited view of what counts as success (Kuh, 2015). Knight et al. (2012) looked at the topic of program assessment and accountability of teacher education programs, with the overarching questions, “Who is to be held accountable? For what? And by whom?” (p. 301). By asking these questions, they open the notion of accountability to look at the various ways teacher education has been evaluated. Knight et al. gave an example: under the No Child Left Behind Act and the Race to the Top initiatives, a “value-added” approach to assessment was implemented whereby the English and mathematics standardized test scores of pupils in the classroom were used as an assessment indicator of the teacher education program from which the teacher graduated (Knight, 2012, p. 301). To answer
the researcher’s questions in this example, the higher education program from which the teacher graduated was held accountable for the pupils’ standardized test scores, by the federal government. While this article is dated, given that these two political initiatives have since come to an end, the questions raised by Knight et al. drew attention to a relevant dilemma about the intention of assessment in teacher education. Under the accountability movement, to whom are teacher education faculty accountable -- to outside evaluators such as accrediting agencies to meet compliance demands?

Zeichner et al. (2015) argue that in a democratic society, teacher education faculty ought to hold themselves accountable to other institutions, the community, and to themselves as professionals. As Zeichner et al. (2015) put forth, when teacher educators merely respond to assessment demands handed to them by the federal government and accrediting agencies, there is an unspoken understanding that these external entities are the experts in what teacher education programs need to be doing instead of recognizing that professional expertise can be cultivated on the ground, in the classrooms, and in the teacher education programs.

Research has shown that that teachers have the single greatest impact on student learning (Bae, 2018; Cohen & Brown, 2016; Duchesne et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2017). It follows then that there is a public concern and interest in making sure that teachers receive quality preparation (Bastian et al., 2018; Juarez & Purper, 2018). The field of education, including local, state, and federal departments of education, all have an interest in knowing that teacher education programs are being assessed, as a responsibility for the public good (Eastman & Boyles, 2015). Eastman and Boyles (2015) remind readers of the language used by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in the 1915 Declaration of Principles when they described one of the tenets of the job of the university professor as maintaining “freedom of inquiry” (p. 20). This
idea of questioning and thinking about academic work with students is part of what defines assessment, although with the constraints of the accountability movement, it is not always a part of the process today (Bae, 2018).

Program assessment in teacher education has largely been driven by national standards set by accreditors and state certification requirements (Sloan, 2015). When performing program assessment, faculty and administrators tend to consider the expectations for accreditation first, and then do a mapping back to their assessments of student work as a way to make sure that they are meeting the requirements set out for their program (Sloan, 2015; Zehnder, 2017). This practice, known as backward design is commonly used in writing curriculum, and increasingly so in creating assessment systems (Zehnder, 2017). In a study of the assessment practices in an elementary education teaching program at Trinity University, Norman and Sherwood (2015) described how the faculty worked to create assessments that specifically addressed the expectations of both the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Educators (NCATE) and the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI). While the researchers warned of the de-professionalizing that can happen when a college administration tells faculty what and how to assess within their programs to meet the accreditation demands, they did not note any faculty resistance to the process (Norman & Sherwood, 2015). It is possible that the authors made the effort sound simpler than it was.

A common approach to assessment in teacher education involves collecting examples of student work that are analyzed and used as evidence of meeting standards (Erickson & Wentworth, 2010). A result of this assessment approach has been the proliferation of electronic assessment systems, to help manage the heavy quantitative data management demands (Bush et al., 2015). In a study at the University of North Texas on the faculty experience using an
electronic assessment system to organize assessment data, there was a culture shift for the education faculty, in that they were now not only able to, but required to look at many more combinations of quantitative data from student assessments (Bush et al., 2015). Because the management system made it easy to run reports, faculty had a wealth of information for not only their program, but across programs. This approach has its benefits, as faculty across institutions can use the same basic language for talking about the work, since it is based on standards that have been approved by each accrediting agency (Hardy, 2018b). However, as Bush et al. (2015) noted, there was some discomfort expressed by the faculty about the shift to such a quantitative assessment process.

In another study of how teacher education faculty perform assessment, Sloan (2015) looked at the efforts happening at the University of California at Santa Barbara (UC Santa Barbara). She noted that the usual approach was for faculty to look at the numerical ratings of a selection of course embedded assessments throughout an academic program, in a seven-year cycle that was documented for accreditors. As standard procedure, much like the study Bush et al. (2015) described, faculty fill out rubrics for each student and the data are aggregated by program. The quantified data are then presented to faculty for their review. This is an approach to assessment that has been documented and studied across the United States and serves as what some would call the typical approach under the accountability movement (Cramer et al, 2014; Norman & Sherwood, 2015). Sloan (2015) studied a different assessment effort by the faculty, to examine a wider range of evidence, including survey data from graduates and employers, as well as student work from the new portfolio requirement for teacher certification. Sloan (2015) noted that while the new approach encouraged richer conversations, faculty felt ill-prepared to draw conclusions. It should be noted that Sloan did not consider that such data may require a
different review structure to support faculty. It may be that this type of data could be used to
engage faculty in an inquiry group process, given the proper supports and guidance.

Out of the literature, two categories for program assessment exist: summative, which
relies on student outcomes, to try to measure success; and formative, which relies on feedback
throughout a program experience (Stiggins, 2002). Faculty involved in a summative program
assessment process may meet once a year for an assessment day event, to look at data together to
identify areas for improvement. The data may include standardized test scores, graduation rates,
and number and type of clinical experiences (Council for the Accreditation of Educator
Preparation, 2013). By looking at the data and having conversations about it at the end of a
collection year, faculty have the chance to notice what has happened for the students in a given
year and compare it to their end results (Buchholtz et al., 2018). Formative assessment involves
conversations about the data throughout the year (Fabiano et al., 2018). This approach requires
an ongoing investment of time with more frequent looks at data (Zenouzagh, 2018).

The issue with both assessment approaches is that they rely on external entities to set the
priorities for what questions to ask and what topics to study (Cramer et al, 2014). This approach
can cause faculty to feel as though they are doing assessment for someone else, because the data
points collected and discussed are decided for them by national standards, and may not
necessarily reflect questions they have about the work they are doing at their institution.

**Accountability and Compliance Pressures**

The debate about the accountability pressures put on the field of education in the United
States has been happening for a number of years now. Capen (1939) wrote that the “fertility of
invention which has been American education’s chief source of strength is thwarted” (paragraph
23) with the pressures of accreditation compliance. This concern continued into teacher
education specifically, with the seminal John R. Mayor Report of 1965 written in response to the newly formed National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, with the idea being that education is continuously changing and the movement towards another layer of monitoring for teachers would impose a static, limited way of measuring success (Allen, 1965). The widespread criticisms of education that are part of the discourse today took hold nearly 20 years later with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), commissioned by President Reagan. The report put into writing, and inserted into the American consciousness, the belief that the United States education system was failing, thus marking the beginning of the public debate on how to fix our nation’s schools.

While national accreditation for teacher preparation programs has been in existence since the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) was founded in 1954, teacher education faculty were given quite a bit of latitude to assess their programs for quite a while. The Higher Education Act of 1965 started out with the stance that higher education is a public good and the goal is to increase access (McClellan, 2016). A major shift occurred in the early 1980s, after the release of *A Nation at Risk*, when Secretary of Education William Bennett issued an executive order directing accrediting agencies to add student outcomes assessment to their requirements for institutional approval. Once the next amendment to the Higher Education Act was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush in 1992, this assessment shift was made into federal law (McClellan, 2016). In 2001 NCATE released the revised national standards for teacher education, which put teacher preparation programs under pressure to measure their progress by using an even more narrowly prescribed set of student outcomes including employment rates and certification test scores (Wise & Leibbrand, 2001). Program assessment in
teacher education had become aligned with high stakes testing -- with great pressure to produce narrowly defined outcomes (Norman & Sherwood, 2015).

The criticisms and pressure on teacher education continued. Former Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, declared in an open letter to education deans that, “the system we have for training teachers lacks rigor, is out of step with the times, and is given to extreme grade inflation that leaves teachers unprepared and their future students at risk” (Duncan, 2016). Highly critical statements such as that reinforced the accountability movement for teacher education and did little to help identify supportive ways to improve the field (Bae, 2018). As Ewell (2009) explains:

Accountability requires the entity held accountable to demonstrate, with evidence, conformity with an established standard of process or outcome. The associated incentive for that entity is to look as good as possible, regardless of the underlying performance. Improvement, in turn, entails an opposite set of incentives.

Deficiencies in performance must be faithfully detected and reported so they can be acted upon. Indeed, discovering deficiencies is one of the major objectives of assessment for improvement. (Ewell, 2009, p. 7)

Using assessment for both accountability and for finding areas for improvement has created a tension that has caused a defensiveness and protectiveness of faculty work (Stiggins, 2002). As described by Stiggins (2002), in the years following the release of NCATE’s new standards, teacher education faculty expressed concern of this shift from assessment for learning to assessment of learning. Like medical education, teacher education was now being evaluated by test scores with little attention to more difficult to measure outcomes such as ability to solve complex problems (Guris, 2017). It also narrowed the lens through which they were being
judged in a way that did not allow for contextual or developmental variations (Rogers & Scales, 2013). In a study of work by student teachers, Rogers and Scales (2013) explored the complexity of assessing a program based on beginning teachers’ level of expertise in the classroom. From a compliance standpoint, the student teacher work must be evaluated, but from an adult learning standpoint, it could be argued that beginning teachers have much to learn and that judging an academic program on this type of evidence does not acknowledge the continuum of adult development and learning processes (Rogers & Scales, 2013).

**Inquiry-based Assessment**

Inquiry is used as a pedagogical approach in K-12 classrooms; however, less is known about what it might offer as an assessment approach in the field of teacher education. Whereas the accountability movement operates under the theory that monitoring reports, and the threat they carry, will drive faculty to make program improvements, inquiry offers an alternative that could enable faculty to view assessment as an ongoing process of learning (Arkhipenko et al., 2018). In a collaborative study between the teacher education department of the University of Manchester and a local school district in Northern England, Arkhipenko et al. took a look over eleven months, at the ways inquiry can affect change in a teacher’s practice. The teachers varied in their reactions from those who used inquiry to problem solve, to those who wished to gain deeper understanding (Arkhipenko et al., 2018). The research points to the idea that inquiry is different than typical assessment methods in that it may help participants to learn about themselves and what they understand about their work.

Over time, an inquiry process could encourage a shift in thinking from assessment for accountability to assessment for understanding (Serrano, et. al, 2018). To illustrate, eight researchers in the University of Liverpool took on a study with faculty members in the
humanities and social sciences department, to seek to understand the impact that Critical Pedagogies, an approach to teaching, might have on the faculty and students. Assessment and learning were intertwined and thought of as one and the same. As Serrano et al. (2018) described, faculty demonstrated a large degree of variance from acceptance and comfort to impatience and confusion. It is important to note that the classes in this study did not receive the same level of support. It was not simply that the approach worked for some people and did not work for others; it worked better for those who were supported throughout the process.

Inquiry as a Process

Inquiry is a process of learning that encourages questioning, reflection, and meaning-making together (Cochran-Smith, 2009). Inquiry can be used as a pedagogical approach to instruction in K-12 classrooms to change from teacher-directed to more of a student-centered classroom (Lotter et al, 2016). It has most often been used in science or mathematics subject areas, to spark students’ interest through their own questions and curiosity. As an example, Makar and Fielding-Wells (2018) studied Australian teachers across several primary schools who were all facing a new curriculum called Mathematics by Inquiry. It was found that although teachers could develop classroom norms for the inquiry approach, they needed guidance and practice to figure out how to incorporate it into their classrooms. The fact that Makar and Fielding-Wells’s (2018) study took place over three years and the teachers were still forming their classroom norms by the end of the study indicates that inquiry takes time and iteration to put into motion. Makar and Fielding-Wells (2018) focused on inquiry as a pedagogical approach and did not grapple with how it might work as an alternative assessment in higher education.

Inquiry has also been used as a professional development tool for teachers who wish to reflect on their own open-ended questions based on the work they are doing with students
(Garner & Kaplan, 2019; Lemley et al., 2019). When teachers get together for an inquiry process, they start by developing a question about their context or their practice and they may read articles or book chapters together as a way to have a shared experience that they can discuss (Cushman et al., 2018). They are expected to bring pieces of evidence, such as course assignments or student work to study and describe together. In inquiry, the goal is not for people to leave with definitive answers to their questions, or solutions to their problems, but rather to co-construct new understandings about their work as a result of dialogue, reflection, and collaboration (Jones & Jones, 2013).

There is little research on using inquiry as an assessment tool to support teacher education programs. One author who has studied inquiry and teacher education is Marilyn Cochran-Smith, of Boston College. Cochran-Smith (2009) describes how Boston College faculty took on a five-year effort to incorporate inquiry into their ongoing work. The effort was funded by a federal initiative called Teachers for a New Era that provided the college with $5 million. While this article portrays a successful long-term inquiry process, this level of funding is not an option for most educational settings. The article serves as a reminder of the time and effort involved in sustaining such an endeavor at the risk of making it sound nearly impossible to attempt without a federal grant in place.

Other Contexts for Inquiry

A handful of countries across the globe have implemented national policies to support inquiry work in teacher education (Ingvarson & Rowley, 2017). What follows is a description of the context for teacher education assessment for Hong Kong, Australia, and Finland to provide a brief overview of the kinds of changes happening internationally.
**Hong Kong**

Teacher education changed dramatically in Hong Kong in 1997 with the liberation from British rule. This historical transition allowed the government to take a clean slate view of teacher education and develop reform at every level in education, from K-12 up through teacher education (Kwo & Fung, 2014). One specific change for secondary students was the introduction of an inquiry-based high school curriculum in an integrated subject called Liberal Studies. Recognizing that teachers would need practice with this approach, Kwo and Fung (2014), two faculty members at the University of Hong Kong, studied three teacher candidates as they experienced the new curriculum as student teachers. These were student teachers who were much more comfortable with the direct instruction approach that had been the norm in Hong Kong before the reform. This study demonstrated that assessing student work is not a simple task that can be defined in a binary way of either success or failure. Instead, the author showed that as the beginning teachers struggled and questioned the process, they were gaining experiences with ambiguity and perseverance -- two dispositions that are valuable for teachers (Kwo & Fung, 2014). As the author described, these student teachers changed the way they taught the new curriculum so that they were able to let it unfold along with the classroom dynamics. The student teachers moved from an “administrative stance to a learning stance” (Kwo & Fung, 2014, p. S58) that was supported by a developing comfort with not knowing.

**Australia**

Australia offers another example of teachers engaging in an inquiry process to grapple with a shift towards greater accountability (Hardy, 2018a). Australia implemented a national curricular reform for primary grade level classrooms in the subject of literacy, called Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) in the year 2012. Working with a researcher from the University of
Queensland, a group of teachers engaged in a three-year inquiry process to work together in a project referred to as the Inquiry Cycles (IC). The teachers found support by meeting regularly to discuss the pressures they were feeling with the standardized curriculum (Hardy, 2018a). The study revealed that while they appreciated the support they gave each other, they still struggled to find meaning in all of the numerical test score data. The study suggests that inquiry as a mode of assessment of the teacher’s own work helped the teachers to feel a sense of community, yet the changes over time were slow and iterative. The study highlights the need for time and consistency, given that inquiry is not always a rational, linear process, as the teachers demonstrated in their various levels of comfort with the IC. While Kwo and Fung (2014) studied teacher educators and their work with student teachers, Hardy (2018b) studied actual teachers in the classroom as they attempted to go through an inquiry process led by a teacher educator. In both examples, the faculty member was one step removed from the actual inquiry, and instead served as a facilitator.

**Finland**

Teacher education in Finland has been under control by the federal government since the 1970s and is known to be successful (Tatto, 2015). Teachers are expected to take on the task of ongoing self-assessment and curricular reform in their schools as part of the role as researchers into their work. Teacher education programs in Finland place an emphasis on inquiry-based research as a way to develop skills together across diverse perspectives (Hokka & Etelapelto, 2014). Hokka and Etelapelto (2014), reanalyzed four previous studies on the barriers to and supports for teacher research in Finland, and followed up with interviews of eight teachers who were considered key contributors. They found that even though inquiry into practice offers teachers a feeling of autonomy in their choice of what to study, there were some feelings of
mistrust and inability to share learnings with others. They also found that relying on such a process for program change is a very slow and iterative process that cannot be confined to a strict timeline (Hokka & Etalapelto, 2014).

Results of an Inquiry Process

One of the foundational ideas behind inquiry when used for assessment is that it shifts the focus from one of problem-solving to that of seeking understanding (Arkhipenka et al., 2018). The results may result in ideas for program improvements or they may result in shifts in thinking about the program and the work, which is harder to measure (Arkhipenka et al., 2018). This kind of shift can have an impact on the professional dispositions of faculty as they become more aware of what their goals are and what their actions mean for students (Cochran-Smith, 2017). Because an inquiry process takes place in a group setting with other faculty members, it challenges how faculty relationships are defined (Cochran-Smith, 2017).

Relationships with Colleagues

As Le Cornu (2015) described in an overview of 25 years of work in teacher education, as teacher educators have felt increasingly confined by accountability, they have used this as a reason to come together with school partners such as classroom teachers, to make sense of their shared work. Inquiry can provide a collegial platform for faculty to learn together -- both from each other as well as with each other, whereas many traditional outcomes-oriented assessment methods can create a spirit of competition among programs (Le Cornu, 2015). The collaborative efforts that Le Cornu (2015) noted are more of personal and professional development with colleagues. Even though she mentions the compliance-driven environment as a reason that people want to come together to cope and collaborate, she does not make the connection to how inquiry can be used for programmatic assessment.
Hokka & Etelapelto (2014) looked at how teacher educators in Finland used a process of inquiry for ongoing research into their practice. Even though they expected the inquiry to be a collegial process, there was a level of competition across program areas and the teachers were not always supportive of each other. The study put priority on individual agency at the expense of developing group norms and processes (Hokka & Etelapelto, 2014). It may be that the feeling of competition could have been kept in check, had the instructors been encouraged to spend more time constructing understandings for their process together.

When inquiry is done with an understanding of trust, it has the potential to have benefits that go beyond the surface value of producing assessment data, to create a general feeling of well-being (Louis & Murphy, 2017). In a study of a database of surveys of 116 schools, Louis and Murphy (2017) found that trust is not always reciprocal in this kind of work. They did note that if an educational leader demonstrates trust in the abilities of his/her faculty members, then they are more likely to reciprocate. This study was highly quantitative in its approach, and the authors seemed to place a premium on the trust relationship between leader and subordinate. In a collaborative effort such as inquiry, where the work is largely being done among colleagues, peer-to-peer relationships ought to be considered in more detail. It may be true that the administration plays a role in setting the tone for the work, but the group dynamics would have a role too. This study did not explore the trust relationship among colleagues as much as it did the role of trusting the educational leader.

When faculty experience what it means to be supportive with each other, they are gaining skills that can help them to be supportive of students as well as with others in their outside community (Brubaker, 2015). It is through these relationships with colleagues that faculty then have the opportunity to feel and live what it means to be part of a democracy, so that their work
takes on a larger meaning within the larger context of the community and the field of education (Zaphir, 2018).

By deepening their relationships with each other, faculty learn to develop a capacity for trust through sharing their questions and concerns (Serrano et al, 2018). This may evoke a feeling of vulnerability, but it offers a way of openness to learning that has the potential for new understandings through experiences (Arkhipenka et al, 2018). By allowing themselves to engage with each other fully and authentically, faculty then can grow their own skills in creating similar learning environments for students (Dyer & Loytonen, 2012). In a collaborative inquiry study between two dance teacher educators, one in Arizona and one in Finland, Dyer and Loytonen (2012), explored their approaches to working with dance teachers. As they described, their ongoing inquiry work over two years had the goal, not to identify specific changes to make in their practice, but instead to encourage dialogue and relationship-building as a way to learn about oneself and others professional work with students (Dyer & Loytonen, 2012).

When faculty work together on issues that they value, their relationships have the potential of becoming stronger, which has the potential of reinforcing and sustaining their working relationships and their dedication to their programs (Haviland et al, 2011). The cyclical nature of preparing assessments for external evaluators, can be difficult to sustain, because it is based on reporting out predefined outcomes that may or may not connect to the current questions of faculty work (Bair, 2017).

**Relationship with Self**

When a faculty member takes part in an inquiry process, they can improve more than their practice, they can deepen their thinking as they turn the research on themselves (Lotter et al, 2016). In a study of 102 middle school teachers who were charged with implementing an
inquiry-based science curriculum, Lotter (2016) explored Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory that for the teachers to be able to teach inquiry, they must first believe in themselves that they can teach in this method. Through a professional development workshop format, the teachers engaged in their own series of inquiry-based lessons aimed to help them to become familiar with both the curriculum and the inquiry delivery format. Lotter (2016) showed that although some teachers started out questioning the inquiry approach, through the experience of doing inquiry their abilities and their attitudes changed so that they began to see the value in inquiry-based learning. This study highlighted the value of peer support, both in learning how to do inquiry, as well as in having an outlet for reflection to understand what is happening.

An essential piece of inquiry is the fact that it values and celebrates diverse perspectives, as a point of learning (Haynes, 2018). Haynes (2018) researched the relations that take place within communities of inquiry -- an approach that first received attention when John Dewey described it more than 100 years ago. Haynes (2018) noted that inquiry encourages participants to challenge each other so that the learners see that questioning is important and knowledge comes out of sharing ideas with each other. Similarly, D’Olimpio (2018) wrote a theoretical exploration on the possible personal growth that can come out of working in a community of inquiry. While building on the idea that participants learn through collaborative work together, she extends this idea to include how assessment may come into play. As D’Olimpio (2018) explains, individuals learn self-reflection based on observing how others react to them. Whereas a traditional approach to assessment may mean looking at scores from rubrics conducted across a program and documenting areas that need improvement, inquiry may offer more of a chance to reflect and discuss what is happening in the curriculum. When faculty members have experience of voicing their ideas in response to an opposing view, they are able to get clearer with
themselves what it is they value and why because they are forced to think about it and articulate it (D’Olimpio, 2018).

**Relationships with Assessment/Accreditors**

The prevailing traditional accountability approach to assessment assumes a linear relationship between quantifiable data collected and program changes implemented for accreditation reports (Bae, 2018). It is an approach that simplifies the kinds of data collected and how they are used (Cochran-Smith, 2017). Within this context, faculty may feel a sense of not being understood or valued fully by the external evaluators (Elliott-Johns, 2015). This can impact faculty relationships with accreditors and other outside entities, as the relationship begins from a place of feeling devalued and judged unfairly (Kayler, 2009). In a study of a two-year teacher education program at George Mason University, Kayler (2009) studied what happened when faculty choose to engage with teachers in the field to identify curricular changes. Rather than defer to accreditors for setting standardized goals, the faculty chose to develop their own questions from the field. Kayler (2009) provided a model for how faculty might shift their thinking about whose questions are valuable to consider.

To engage in program assessment effectively, faculty need to develop a deeper understanding of their own program, in part so that they can communicate with external audiences. A large challenge is that education programs, much like the classroom settings they prepare teachers to enter are “contextual, ambiguous, and complex” (Riedler & Eryaman, 2016, p. 173). Riedler and Eryaman (2016) used an inquiry approach to study how a group of 21 student teachers connect what they were learning in their methods class to their fieldwork. The researchers showed that through inquiry they were able to understand the complexities of each student’s experience. This study focused on inquiry as a method for these two researchers to use,
in order to understand the program, however it would be interesting to see how this kind of
approach could help a larger set of faculty members, who were all engaged in a similar
assessment activity. By expanding the inquiry project, it might be possible to conduct a
programmatic review, across faculty members.

Through inquiry, faculty may experience that data, or evidence, does not come with
instructions on what to do next which shifts their relationship with each other and with the data
(Benade, 2015). In a research study based in the School of Education at Auckland University of
Technology in New Zealand, Benade (2015) found that the nationally mandated inquiry-based
curriculum was neither understood nor practiced by many schools. The researcher, a professor
out of the School of Education, Auckland University of Technology, worked with twenty-five
teachers who were responsible for implementing the new curriculum, in a project entitled 21st
Century Learning. Benade (2015) found that the teachers struggled with the new curriculum
mostly because they were not given enough training with it. Benade (2015) put forth the idea that
inquiry is better used for assessment and research, than it is for teaching. Benade (2015) did not
give much attention to the less-than-perfect the circumstances the teachers were placed to use
this new curriculum. It seems as though that should have been a factor to consider, as each
classroom presents its own set of circumstances that may help or hinder a process.

Faculty members at the University of Helsinki in Finland, Lipponen and Kumpulainen
(2011) studied nine student teachers to seek to understand how they develop and use their sense
of agency in the classroom. By taking a discussion-based teaching approach, the faculty
members were able to begin to connect the interactions in the classroom to the students’ actions
(Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011). The faculty members were able to bring the students into
their study, not only as research subjects, but as partners in learning together. In this way,
program assessment became a part of their practice and a part of the program, rather than seen as an additional piece of work.

Summary

Accountability pressures on teacher education programs have increased over the years, which has created a struggle for faculty to find ways to create meaningful assessment practices for ongoing reflection and growth. It is possible that an inquiry approach may help faculty in the field of teacher education to shift their focus from assessment for compliance, to assessment for understanding. A look at Hong Kong, Australia, and Finland found that these countries all have faculty who are engaging in an inquiry-based research approach to assessment for teacher educators with varying degrees of success.

If the field of teacher education is going to move out of the compliance mindset created by the American government, and into a more supportive approach to assessment, then faculty need opportunities to understand the possible ways to do this work. An inquiry group may be an option that could provide a more meaningful alternative assessment process, however there are challenges to consider. There is very little practical guidance on using an inquiry process for assessment in the field of teacher education. While inquiry has been used in the classroom as a way to exercise autonomy and foster continuous learning, it may be worth taking a look at how it can be used as an assessment tool for the field of teacher education.

Chapter Three: Research Design

The purpose of this study was to discover if participation in an inquiry-based approach to program assessment impacts faculty motivation. The study aimed to construct and interpret what conditions may help higher education administrators to support faculty motivation in assessment work that is often driven by compliance and accountability demands.
Qualitative Research Approach

Given the topic of faculty motivation to engage in programmatic assessment, a qualitative research approach was selected. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research is best suited for studying a central phenomenon that requires exploration and understanding. Rather than try to “solve” or “fix” the complex problem of faculty motivation, qualitative research seeks to construct understanding of the issue. As data were collected on how the faculty members have engaged with the inquiry-based process for assessment, themes were identified from the research. Because the participants had varying experiences, it became necessary to look across their experiences to understand the points of intersection.

The study reflects the lens through which the researcher views the world, because with qualitative research, “ultimately writing is an interpretation by us of events, people, and activities” (Creswell, 2013, p. 278). To be transparent and reflective of her positionality, the researcher bracketed her assumptions and beliefs explicitly in the study (Ponterotto, 2005). Even with involvement from the faculty participants to engage in member checking, the writing of a qualitative study will always be an interpretation (Creswell, 2013).

Constructivism-Interpretivism Paradigm

The study utilized the constructivism-interpretivism paradigm in which “reality is constructed by the actor” (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 129) and varies depending on the circumstances and the interpretation. This is a highly nuanced view that acknowledges that knowledge, just like life, is always changing and evolving (Merriam, 1991). By its very nature, this was a subjective approach to research in which the experience was continuously constructed throughout the study (Riegler, 2012). Philosophically, the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm is not concerned with discovering an objective truth, and instead puts forth the notion that truth
depends on the person’s point of view (Baxter & Jack, 2008). It was necessary to allow for these nuanced interpretations because the experience of the participants was highly personal and subject to their own circumstances. A constructivist study on faculty involvement with programmatic assessment necessarily involves subjective understanding of what the evidence means (Stake, 1995).

**Instrumental Case Study**

A qualitative case study design is best used for research that seeks answers to “how” and “why” questions (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2013). In keeping with the research of Stake (1995), the intent of a case study was, “not to represent the world, but to represent the case,” (p. 460). Case study was an appropriate research methodology, because the study sought to understand how and why faculty may (or may not be) motivated to engage in program assessment through their experience with an inquiry based approach within a bounded single-site; and did not attempt to define criteria that could be replicated across different settings (Stake, 1995; Yazan, 2015). As was expected in the constructivist-interpretivist approach taken with the qualitative instrumental case study, the researcher played an integral role in the study, as she was personally involved with the site and the data collection (Stake, 1995). The study utilized an instrumental case study - a type of case study in which the case is used to help understand a particular phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The phenomenon under review was faculty motivation, and the vehicle, or instrument, to understand the case was the inquiry-based program assessment process at Westside College (Stake, 1995). Because an instrumental case study relies on the use of multiple sources of evidence as a way to examine the issue from multiple perspectives, the study drew from interviews with a small group of participants, summary reports written by the faculty, and publicly available documents (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam, 2009).
This research approach allowed for a rich and layered look at the topic of faculty motivation within a narrowly defined context (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yazan, 2015). The instrumental case study was particularly useful in identifying new ideas as the researcher worked with the data collection and data analysis simultaneously as is customary in a constructivist-interpretivist approach (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998; Noor, 2008).

**Research Participants**

As Miles and Huberman (1994) described, a case is, “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (p. 25). Participants were bound by a single site -- Westside College, a non-research, non-tenure private graduate school of education where faculty have been engaged in IBP for program assessment since the fall of 2015. The college was a private, nonprofit institution that offers 35 master’s degrees in education and educational leadership to its 650 students. There were 45 full time faculty members at Westside College, all of whom participated in the programmatic assessment work. This site was a progressive setting where collaborative learning and experimentation were espoused in the college mission.

In keeping with the expectations for instrumental case study research, five faculty members who were involved with the inquiry-based assessment process were recruited to participate. A small number of participants allowed the study to go into depth with everyone to create a detailed profile of their experience (Creswell, 2013). Participants were adults working as faculty members in either teacher education or school leadership preparation programs who were involved in the inquiry-based assessment process for at least one academic year. This time frame ensured that each participant had completed at least one full year of the inquiry work and had time to reflect on the experience. Because the study focused on the inquiry-based assessment process, it was not a requirement that the faculty knew about
the previous assessment processes at Westside College.

As case studies rely on multiple perspectives to identify both convergence and divergence of findings (Stake, 1995), there were two primary sources of data: interviews with each participant and a document analysis of sixteen faculty reports. Individual semi-structured interviews gave participants a chance to express their own experiences with the inquiry-based process for assessment (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). A document analysis consisting of end-of-year inquiry reports written by faculty were used to supplement the information gathered from the interview transcripts and further validated the themes identified in the transcripts. Throughout the study, a reflexive journal was kept to record observations and reactions to the research, as the process of constructing understanding from the data sources happened over time (Boblin et al., 2015).

**Procedures**

The primary research question guiding this study was: “How does the experience of performing academic program assessment through an inquiry group process affect faculty motivation?” Data sources included faculty interviews and document review. Before participant recruitment or data collection commenced, proposals were submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Northeastern University, as well as at the study site. The next step was to solicit participants for the study. Purposeful sampling strategy was employed (Creswell, 2013) to ensure that participants met the criteria set forth for the study. An email message was sent to faculty members, inviting them to participate (see Appendix A). Two out of five faculty members did not respond after one week and were sent a reminder email message (see Appendix B). Once the affirmative responses were received from all five participants, confirmation email messages were sent with further details about the study (see Appendix C). At the first meeting, participants were
asked to sign an informed consent form in which the intention of the study and plans for protecting their confidentiality were reiterated (see Appendix D). Interviews were conducted using the planned interview protocol (see Appendix E).

**Data Analysis**

While the literature review helped to identify large ideas that have been explored in the research, it was important not to let the literature dictate the codes (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Researchers must be able to look at the data with an open mind. In keeping with the qualitative research approach for case studies, data collection and data analysis happened simultaneously (Baxter & Jack, 2008). As interviews were conducted, they were transcribed using the Rev transcription service via an online application by mobile phone. The transcripts were coded inductively for large ideas which were collapsed into themes using MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software (Creswell, 2013). To facilitate file sharing necessary for member checking, files were moved over to Google Drive. Transcripts were again coded, using highlighting and comments along the margins. A summary document was created, listing the themes and corresponding quotes from all of the transcripts. From this master document five participant-specific documents were created, showing each theme and a list of each of their own corresponding quotes.

The process of data analysis for this study can be illustrated by the “data analysis spiral” (Creswell, 2013, p. 182) in which the meaning was derived from the evidence through a cycle of reading, classifying, and interpreting that repeatedly went back and forth between data collection and data analysis. To support this meaning making, all transcripts were read closely before coding for initial ideas. Notes were kept through the process and lean coding was expanded to larger categories as they emerge through analysis (Creswell, 2013). Analyzing interview data
involved a “winnowing process” (Seidman, 2013, p. 135) in which the categories became themes, the evidence was considered and reconsidered in the research journal. Through the use of multiple sources of data, findings were triangulated as a way to confirm that the various perspectives lead to similar themes (Stake, 1995).

Criteria for Quality Qualitative Research

As with any qualitative study, it was essential to delineate criteria to be used to demonstrate that deliberate steps were taken to focus on ethical considerations. Specifically, the steps taken involved paying close attention to credibility, transferability, self-reflexivity, and transparency, and the researcher’s internal audit.

Ethical Considerations

Care was given to ensure that the study adhered to the ethical standards of educational studies. As the American Educational Research Association (AERA) has stated, it is the responsibility of educational researchers, “to maintain the integrity of our research, of our research community, and of all those with whom we have professional relations” (AERA, 2000). At the start of the study, each participant was assigned with a pseudonym that was used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity (Seidman, 2013). All files were stored in Google Drive, which allowed for two levels of password protection: the first level when logging into the computer with a password; and the second level when signing into the Google account with another password. This precaution was taken to keep all documents secure and accessible only to the study.

Throughout the study, the stated procedures for data collection and analysis were followed, thereby ensuring the integrity of the research (Farquhar, 2013). This included technical steps such as proper citation of all references and careful handling of all records and notes. It also
included researcher self-reflection and identification of biases to help ensure that the evidence would be looked at for multiple meanings (Merriam, 1998).

Credibility

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. Data analysis was grounded with written transcriptions to safeguard against the unintentional bias that could occur from relying on audio recording or memory (Creswell, 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In the process of coding the transcripts, regular member check-ins were conducted with the participants as a way to establish credibility and validity in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants were given a chance to review initial codes and themes and provide feedback. This process of member checking was intended to invite faculty to confirm that the themes and findings were representative of their ideas, as meaning was co-constructed. While interview data was the primary evidence, it was important to use multiple sources of evidence that point to similar conclusions to triangulate findings across the case to increase credibility (Yin, 2013). Evidence was reviewed, coded, and collected throughout the study to the point of saturation when new evidence no longer produced new themes (Charmaz, 2000). In research, saturation helps to signal when enough evidence has been collected for the study, as well as signal a sign of credibility that the evidence is affirming the identified categories (Kennedy, 2011).

Transferability

Because case study research gives insight into the personal experience of a small number of participants, there is potential to go into rich detail so that readers can envision the case clearly (Yin, 2013). Through this level of description, it becomes possible for audiences to imagine how the findings can be transferred to other contexts. As the experience and phenomena of faculty motivation to engage in programmatic assessment was explored, the researcher employed “thick
description,” which refers to a great level of detail and nuance in description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through thick description, the study can come alive for the reader, so that they are able to picture the themes and concepts within their own context (Tracy, 2000). While the current study took place in a non-research, non-tenure, private graduate school of education, the concept of faculty motivation in program assessment is one that can be applicable to other educational settings and therefore it is up to the individual reader to draw their own conclusions of how the study relates to their context. This idea of “transferability” is characteristic of case study research in that the goal is not to generalize or replicate findings to other populations, but to be able to transfer ideas to one’s own context (Kennedy, 2011).

**Internal Audit**

The research question guiding this study was “How does the experience of performing academic program assessment through an inquiry group process affect faculty motivation?” Through the process of conducting a qualitative instrumental case study, the researcher aimed to construct an understanding of themes and ideas that could answer the research question. The instrumental case study approach was particularly useful to the study, to understand the phenomenon of faculty motivation (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The research activities were made clear and transparent so that any independent auditor could review the activities to see how the final report was reached.

**Audio recordings.** All interviews were audio recorded using the Rev audio recording application available on mobile phone. Audio files were stored on the researcher’s password protected phone, as well as on her password protected personal computer, on Google Drive. Recordings were kept for the duration of the study, and will be destroyed upon successful completion of a final thesis defense at Northeastern University.
Transcriptions with coding. All interviews were transcribed and stored as electronic files in the MAXQDI qualitative data analysis software program on the researcher’s personal computer. Codes and themes were left intact on the transcript files, along with notations. These files were then transferred to Google Drive for additional coding and analysis, along with member checking with participants. Any changes to the coding or themes were made directly onto the transcript files.

Document Analysis. Sixteen end-of-year faculty inquiry group reports were reviewed systematically as part of the evidence for the study. Notations and highlighted quotes were kept in tact, in Google Drive files, in case there is a need to review them at a later date. Large ideas were compared against the themes identified in the transcripts, to add validity to the findings.

Tables of Themes. Through the process of coding evidence - both the document analysis and the transcriptions - I developed themes to organize the data. Themes were tracked in tables as a visual way for the participants to see how the ideas were grouped during member checking. Any corresponding quotations from the transcripts were included so that it was apparent what evidence was used to support each theme. A summary table showing agreement with themes by participant has been included in the report.

Research Journal. A research journal was kept for the duration of the study as a way to track the researcher’s reflexive thoughts during the data collection and writing process. This journal was kept as an electronic file in Google Drive and stored under password protection. The journal will be saved through the duration of the study, until successful completion of the final defense, if it is needed for review.

Draft Reports. All writing took place in Google Drive where drafts were saved and easily retrievable by date. The first three chapters, or “research proposal” was kept intact upon
submission to the IRB review so that it could be referenced again later in the study. Once IRB approval was received, a copy of the research proposal was made and preserved in Google Drive. The other copy was used for revising and building out the next two chapters.

**Self-reflexivity and Transparency**

For the first half of the study, the researcher was Assistant Dean at the study site. In this role, she was intricately involved with the academic program assessment processes across the institution. She was involved with the extensive national and regional accreditation reviews in 2012, both resulting in lengthy written reports and multi-day onsite visits from accreditation teams. As she constructed and administered assessment data collection processes in this role, she witnessed first-hand how frustrated the faculty were with the work. In 2015 the new dean arrived and introduced the inquiry group process as an alternative approach to working with faculty. The researcher observed a transformation as faculty became engaged in ways that did not seem possible before.

The researcher is passionate about this research investigation because she believes deeply in the importance of meaningful work. It pains her to think that she was complicit in an assessment process that may have caused strife for the faculty. At the time the faculty’s negative reaction was believable, given the high pressures of assessing for accountability. The researcher became curious to know more about what the faculty were experiencing in the new inquiry-based process, as she felt a great sense of responsibility in helping to design sustainable assessment processes. When the faculty are engaged and motivated, the assessments will be more meaningful and easier to sustain over the long term.

During the study, the researcher accepted an Associate Dean position with another institution, which physically distanced her and removed any influence she may have had over
assessment processes at the study site. It was not the intention of the study to imply that the
previous processes were “bad”, and the new processes are “good” because nothing is as
simplistic as that. There were, and still are, many different factors that contribute to motivation
with assessment. For example, timing was a factor that could have a lot of influence. In 2012, the
graduate school did not have the luxury of time to try any untested approaches to assessment.
The institution was required to obtain national accreditation within a relatively short timeline.
What resulted was a successful process, in that the institution obtained nearly 100% faculty
participation and passed both regional and national seven-year accreditation reviews, with no
follow up reports or visits required.

Through this investigation, the hope was to begin building a research agenda on
assessment of teacher education programs. The goal was to disrupt the current discourse within
the accrediting associations and institutional research groups so the conversation in the field
moves away from how to deal with faculty resistance, and instead explores ways to support
faculty engagement.

Limitations

Qualitative case study research is limited by the fact that the findings are specific to the
context (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013). This means that findings are not expected to be generalizable
across time or space in the way that quantitative research might be (Farquhar, 2013). This
research study was limited in its impact, in that it was not expected to solve a problem or invent a
specific strategy that could be used widely by other higher education administrators. The study
was further limited in its size and scope, as it was bound by the small number of participants and
the single site for the study. There were no plans to look at multiple sites as a point of
comparison, as this would have been too large of an undertaking for an initial report.
The goal of the study was to convey a deep and detailed understanding of the experience of five faculty members at a non-research, non-tenure, private graduate school of education, as they reflected on and went through an inquiry group process for academic program assessment. By utilizing an instrumental case study approach as defined by Baxter and Jack (2008), the researcher examined the faculty members’ experience as an instrument, or tool, to study the topic of faculty motivation. Because of the limited focus of the case study, related topics such as effectiveness of the inquiry-based process for producing actionable program changes or the impact on student outcomes were not explored.

**Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis**

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to understand if the experience of performing academic program assessment through an inquiry-based process (IBP) affects faculty motivation to engage with assessment. Academic program assessment allows faculty and higher education administrators to look at how a program is performing, and it is a requirement for teacher education programs for accreditation and other external reporting requirements. The central research question that guided the case study was, “How does the experience of performing academic program assessment through an inquiry group process affect faculty motivation?” This type of open-ended research question is best suited for the case study approach that often begins with “how” and “why” questions (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2013). The study sought to understand if faculty motivation to engage in program assessment was affected by their involvement with the inquiry-based process at Westside College, the single site for the study. In keeping with the instrumental case study approach, a specific situation or experience was studied in order to provide data to understand phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Following the definition of an instrumental case study by Baxter and Jack (2008), the experience
of inquiry-based process was studied to explain faculty motivation to engage in program assessment. The objective of the case study was to identify what motivates faculty, to develop recommendations or ideas for further research for higher education administrators who are tasked with overseeing program assessment at their institution.

The study utilized purposeful sampling to invite a small sample of six full time faculty members at Westside College to be interviewed. Faculty were contacted via email (see Appendix A) to be invited to be part of the study. A follow up email was sent to three faculty members who had not responded within a week (see Appendix B). A total of five faculty agreed to be a part of the study. Participants were required to have been full time faculty involved with the inquiry-based process at Westside for a minimum of one year, because this ensured that each individual had undergone a complete one-year cycle of the inquiry-based process, from start to finish.

In keeping with the instrumental case study approach, the study drew from multiple sources of data to triangulate the findings and allow for multiple points of view (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2013). The study took into consideration three sources of data: interviews with participants, summary reports written by the faculty inquiry groups, and publicly available material about the academic programs at Westside College. The primary data for the study were the faculty interviews. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed via Rev, a third-party transcription service. Analysis of the five transcripts and triangulation with other data sources revealed five themes: (1) Faculty saw themselves as more than educators; (2) Faculty use assessment to investigate their own ongoing questions; (3) Faculty valued their decision-making authority in the inquiry-based process; (4) Faculty shared ideas in the inquiry-based process; (5) Faculty connected the Inquiry Group Process to accreditation.
Five themes emerged as a result of the data collection. For the purpose of this study, themes were defined when a concept appeared in a minimum of three out of the five participant responses. Each of the five themes and the participants whose data provided supporting evidence are detailed below in Table 1. Identification of Recurring Themes by Participant.

![Table 1](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sandy</th>
<th>Lily</th>
<th>Emma</th>
<th>Ava</th>
<th>Heather</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: Faculty saw themselves as more than educators</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Faculty use assessment to investigate their own ongoing questions</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: Faculty valued their decision-making authority in the inquiry-based process</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4: Faculty shared ideas in the inquiry-based process</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5: Faculty connected the inquiry-based process to accreditation</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What follows is a description of the research setting. After that, a brief vignette introducing each participant is provided. The next section is an analysis of each of the five themes identified from the study. The chapter ends with a triangulation of the findings from the participant interviews with the other data sources, and then concludes with a summary of the chapter findings.
Setting

The study took place at Westside College, a non-research, non-tenure, private, stand-alone graduate school of education located in a large urban city in the northeastern area of the United States. Westside College is a small college, with approximately 35 full time faculty members and 650 full time graduate students. Through its website, Westside College represents itself as a progressive institution in which the mission and values are woven into the language of program descriptions, faculty biographies, and admissions materials. Education is described as an opportunity for critical inquiry and lively intellectual curiosity in which the world is viewed as an exciting laboratory where learning through reflection, relationships and discussion are valued. Academic programs consist entirely of educator preparation and school building and district leadership programs, with most leading to state certification, as such the majority programs require ongoing program assessment for accreditation purposes.

In the fall of 2015, with the arrival of the new dean, the faculty experienced a shift in assessment processes, from that of a highly prescriptive accreditation-driven approach, to the current inquiry-based process for program assessment. The inquiry-based process was a structured, year-long activity in which faculty choose a topic of interest at the start of the academic year, and then worked in groups to develop research questions to assess their academic programs together. This instrumental case study sought to understand how the faculty experience of the inquiry-based process has impacted their motivation to engage in program assessment. The next section introduces the five participants.
Participants

The participants were all full-time faculty members at Westside College. The minimum requirement for the study was that they were employed full time for at least one year prior to the study, to establish that they had participated in at least one full academic year of the inquiry-based process for program assessment. Individual participant experience at Westside College ranged from seven years to 30 years. Participants were given the opportunity to select a pseudonym to protect their identity in the study and those who did not pick a name were assigned one. At the start of initial interviews, participants were asked to talk about their time at Westside College and their general thoughts on assessment to situate themselves in the current context of the study. What follows is a vignette of each participant that synthesizes how they described their experiences with assessment at Westside College.

Emma

Emma started as a faculty member at Westside in 1986 and left briefly to pursue her own doctoral study, before returning to Westside to her current, long-time position as a faculty member. Emma spoke of how the inquiry-based process (IBP) is not entirely new for Westside College, and noted, “We used to do a lot of faculty inquiry when I first came to work here. That was like a big deal. We did a lot of descriptive review, a lot of faculty inquiry work.” Emma’s statement suggests that she has a level of familiarity with faculty inquiry work, and that she brings her own knowledge based on prior experience at Westside College, which may influence her feelings of competence and openness to the experience. Emma recalled that over time the situation changed at Westside College and, “as the field became much more of like accreditation oriented, accountability, not really accreditation, but accountability oriented, the deans I think felt like they had to focus more on accountability, accreditations types of things.” Emma’s quote
seems to indicate that believes the increasing external demands for accountability data are the reason that the deans shifted away from inquiry-based processes. These statements may imply that because Emma had positive prior experience with faculty inquiry work, she could have higher motivation to return to it as a method for program assessment.

Inquiry was not the only approach to assessment, in Emma’s experience at Westside College. Reflecting on other past practices, Emma recalled that program assessment had been conducted in cooperation with an external reviewer in the field of education. Much like the inquiry work, this was also a positive experience for Emma, as she described, “I found it such a great experience to have an external review. Because the people who do your review are not accreditors, so there isn't that anxiety about like, ‘Are we going to give them all the things they want?’” With this statement, Emma highlighted a tension she felt between assessment as a positive experience, and assessment for accountability, which she described as being anxiety provoking and filled with worry about giving correct answers. This kind of description may indicate that Emma has tended to feel less comfortable with assessment when she is unsure of her own competence in the process. By contrast, Emma explained that the external reviewer was, “a person who really cares about your program and really wants to help you have the best program.” The idea that the external reviewer cared about her program was described as important to Emma, because as she put it, the reviewer was someone who wants to see the program succeed and is not reviewing materials for evaluation or judgement. Emma’s preference for having a reviewer who cares about her program, may predispose her to feeling motivated by an inquiry-based process in which faculty relate to each other and share ideas in the spirit of learning. Emma seemed to place a value on sharing ideas across the faculty, and recalled, “I felt like I had died and gone to heaven when I came here. It's like people actually have conversations
about things here, as opposed to public education, which is very, very top down.” For Emma, the idea of having conversations with her colleagues and making decisions about their work together, was described as very important to her which may indicate a proclivity to engaging with the inquiry-based process for program assessment.

**Lily**

Another long-time member of the Westside College community, Lily stated that she has been at Westside College for over 20 years in various roles as project director, graduate student, union representative and faculty member. Reflecting specifically on her work as a faculty member, Lily also recalled that there had been a past practice to have an external reviewer as part of the program assessment process, and stated, “It was valuable to have an outsider look [at our work].” However, Lily found some flaws in the process, as she remarked that, “quite often they pointed out all the yummy things and didn't always tackle what could be improved upon.” Lily’s statement seems to suggest that she appreciated interacting with the external reviewer but yearned for more critical feedback that she could use to assess her program. Not only did Lily not describe feeling judged or inhibited by the reviewer as part of this assessment process, her statement suggests that she was not even sure it was helpful in getting her to think about program changes. As she put it, “It was always just kind of a nice pat on the back.” Lily’s desire for stronger, actionable examination of her work may point to a motivation to engage in a more rigorous and nuanced program assessment process. This proclivity for increased rigor from a reviewer could indicate that Lily may be interested in working in an inquiry group which would involve a year-long examination into her work. Rather than shy away from assessment out of fear of judgement or evaluation, Lily seemed to be saying that she wanted to engage with
assessment in a more meaningful, in-depth way, rather than simply be told whether she is doing a good job.

Lily talked about how she did not always feel so eager to take part in the program assessment work of Westside College. Thinking back to college-wide process that existed directly before the inquiry-based process, Lily described how confused she felt as she was expected to “run these awful data things that never made any sense whatsoever, because we didn't know what we were doing.” The assessment work at the time was based primarily on Lily went on to describe that as part of this past assessment process, “We were asked to be statistics people when we're educators, for heavens’ sake.” Lily spoke of how disconnected she felt from the past practice, unable to draw a connection between the highly quantitative assessment to her actual work with students. Her description of how much she dreaded the program assessment of the past seemed to be almost entirely attributed to how unrelatable it was to her work and how ill-equipped she felt to understand the work. This may suggest that Lily would feel more motivated, if she were able to relate to the topics and feel competent in her ability to take on the work. As Lily talked about her experience with the current inquiry-based process, she described how at first she felt “a little pessimistic” because she could not imagine that it would be any different from the negative experience she had just had. As she grew to understand the choices she would have in constructing the inquiry work to meet her interests and questions, she stated, “I got very excited by it,” and not only that, “using inquiry as part of institutional and programmatic assessment...it’s been healing.” In Lily’s case, her mostly negative experience seemed to put her in a position to be motivated to engage with the inquiry-based process. Although she had no familiarity with such work, she spoke of being able to relate to it and appreciate the ability to connect the assessments to her work with students. For Lily, the
inquiry-based process provided her with an antidote to the past, confusing process that she
described as dreading.

**Sandy**

The participants spoke about assessment with varying emotions. Sandy’s responses seem
to indicate a certain level of conservativeness of opinion as compared to the other participants.
She stated that she has been working steadily at Westside College as a faculty member for
approximately 15 years. When asked to talk about her experience with past assessment processes
at Westside College, she noted, “my sense is that there were other opportunities here and there
along my journey at Westside College, where faculty engaged in discussions that would on the
surface lend themselves to being an inquiry.” Sandy’s response seems to indicate the inquiry
work of the past was less formalized and used as a way of engaging in conversations that may or
may not have been used for assessment. Sandy described that the difference now is, “there is a
label put to it that there is consistency whereby we're meeting monthly with other group
members. Whereas, in the past it was more sort of discovery and just opportunities to have
quality discourse.” Sandy’s description may point to the culture of inquiry that is espoused as
part of Westside College’s mission and credo. Although the past practice may not have been as
systematic as it is in the current effort to implement inquiry as a method for program assessment,
Sandy noted that there were always opportunities to engage in inquiry, throughout the years.
Sandy talked about her past experience with inquiry as being worthwhile, but at the same time,
she considered that it was, “probably lacking in where do we go from here with what we yield
from these discussions?” Sandy’s statement shows that she has an interest in moving
conversations on to the next step, and on to action, which may suggest an openness to engaging
in a more formal process, such as the current inquiry-based process for program assessment.
When asked to share her thoughts on the current process, Sandy said, “I feel that inquiry groups I would call it in the [new] era have been tremendously fulfilling. I found the process to be energizing, meaningful.” As Sandy contrasted the past, less formal inquiry work, to the new, division-wide assessment process, she seemed to be suggesting that with more structure, she felt more motivated and interested in the work. Rather than feel restricted by parameters, Sandy described a level of excitement and curiosity as she spoke of enjoying the group work with her faculty colleagues. That is not to say the work was simple or easy, in fact Sandy offered that, “I felt that it helped to stretch me in terms of my own skills as an educator.” With this statement, Sandy seems to imply that she found value in the deeper inquiry work, because it not only helped her to produce data for program improvements, which is a part of any assessment system, but it also helped her to reach beyond her current proficiency as a faculty member, and push her to reflect deeply about herself and her own strengths and areas for growth. This idea of self-reflection and learning through investigation was echoed in the Westside College’s promotional materials and may point to a willingness on Sandy’s part to immerse herself in the inquiry-based process. Like Lily, Sandy’s statements seem to suggest a desire for more stringent assessment, that allows her to look at her own work as an opportunity to learn and grow as a professional in a way that was not conducive in the past processes.

Heather

Not all participants had direct experience with the prior assessment processes at Westside College. Heather said that she has been connected to Westside College as an adjunct and a graduate student since 2003 and was hired as a full-time faculty member in 2012. Although Heather was working for Westside during the most recent national accreditation review, she was an adjunct faculty member at the time, and as such had not been involved with the data collection
or review. Heather described having a sense that faculty were not happy with the numerous rubrics and high pressures for quantitative data, and stated that she knew, “what they went through, [and] saw the post-traumatic stress of all the people who did the accreditation stuff.” Heather described her impression of the prior process as being largely negative and demotivating for the faculty. She intimated that the problem for faculty may have been that the assessment work became caught up in accreditation requirements. From Heather’s point of view, accreditation has value, and she believes it is, “only a dirty word because the tail wags the dog instead of the other way around. Right? When we are pursuing everything because it's for the accreditors, then the tail is wagging the dog.” Like Emma and Lily, Heather did not talk about having an issue with accreditation, but rather with how it is presented to faculty. Her remarks seemed to imply that if the faculty perception is that assessment work is being performed only for compliance purposes, then it will be demotivating for faculty.

By contrast, Heather spoke of the current inquiry-based process as being, “purposeful for our work and our growth [as faculty members].” Heather gave an example of what she meant by purposeful, and said, “We're being given access and opportunity to learn the way we want, the things that we want to pursue and learn.” Heather’s characterization of the current inquiry-based process focused on the autonomy that she believes faculty are being given to construct the assessment processes to suit their professional needs to improve their skills and competence. She referred to the assessment effort as having dual purposes of being both an opportunity for faculty to consider their work with students, and a chance for them to reflect on their abilities as educators. This kind of thinking is reflected in the Westside College mission that states that the college seeks to improve the education of both students and their teachers. Heather’s statements seem to indicate a preference for assessment work that enables choice for faculty, and
opportunities for meaningful, personal research topics. These values may suggest an openness to the inquiry-based process, which requires the faculty to choose a research topic and co-construct the process with other faculty members in working groups.

Ava

Ava was the one participant who did not explicitly support the inquiry-based process. Ava is a long-time member of the Westside College community, having served in various roles in the past 30 years, as a graduate student, student advisor, and an adjunct instructor and most recently starting in 2015 as a full-time faculty member. Given that the accreditation efforts at Westside College involved only full-time faculty and administrators, Ava’s only first-hand involvement with academic program assessment has been with the current inquiry-based process. When asked for her impressions of the past assessment processes at the college, Ava did not venture an opinion and responded, “Remember, I was an adjunct for many years and wasn't part of it.” While the other participants spoke about what they had heard from other faculty members who were participating in assessment and accreditation efforts over the years, Ava spoke from her own direct experience and did not weigh in with any opinions on what other people might have gone through.

When asked to talk about the current inquiry-based process, Ava remarked at the vast opportunities it provides for conversations, but then concluded, “I fear the college people are too immersed in kind of an intellectual musing and that we don't do enough action.” Ava’s comment seems to suggest that the freedom to have discussions with colleagues was not in her opinion, in and of itself enough, and that she would prefer to see less talking and more doing. Ava spoke of activities - both past and present - in which she worked with P-12 schools and community centers and referred to these projects throughout the interview, as examples of the kind of work
that motivates her. By contrast to the other participants, Ava did not talk much about accreditation or assessment even when asked directly for her experiences and thoughts. Ava’s comments seem to suggest that she would not be motivated by additional faculty discussions, and instead she might be more engaged with an assessment project that puts her in front of students or working directly with teachers in the field, similar to the projects she described.

Themes and Sub-Themes

The five themes that emerged from the data include: (1) faculty saw themselves as more than educators, with two sub-themes (a) program design; and (b) mentoring students; (2) faculty use assessment to investigate their own ongoing questions; (3) faculty valued their decision-making authority in the inquiry-based process; (4) faculty shared ideas in the inquiry-based process; and (5) faculty connected the inquiry-based process to accreditation. What follows is an exploration of each theme and concluding summary based on the findings.

Theme One: Faculty Saw Themselves as More than Educators

While the primary role of a faculty member is to teach students, the data revealed that faculty spoke about their role expansively, and provided details about their contributions to the administrative, programmatic and supportive work of Westside College. Theme one was supported by five out of five interviews, as each of the participants described the satisfaction derived from engaging tasks outside their teaching role in the classroom. Within theme one, two sub-themes that surfaced: (1) program design; and (2) student mentoring.

Sub-Theme One: Program Design

A sub-theme to theme one, was the idea that faculty see program design work as part of their role at the college. Recalling a project in which she designed an outreach program for
children and families, Lily said, “I loved starting it. And I loved being in charge of evaluations and helping parents through the evaluation process.” For Lily, the idea of creating a new program, including the administrative work of overseeing the evaluation process with parents and students, was so satisfying that she spoke of loving this work. Lily explained that program design work allowed her to take part in the administrative structure of the college, and noted, “I really, very much enjoy seeing that big picture process. So on one level it's the students and then the big umbrella picture of how do we organize Westside?” Ava shared a similar sentiment about the supportive work of the college and stated, “I love teaching, but I also love some of the other stuff that people don't love, like some of the administrative stuff.” Although Ava’s primary role is as an educator with courses to teach, she expressed that she finds also enjoyment from administrative work such as, “seeing the big picture, and thinking about creating programs,” as a way to contribute to the work of the college. This type of additional program design work was described as taking time, but was viewed by the participants as time well spent. Emma echoed this sentiment as she recalled the time it took to collaborate with other faculty to create a new program: “We had such long meetings but it was great. It's some of the most interesting work I've done here.” The study revealed that faculty appreciated the ability to engage in program design work and that it was a choice. Heather agreed with this idea when she reflected, “I've been tinkering with [my program] since I took it over. Nobody says no. Building the online work. Nobody said no.” For Heather, the freedom to choose to work on program design is a central part of what she likes about her work as a faculty member at Westside College. It was important to Heather that “nobody said no” to her as she engaged in program design. The first sub-theme revealed the participants talked about program design as an enjoyable and important
aspect of their role as faculty members. Participants also spoke about their role in mentoring students, as described next.

**Sub-Theme Two: Mentoring Students**

The second sub-theme to emerge was that faculty valued their ability to mentor students, including their role in student growth and development. When asked what she enjoys most about her work as a faculty member, Sandy stated that she likes, “being in the field with students and watching the arc of their learning.” For Sandy, this type of mentoring role provides, “opportunities where you actually feel as though you are playing this integral role in their lives by accompanying them on the journey in the highs and the lows.” Lily agreed with the idea of accompanying students on their educational path, and shared, “I’ve really enjoyed, for a very long time, the actual beginning to end process with students.” Lily described her role as, “helping them through the program, being there when they graduate,” and “that whole process and watching various students go through it in various ways.” Heather built on this idea of mentoring, adding that she encourages her students to learn about themselves. Heather explained that when it comes to course content, “They can learn that. I care whether they understand that what they’ve learned reflects what they value.” The sub-theme of mentoring students showed that for these three participants, guiding students is a central piece of their work as faculty members.

Theme one demonstrated the ideas that faculty have about their role in the college. Theme two explored the ideas that faculty have about assessment.

**Theme Two: Faculty Use Assessment to Investigate Their Own Ongoing Questions**

The results of the interviews revealed that five out of five participants view assessment as a chance for faculty to investigate their own ongoing questions about their work. When asked
how she views program assessment, Ava responded, “it should be that every three to five years you're really looking carefully at what it is that you're writing about this program, how you're presenting it, and what you're actually achieving” and she believed that faculty involvement was crucial to the process, stating, “I see that program assessment is important, and I do like the fact that it's in the hands of the faculty.” Sandy expanded on the idea of faculty involvement, stating that the actual questions of the faculty should be what informs program assessment work. As examples, Sandy considered, “What are we giving [students] that makes them to be well equipped? And where are they being short changed?” Sandy stated that these kinds of questions provide a way for faculty to connect program assessment to their work with students. Lily agreed, and said that faculty need to be asking themselves, “is this course saying what it's going to deliver? Is it really happening?” and wondered, “where can we not overburden the syllabus, but where can we bring these issues in that are relevant to this course?” Heather shared the same feeling about assessment, and said that faculty need to be, “constantly paying attention to what our intentions are for our program. Looking for data that actually supports or doesn't support our intentions,” and that these questions help faculty to identify, “what things you have to change about your own practice.” Emma agreed with the idea that assessment is tied to faculty’s own practice, and stated, “This is directly how we as faculty assess our job - are we doing a good enough job by our students? Are we giving them what they need? Are we doing what we say we're doing, for example?” The study revealed that the participants view these kinds of personal, faculty-driven questions as central to program assessment. Five out of five participants spoke of the ongoing nature of assessment and its connection to faculty questions. While theme two highlighted the participants’ role in asking questions, theme three showed that the participants’ also see their role in making decisions.
Theme Three: Faculty Valued their Decision-Making Authority

Theme three emerged as four out of five participants spoke of valuing their role in making decisions in the inquiry-based process. When asked to describe the inquiry-based process, Heather stated, “We're engaged and immersed in a question that's of our interest, because we chose it.” For Heather, an important aspect of the work was that she was able to decide for herself what she was interested in studying, and then once formed, the faculty group, “spends time talking about the question and what it is they need to be doing, and the purpose of it.” Sandy agreed and remarked that the entire process of having the ability to “self-select from a menu of inquiries,” was for her, “very helpful in that I have the opportunity to work with a group of colleagues who are interested in the same inquiry as I am.” Emma echoed the idea that the inquiry-based process enables faculty to gravitate towards others with similar interests, and commented that “the faculty are going to choose things that they want to examine and think about,” and then after the groups are identified, “we're left off on our own to do it, to figure how we're going to do it.” Lily also highlighted how valuable it was to make decisions, explaining that an important aspect of the process for her was, “deciding as a group what were the questions or statements that were going to guide our inquiry” and that together the faculty, “have a lot of independence to move towards that goal.” The inquiry work not only provided a sense of independence and decision-making authority for faculty, but as Emma noted, in the process, it was also, “really respectful of people's competence, and people's integrity, and people's ability and expertise.”

While there was agreement among four participants that they valued the decision-making authority that the inquiry-based process gave them, one participant, Ava, held a different point of view. When asked to describe how the work is structured, Ava first responded similarly to the
other participants by saying, “You have a choice of among five topics,” but then added, “what do I care about those five topics?” For Ava, the ability to choose from a selection of five inquiry topics did not feel like a choice, as she remarked, “The way it happens, the choice of the topics, it undercuts a person’s sense of autonomy and agency that you require to do this,” and even though “I believe that faculty should be on various committees,” she expressed that “I don’t want somebody to tell me to study this and then be part of a group project.” The interviews revealed that four out of five faculty spoke of the value they saw in making decisions in the inquiry-based process. In addition to making decisions, faculty spoke of sharing ideas, as described in theme four.

**Theme Four: Faculty Share Ideas in the Inquiry-Based Process**

Theme four emerged as four out of five participants expressed how they were able to share ideas with each other in the inquiry-based process. They were able to describe examples of how collaborative discussions, cross-program learning, and sharing of resources happened for them in their daily work. Reflecting on her comfort level in the faculty discussions, Sandy prefaced her thought by saying, “Ordinarily I'm not much of a talker. That's just by nature,” and then continued, “but I never felt that I couldn't share my ideas or contribute to the dialogue when I wanted to.” Sandy remarked that the faculty followed a democratic process of idea sharing whereby, “at each meeting one or two of us from the group would share what information we had gathered,” and then, “each person present could opt to provide some insight based on what their colleague shared.” Lily agreed, and found that the process of sharing ideas, was not only respectful, but useful as well, as she explained, “I think we really found out things across programs and across various syllabi,” which, she said, “was meaningful and good stuff came out of it that then we could use.” While Lily spoke generally of how useful the discussions were,
Heather cited a specific example of listening to another faculty member share her ideas, and how she remembered thinking, “I could do so much more. I didn't even realize that until I heard how Brenda talks about that and does the work she does around that [topic] in her classroom. In her course.” For Heather, the value of sharing ideas is, “I get to work with and learn from, people outside my program and the department.” Working with faculty from other programs not only helped to identify improvements within courses, but it also provided the opportunity to think about common needs across the college. Emma recalled that her group created, “a list of resources for faculty so that faculty could learn more,” because there was a sense that, “we wanted faculty to have readings and resources of things that they could put into the syllabus to help their students and also so they could learn more.” While these four participants spoke of how much they appreciated the experience of sharing ideas and resources, Ava had a different take on the situation and commented, “We spent a lot of time in one of the inquiry groups gathering resources,” but “I just feel it's labored and I'm not interested. I'm supposed to be part of it whether I'm interested or not. So, that's the part that bothers me.” Within theme four, four out of five participants spoke of the value of sharing ideas and learning from other faculty members, while one participant expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that she felt that the work was compulsory.

**Theme Five: Faculty Connected the Inquiry-Based Process to Accreditation**

Theme Five surfaced as four out of five of the faculty participants talked about their awareness that the inquiry-based process was in fact connected to externally driven accreditation requirements. Reflecting on her experience with the inquiry-based process, Sandy stated that she was aware that, “there is a destination called accreditation that we are working towards.” Similarly, Lily said, “I was always aware of that it was threading back to accreditation and how
we were seeing our programs, but also what we deliver as Westside College.” Emma was not only aware of the connection to accreditation, but had thoughts on the specific accreditor, and remarked, “I think it's very unique that the agency that we're using now is allowing [inquiry] to be part of the accreditation process.” and that the inquiry-based process is, “something that accreditors have not looked at in the past.” Heather agreed, and added, “I know that that [inquiry] appeals to our new accreditor,” which she explained, helped to reinforce for her that the work was, “just that more beneficial.” While four out of five participants commented on the connection they saw between the inquiry-based process and accreditation, Ava was less sure.

When asked whether she saw any link between the inquiry work and accreditation, Ava responded, “It may be that it is essential for accreditation,” and that, “if it is, I could just swallow whatever I'm feeling and just do it because we have to do it for accreditation.” Whereas four out of five participants articulated that they knew there was a connection to accreditation, Ava expressed a lack of clarity about the role of accreditation in the process.

**Document Analysis of Faculty Inquiry Reports**

In order to triangulate the themes identified, a document analysis of the final reports written by each faculty inquiry group was performed. Sixteen faculty inquiry reports were reviewed, spanning from 2016 to 2019. These reports are required of Westside College faculty at the conclusion of each academic year-long inquiry-based process, in June, to provide written summaries on their group process and what they learned. The reports are important to Westside College, because they are used for supporting documentation towards national accreditation, as well as for conversations about implementing program improvements within the academic departments. Because they are written by faculty to record their experience and findings from the inquiry-based process for program assessment, they were considered trustworthy to validate the
themes that were identified by the study. The summary reports echoed the sentiments that emerged from the interview process, thereby validating the identified themes.

**Support for Theme One: Faculty Saw Themselves as More than Educators**

The reports supported theme one, in which faculty saw themselves as more than educators, with both sub-themes of (a) program design; and (b) mentoring students. For example, in one report, faculty wrote of the enjoyment they found in performing program design, as they stated, “We learned we desire more opportunities for program mapping across and between programs,” (Curriculum Group, 2018, p. 1). The faculty extended this thought, and listed ideas for how they could continue their program design work, with suggestions to:

- Go back and look at overall program structure.
- Look more deeply at the history of the evolution of program.
- Engage in deeper mapping: assignments, readings, etc.
- Bring this work to a wider group of faculty. (p. 3, Curriculum Group, 2017-2018)

Another group wrote of the realization that they play an important role in program design. As they reflected on their group work, they wrote of how their discussions, “focused on specific courses and influenced our understanding of our own courses and made us think more critically about what changes can be made programmatically,” (Assessment Inquiry Report, 2018, p. 3). As they thought through this idea, they were able to identify an actionable next step that they could do, as they described, “Specifically, as members of this group, we can be influential in our program meetings in helping guide discussions for program changes,” (Assessment Inquiry Report, 2018, p. 3).
When it came to their role in mentoring students, the second sub-theme, the faculty reports showed that they had specific thoughts on this as well. One group wrote of the idea that certain assignments can make an impact on a student’s future, as they continue to grow into their role as a beginning educator and revisit their thoughts with their instructor, in a mentor relationship over time. In the example provided, “This statement is used in class as part of the student’s on-going reflection and definition of self. The hope is that students return to this over their career,” and in fact, the faculty member, “shared that graduates will talk with her about how they continue to use their statements as guides to their own learning,” (Assessment Inquiry Report, 2018, p. 8). This idea of mentoring students throughout their educational journey was apparent in other reports as well. As one group wrote, “This work assumes that students will not just ‘dip their toe’ into thinking about race but come to see it as part of their life's work,” and in order to make this happen, faculty see their role as, “helping students to have insight into their own place of the continuum will help them to better understand the connection between their behavior and their development,” not only in the classroom, but in their ongoing work as they develop into sensitive human beings (Racial Literacy Inquiry Report, 2019, p. 5).

Support for Theme Two: Faculty Use Assessment to Investigate Their Own Questions

Theme two, in which faculty use assessment to investigate their own ongoing questions, appeared in the faculty inquiry reports as they shared the actual questions they had as they engaged in the inquiry process. One group wrote, “Do students do what they want to do or are they doing what they think the teacher wants them to do? How do we create ways for students maintain ownership of their work? How do we honor individual and group work? How do we create space for the unintended?” (p. 2, Artistic Expression Report, 2018-2019). The faculty used the inquiry process to talk about their own personal questions about their work with
students, including pedagogical approaches and philosophy of teaching. Each group had their own focus, which meant that each group also had their own questions. Another group focused specifically on assessment and asked, “How do we use helpful assessment practices to support students as they move on?” and then turned the question back to themselves and their role, as they, “wondered about the range of ways that individual faculty think about assessing students and how we share that knowledge and those sensibilities both with the students and amongst ourselves as a community of learners?” (Supervised Fieldwork Inquiry Report, 2017, p. 4). For this group, there was a connection made that we are all learners, and that faculty and students are part of the community of learning. The reports demonstrated that being part of this community means asking questions of one another. As one group wrote,

The inquiry process gave us an opportunity to raise questions that are important to us. In the words of Barbara Biber, the learning is in the questions. Inquiry helped us to examine our mutual work, to understand the cyclical process in the relationship of theory into practice (Theory into Practice Inquiry Report, 2016, p. 2).

This quote indicated that faculty not only asked questions about their work, but were reflective of why they valued the opportunity: because it allowed them to learn what they felt was important to themselves and find the connections to theory among their group-mates.

**Support for Theme Three: Faculty Valued Their Decision-Making Authority**

The reports provided evidence for theme three, in which faculty spoke of valuing their decision-making authority in the inquiry-based process. This was evident in the way the reports made reference to the decisions they participated in throughout their work together. As one group acknowledged, “Through our conversation we clarified our purposes, began to develop a
shared language and learned what resources we could each contribute.” (Developmental Variations Inquiry Report, 2019, p. 2). All these steps included making decisions together about the language they were using, as the report noted, “An important part of the process was negotiating wording and meanings to agree on definitions,” (Developmental Variations Inquiry Report, 2019, p. 2). In addition to making decisions about purpose and language, the groups wrote of the decisions they made about their shared process: “Group members self-identified what and when they would take the responsibility for sharing work. They were responsible for facilitating that portion of the meeting. The inquiry chair would facilitate the other portions of the meetings,” (Artistic Expression Inquiry Report, 2019, p. 1). The reports demonstrated that the faculty took up the work together and constructed their own plan about how they would use their time. As described in another report, the faculty wrote of how they, “decided to examine a variety of artifacts that would help us better understand what students were learning in child development and how that intersected with adult development,” and then they “also decided to use the lens of artistic experiential thinking” (Developmental Inquiry Group, 2018, p. 2). In this group report, decision-making extended to the kind of evidence of student learning they would study and the theoretical framework they would use. To prepare themselves for the work, they made the choice to “read and discuss an article by Maxine Greene, examine a video of a lesson taught in the Social Studies course, two different child development syllabi and recreate one of the assignments from a Child Development syllabus,” (Developmental Inquiry Group, 2018, p. 2). The reports surfaced the idea that faculty used their decision-making authority to decide the kind of preparation they needed to do together in order to engage in the inquiry fully, including taking on readings, viewing videos, and immersing themselves in the student work by doing one
of the assignments. It was the faculty’s choice to approach the work in this way, as the reports demonstrated.

**Support for Theme 4: Faculty Shared Ideas in the Inquiry-Based Process**

The inquiry reports surfaced support for theme four, in which faculty shared ideas in the inquiry-based process. As one group wrote, “sharing practices and questions broadened our own thinking and repertoire of advisor skills; for example, some of us are videotaping more, using journals, becoming more comfortable with emerging topics, becoming more comfortable with some structured routines,” (Supervised Fieldwork Inquiry Group, 2017, p. 4). This quote seems to indicate that faculty not only shared ideas but learned different teaching practices from each other. The report suggested that the faculty, “valued having time allotted to sit together as a group and think about our work, and how we facilitate opportunities for our students, to learn about self, alongside learning about oneself as an educator,” (Supervised Fieldwork Inquiry Group, 2017, p. 4). For the faculty in this report, sharing ideas is described as a chance to learn course content as well as about oneself. Other reports highlighted the idea of sharing ideas in connection with learning. As one group wrote, “The sharing forced us to listen carefully. As educators we need to consider how we help students to be able to listen carefully to each other.” (Artistic Expression Inquiry Report, 2019, p.2). Much like the previous quote, this excerpt seems to show that faculty not only shared ideas but connected the experience of listening to the kind of skills they expect of their students. Over time, the group reports indicated that sharing ideas could also take place across time, as the faculty had access to the previous years’ reports. One group wrote, “Some of these materials were notes from previous work by other groups. We felt it was important to build off of work that had already begun,” (Developmental Variations Inquiry Report, 2019, p. 2). The reports provided examples of faculty sharing ideas with each other for
the sake of learning about the topic at hand, as well as to learn about themselves, and that sharing took place within the groups, as well as by making use of prior inquiry reports.

Support for Theme Five: Faculty Connected the Inquiry-Based Process to Accreditation

Theme five, in which faculty connected the inquiry-based process to accreditation, did not surface in most of the faculty inquiry reports. A careful analysis of all sixteen reports resulted in only three reports that made mention of accreditation or external reporting. While this theme derived from the participant interviews, it did not come out in the written inquiry reports with the same level of support.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative instrumental case study was to develop an understanding whether faculty motivation to engage with program assessment was impacted by their experience with an inquiry-based process. The instrumental case study approach provided a structure to focus the findings on interpreting the phenomenon of faculty motivation within the bounded single-site and did not attempt to define instructions to be replicated across settings (Noor, 2008; Stake, 1995). As is expected in case study research, the findings emerged from a holistic description of multiple sources of data and were necessarily composed through the subjective view that the researcher brought to the study (Creswell, 2013). As Stake (1995) described, the case study researcher plays an important role in deciding how and what to study, which necessarily means that the data is specific to the context and the researcher. Theme one was that faculty saw themselves as more than educators, with two sub-themes (a) program design; and (b) mentoring students. This theme revealed that all five participants saw themselves in a variety of roles, beyond their primary position as classroom educator; most notably as academic program designers and mentors to students. Theme two demonstrated that faculty use assessment to
investigate their own ongoing questions. All five participants discussed how they view assessment and spoke of the importance of investigating their own questions in the process. Theme three was that faculty valued their decision-making authority in the inquiry-based process. Four out of five participants spoke about appreciating the freedom to make decisions throughout the inquiry-based process, while one participant expressed the view that she did not have a choice in the work and was not satisfied with the process. Theme four emerged as the participants talked about sharing ideas in the inquiry-based process. Four out of five participants shared examples of the ways in which they experienced idea-sharing in their inquiry work, while one participant did not agree and expressed that the process felt contrived. Theme five came out of the study as participants talked about connecting the inquiry-based process to accreditation. Four out of five participants articulated the connection between the inquiry work and the accreditation process happening at Westside College, but one participant shared that she had no idea of the connection and had she been aware, that might have helped her to understand the purpose of the work.

Each participant was invited to review the themes and the corresponding quotes from their coded interview transcript, as is consistent with case study research (Creswell, 2013). The study compared the faculty inquiry reports and publicly available promotional materials to the transcripts, to further validate the themes. Through the process of member checking and separate step of data triangulation with additional data sources, as is characteristic of a case study, trustworthy data was created (Yin, 2013). Chapter five will explore how the Self Determination Theoretical framework can be applied to the themes, to identify conclusions from the study.
Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications for Practice

This instrumental case study sought to explore if faculty motivation to engage with assessment is impacted by the experience of performing academic program assessment through an inquiry-based process. The guiding research question for the study was, “How does the experience of performing academic program assessment through an inquiry group process affect faculty motivation?” The theoretical framework for the study was organized through Self-Determination Theory, a human motivational theory that researchers have used in educational settings to understand student motivation, and more recently in higher education professional settings to understand faculty motivation (Deci, Olafsen, and Ryan, 2017). SDT was the most appropriate choice for this study because it provided a framework to focus on the faculty’s view of their experience with the inquiry-based process and whether that impacted their motivation to partake in program assessment. The underlying idea of Self-Determination Theory is that humans have basic psychological needs in order to feel a sense of well-being and motivation to engage in the activities in their lives. These needs are organized in the three tenets of the theory, as autonomy: the ability to make decisions about one’s life; competence: the belief that one’s knowledge can be utilized; and relatedness: the sense that one’s work contributes to the greater good of a project or institution (Ryan & Deci, 1991; 2000). The three tenets of SDT provided a structure for looking at the concepts of autonomy, competence, and relatedness through the perspective of the faculty participants in this study, and how these concepts may have impacted their intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 1991; 2000).

This study utilized a qualitative instrumental case study approach with the intent to understand how faculty at a single-site engaged with programmatic assessment through the use of an inquiry-based process. The case study of faculty engagement with an inquiry-based
program assessment was used as an instrument to understand the impact it had on their involvement - with each other, as well as with the inquiry-group process. Five themes emerged from the data as shown in Table 2, Summary of Themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Number</th>
<th>Theme Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme One</td>
<td>Faculty see their role as more than educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-theme One</td>
<td>Program design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-theme Two</td>
<td>Mentoring students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme Two</td>
<td>Faculty viewed program assessment as ongoing and connected to faculty questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme Three</td>
<td>Faculty valued their decision-making authority in the inquiry-based process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme Four</td>
<td>Faculty shared ideas in the inquiry-based process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme Five</td>
<td>Faculty connected the Inquiry Group Process to accreditation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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An examination of each theme, through the Self-Determination Theory framework, resulted in three findings. Chapter five starts with a look at how each of the three findings relates to the theoretical framework and how it is situated within the current literature. The second section presents suggestions for practical implications of these findings for higher education settings, followed by recommendations to improve faculty involvement in program assessment. The chapter concludes with areas for further research.
Findings

Results of the study indicate that through engagement with the inquiry group process, faculty are motivated to engage in assessment when they:

1. have the freedom to construct their own processes
2. contribute their knowledge and skills to the work
3. believe their ideas will benefit others

Faculty Are Motivated When They Have Freedom to Construct Their Own Processes

The majority of the faculty spoke of making many choices throughout the inquiry-based process, including which topic to study, what evidence of student learning to collect, and how to work together to review and draw conclusions about the data, which indicates that they believed they were at liberty to construct these processes. Through their experience with an inquiry-based process for assessment, the participants engaged with assessment in their own way, through making their own choices and taking up the work in processes that they developed, which helped sustain their motivation to participate. The participants spoke of enjoying the work and the freedom they had to construct the process together with the other faculty members. This perception of freedom was a motivating factor in their participation with the assessment process.

By faculty believing that they had flexibility to make choices about how to conduct the inquiry work, they displayed behaviors that are associated with the autonomy tenet of SDT. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), autonomy is the capacity to self-govern, uninhibited by outside forces. When the faculty spoke of making decisions about how to construct their assessment work, they demonstrated that they believed they had autonomy to proceed in this way. The idea of autonomy was central to the faculty’s motivation to engage with the inquiry-based process. As faculty discussed the inquiry-based process, the fact that they were able to
make autonomous decisions was central to what motivated them to engage with assessment, which SDT describes as a relevant component to motivation and well-being.

Current literature on adult motivation to engage in learning on the job also cites autonomy as a central component. It has been shown that teachers are more likely to be motivated to participate in professional development opportunities that provide them with the autonomy to develop their own research questions based on their work (Cushman et al., 2018; Garner & Kaplan, 2019; Lemley et al., 2019). At Westside College, the faculty described having autonomy to devise their own questions, which contributed to their motivation to continue in the inquiry group process. Research on the professional development of teacher educators and cooperating teachers indicates that that autonomy to make decisions about what and how to study about their work was a significant motivating factor (Le Cornu, 2015). In a study of SDT with 1,671 faculty from 19 universities in the United States, it was demonstrated that autonomous motivation was the strongest factor for predicting faculty involvement, across Doctoral, Master’s, and Bachelor level programs (Stupnisky et al., 2018). The current study produced evidence that autonomy to make decisions within the inquiry-based process contributed significantly to the faculty member’s motivation to perform assessment. The idea that faculty felt that they had autonomy in the process, lead to the second finding that faculty believed that they had the background and skills to make sound decisions.

**Faculty Are Motivated When They Contribute their Knowledge and Skills to the Work**

The faculty believed that they held the professional expertise needed to conduct an inquiry into their academic program. The participants spoke of feeling qualified to assess their student work and participate in discussions with each other. They talked about feeling confident with the topics under discussion, which aligns with the concept of competence from Self-
Determination Theory that states when a person feels that they have the expertise required for an activity, then they will feel motivated to engage with it (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The inquiry-based process enabled faculty to apply their own professional knowledge and skills to the assessment work. The study showed that the inquiry-based process positioned faculty -- not accreditors -- as the experts of their academic programs, able to contribute freely to the discussions using their own background knowledge and experience. The perception of competence is a central component of SDT and was shown to be a central part of the faculty’s motivation to engage with the inquiry-based work.

The existing research shows that competence is an important motivator for faculty (Makar & Fielding-Wells, 2018; Serrano, et. al, 2018; Sofo et al., 2018). Through the inquiry process, faculty were able to contribute their content knowledge, as well as soft skills such as collaboration, listening, and self-reflection. D’Olimpio (2018) found faculty are more equipped to enter into an inquiry process with a fairly developed sense of competence, because the work is co-constructed in cooperation with other faculty. In a study focused on how faculty in different settings conduct collaborative inquiry together, Dyer and Loytonen (2012) that competence was a strong motivator for participation. The current study showed that the skills needed by faculty for the inquiry-based process are learned together through shared experiences, and the program content is framed in the language of their lived experience, as opposed to the prescriptive language of national standards. The findings from the study demonstrated that competence, a tenet of SDT, was a motivating factor for faculty. Participants of the current study felt competent in how to work with the inquiry-based process, as well as their own professional experience and knowledge to add to the work in a meaningful way, which supported their motivation to take part
in the work together. The notion that faculty understood that the inquiry-based process was in fact a group endeavor, and not a solitary pursuit, lead into the third and final finding.

Faculty Are Motivated When They Believe their Ideas Will Benefit Others

The study revealed that faculty believed that what they learned through the inquiry-based process was beneficial to other faculty members, which helped to increase their motivation to engage in assessment. They spoke of sharing ideas across academic programs and believed that these connections contributed to their own work as faculty, as well as to the accreditation work of the college. Self Determination Theory says that relatedness is when a person is able to relate their work to others and that through this they will feel more motivated to engage in that work (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The findings of this study showed that theory to be true as the faculty were able to relate the work they were doing with the inquiry-based process to the work of other academic programs, and to the larger work of Westside College, they became motivated to engage with program assessment.

The findings of this study add support to the literature on the role of relatedness in motivational theory in education. In a study of 21 student teachers, Riedler and Eryaman (2016) employ process to understand how the participants were integrating what they were learning in their courses to what they were seeing in the field. Even though each student had their own complicated experience specific to their setting, the inquiry process enabled them to reflect on the common themes across settings and feel a sense of relatedness to their fellow participants (Riedler & Eryaman, 2016). Through the inquiry process in the current study, the participants were motivated by the sense of relatedness they felt for each other, by hearing about each of their struggles and questions at Westside College. Scholars at the University of Helsinki in Finland,
Lipponen and Kumpulainen (2011) also concluded that relatedness is a motivating factor in their study of how student teachers were able to understand and use their role in the classroom.

**Conclusion**

Studies on program assessment and accreditation in higher education have focused on issues of standards and standardized testing (Sloan, 2015) and have not taken a close look at how this work has impacted the motivation of teacher education faculty to engage in this work. This study highlighted faculty experience with collaborative learning as a suggested consideration for administrators when considering the process of academic program assessment. By focusing on faculty motivation to engage with program assessment, the study positioned faculty as integral to this work, as opposed to just another obstacle in the assessment work of an institution. While there is no shortage of studies that look at student motivation (Liu et al., 2016; Mills et al., 2018; Sergis et al., 2018), research on faculty motivation is lacking.

The results of the study revealed that the needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness as defined by SDT were present and affected the motivation of the faculty to perform program assessment. Through the study, it was demonstrated that faculty felt the freedom to make their own choices about the assessment work, the knowledge to perform the work, and an awareness of the connections the work had to their colleagues and the college at large. The findings of the study provide insight into how an inquiry-based process for program assessment can encourage and sustain faculty motivation to perform program assessment. This study provided a new perspective to the existing in the literature on faculty motivation to learn by focusing specifically on motivation to engage with assessment. Although the literature on the importance of Self-Determination Theory in the area of higher education has been used to
understand faculty motivation, it has centered on faulty engagement with professional
development, with little attention to administrative work such as program assessment.

Based on the findings of the research the inquiry-based process enabled participants to
fulfill the three basic psychological needs defined in Self-Determination Theory: autonomy,
competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Faculty were motivated to engage in program
assessment when they felt that they had autonomous decision-making authority over their work,
could bring their own experiences and background to assessment, and were able to share ideas to
the benefit of their colleagues in other academic programs. These three tenets, when working
together, help to support the intrinsic motivation of faculty (Deci & Ryan, 2016).

The findings of the study indicated that when faculty motivation in program assessment
is encouraged by higher education administrators, the faculty experienced a sense of well-being
and satisfaction with the work. Through this support, faculty motivation to perform assessment
became more sustainable, in an on-going assessment cycle, to the benefit of the college. See
Figure 2, Faculty Motivation in Support of Program Assessment Cycle for a visual depiction of
how motivation helped to sustain assessment efforts. As faculty experienced autonomy in their
decision-making to construct and enact assessment processes, they then were able to incorporate
their personal experiences and knowledge to the work which contributed to their feelings of
competence. As faculty went through the inquiry process together with other faculty members,
they experienced a sense of relatedness with each other as they shared ideas and learning across
programs. The findings of the study showed that the three tenets of SDT, autonomy, competence,
and relatedness, were present during the inquiry-based process and contributed to the faculty
members’ motivation to perform assessment. The college benefited by having faculty who were
dedicated to the assessment activities.
As higher education administrators face the numerous demands for assessment data needed for on-going assessment and accreditation requirements, there is a need to identify the best ways to involve and motivate faculty in this work. The next section outlines recommendations for higher education administrators to put these ideas into practice.

**Recommendations for Practice**

The results of the study suggest that the more involved faculty are in the process, the more motivated they will be to collaborate. Recommendations for practice for higher education administrators, K-12 leaders, or other educational professionals who are tasked with overseeing assessment and accreditation processes include the engagement of faculty through activities that encourage autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The findings suggested that the faculty experienced satisfaction from the autonomy of developing their own questions; the competence
they felt when they were able to contribute meaningfully to their college’s assessment process, and the relatedness of sharing ideas with each other. Administrators who are interested in increasing and sustaining faculty motivation in assessment processes may benefit from considering the ways in which they interact faculty, including providing opportunities to participate in committee work, consideration of the messaging about accreditation, and creating a careful plan for introducing new assessment processes.

**Faculty Assessment Committee.** The study indicated that faculty motivation increased as faculty involvement in making decisions and contributing knowledge increased. The creation of a faculty group or committee focused on providing input into assessment data and processes with the larger faculty body would provide an excellent setting for providing faculty with involvement in the process of decision-making. If an institution already has a faculty group, a review of the roles that faculty play may need to be reviewed. A formal faculty committee could benefit the assessment work of the college, and equally important -- the motivation of faculty to engage with this work. With proper planning, this type of faculty group could be a place for faculty to work together to construct assessment activities for division and department meetings, which would enable them to exercise the first two tenets of Self-Determination Theory: autonomy and competence. Through an assessment committee, faculty would be able to exercise the autonomy to develop processes in how to work with data and introduce it to the departments, decide on a process, and come to their own conclusions on what they would like to do. If faculty are given freedom to make these autonomous decisions for themselves, they would also have the chance to bring their expertise to the process, which fulfills the competence tenet of Self-Determination Theory. Finally, as the group begins reviewing data and developing conclusions,
faculty could be given the chance to experience the third tenet of Self-Determination Theory, relatedness, as they share ideas and learn from each other.

It is recommended that the committee be made up of a representation of academic departments, experience levels, and background knowledge of assessment and accreditation. In this way, newer faculty would have the opportunity to contribute to the process, and build new understandings about how their work relates to the rest of the work of the college; and more experienced faculty would have the opportunity to bring their institutional knowledge to the conversation, as well as learn how it relates to the current issues (Lees & Williams, 2018; Lunsford et al., 2018). This leads to the next recommendation for practice, which is that the way the work is introduced is also an important consideration.

**Develop a Plan for Introducing Assessment.** As higher education administrators think about how to work with faculty in assessment processes, it is recommended that they develop a careful plan for how the work is introduced to faculty, including what information is shared, when it is shared, and with whom. What follows is an outline of the four major considerations for administrators to consider.

1. **Membership:** Develop a faculty Assessment Committee, or if one exists already, review the membership to ensure that each academic program is represented by the respective program director, or the program director may use their autonomy to decide if they would rather invite a faculty member to participate. In addition, membership ought to include the department chairs, and a database administrator, or equivalent position. The assessment director should serve as the facilitator of the committee, as they will be overseeing most of the work. Each of these positions will bring their own knowledge and expertise to the group, which relates to the SDT tenet of competence.
2. Calendar: Meetings should take place once a month, to ensure that there is a chance to meet with the Assessment Committee in between each program and/or department monthly meeting. Because of the reliance on faculty members, it is recommended that meetings do not take place over the summer when faculty may not be contracted to work.

3. Information sharing: The committee should be used to provide ongoing updates based on the data collection timeline for the year and would include logistical information such as timing for the various assessments to be administered throughout the year, and updates on when the data would be ready to share. Information sharing should be reciprocal and be an opportunity for the members to report out any updates they might have on the assessments and how their programs have experienced them. By doing this, faculty would experience the autonomy to decide what to share, the competence to contribute to the discussion, and the relatedness of hearing from the other programs.

4. Planning: The committee is an ideal place to practice assessment activities such as data review discussions and validity and reliability exercises. By involving the committee members for these activities, the assessment director would be able to use the three tenets of SDT to keep the faculty motivated. Faculty would exercise their autonomy to help decide what data review protocols will be the most effective for using with the rest of the faculty, their competence in giving feedback on the assessment data and processes, and by working collaboratively, they would experience relatedness with the other members who are making sense of the data together. 

   In order to reach the most people, the recommendation is to develop a range of approaches for sharing information with faculty. For example, introduce all processes to the Assessment Committee first, so that the faculty members could share the information with their
peers as a first step. Later, when information is shared at department meetings, the Assessment Committee members can act as ambassadors or spokespeople, which would foster a sense of relatedness within the faculty. Information also could be shared via email as a follow-up to any in-person meetings for those who prefer to read. Subsequent messages could be given in-person at a college meeting, with an accompanying printed hand-out and PowerPoint presentation for the visual learners. By utilizing a variety of communication efforts, higher education administrators would demonstrate that they respect and understand that multiple messages help to ensure that the plan is received and understood by the faculty, so that their feeling of competence is supported. Part of the job of assessment administrators is to make the connection of the work to accreditation transparent and understandable for faculty, which led to the third recommendation for practice.

**Be Explicit about Accreditation Requirements.** It is recommended that higher education administrators pay attention to the need for explaining the accreditation demands on the college, and how the assessment work performed by faculty will contribute to the requirements. In keeping with Self-Determination Theory, the more that faculty understand the importance of their work for the greater good of the college, the more their feelings of relatedness and competence will be fulfilled, thereby supporting their motivation to engage in the assessment work. Research has shown that faculty will be more receptive to any changes in accreditation processes if they learn about it from their peers in what Van Twembeke and Goeman (2018) refer to as a “guiding coalition” who can answer questions of all faculty -- both supporters and skeptics -- and act as experts in the work. It is recommended that higher education administrators also incorporate ideas from change theory, such as using an iterative process with the committee to involve them in interpreting accreditation requirements, co-
designing assessments, and constructing methods for evaluating data required for external reports (Dowd & Liera, 2018). Through this type of involvement, faculty will play a collaborative role in the assessment processes, which will sustain their needs for competence and relatedness of SDT and enable them to have autonomy in the messaging to the rest of the faculty.

It is recommended that faculty be given more opportunities to learn about accreditation requirements so that they can build their own understanding and competence as to how their work may connect and support the external reporting demands. When faculty are invited into the assessment and accreditation work, they can provide input into the kinds of questions that are examined when looking at data and the process for doing so, which supports their motivation, as described in SDT. Although faculty and administrators alike are typically very busy, the current study showed that the more that administrators can include faculty in the process to ask their own questions, decide together on how to approach the work, and discuss their findings together, the more motivated and engaged they will become. It is also recommended that the connection of the work to accreditation be made explicit to faculty so that they are able to understand the high level of responsibility they are being given, and how much the institution values their contribution to this essential reporting requirement. While the findings suggest a number of recommendations for practice, there are also implications for future research.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The study took place in the context of a non-research institution where the primary responsibilities of faculty were teaching and service, with no formal research expectations or tenure. While the findings added a new viewpoint to the existing literature on faculty motivation, future research is needed in several related areas: (1) what happens before inquiry
groups are formed, including how they are formed; (2) how context impacts faculty motivation; and (3) whether motivated faculty produce more meaningful assessments.

**Inquiry group formation.** At the time of the study, the faculty at Westside College were completing their fourth year of performing academic program assessment together in inquiry groups. The group process had been established and was familiar to the participants. It is recommended that research be done on how faculty motivation is impacted if a college-wide inquiry group process is newly formed, as opposed to pre-existing. Research has shown that institutional change, such as the introduction of a new assessment approach, is best supported through collaborative involvement with the faculty, rather than a top-down administrative initiative (Muluneh & Gedifew, 2018). The current study did not examine how the inquiry group were introduced and implemented. Additionally, the study did not look into how the faculty members’ familiarity with the process contributed to their willingness to engage with the inquiry work. Future research in this area could explore how time and guidance contribute to faculty motivation to engage with inquiry-based processes.

**Context.** The setting was a non-tenured, non-research institution in which the faculty were free from the responsibilities of research and publishing. Future research is needed to understand how faculty motivation to engage with assessment and accreditation efforts is impacted by their other duties and time constraints, particularly in other types of higher education institutions where faculty have increased pressures put upon them to produce and publish research. At Westside College, faculty are expected to teach, advise, and be of service to the educational community. This leaves more time and energy to participate in an inquiry-based process for assessment than at a tenure-track university where faculty have more demands on
their time. It is not known whether these increased demands would affect the faculty’s motivation to engage in an inquiry-based process for assessment.

**Motivated faculty and the relationship to meaningful assessment.** The current study placed an emphasis on the conditions that support faculty motivation to perform academic program assessment, with no attention given to the quality of the assessments to measure student outcomes. An underlying assumption of the study is that it is a benefit to the institution and to the people involved with assessment to have faculty who are motivated to do the work, however the results of the study did not examine the assessments or their contribution to the college’s goals or priorities. Future research is needed to explore whether motivated faculty produce more meaningful assessment tools and assessment data.
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Appendix A

Invitation to Faculty (First Message)
Northeastern University College of Professional Studies
Doctor of Education Program

Subject: Amy Kline Invites your Participation

Dear [Faculty Name],

As you probably know by now, I am a student in the Doctor of Education program at Northeastern University. I am currently conducting a study for my dissertation and am seeking research participants. I hope you will consider participating.

I am researching faculty motivation in academic program assessment. I am particularly interested in how the division-wide inquiry-based process has had informed the faculty’s experience. With my research, I hope to increase higher education administrators’ understanding of how to support faculty to be engaged in program assessment.

If you choose to participate in this study, I will be interviewing you about your experiences with program assessment. I anticipate that the total time needed for your participation will be approximately one and half to two hours, over two interviews. We can meet either in person or via Zoom video conference, depending on your schedule and preference.

If you would like to hear more about my study before deciding, please let me know. I am happy to answer any questions you might have. Please be aware that email or Internet transmissions are neither private nor secure and therefore responses could be read by a third party. Thank you in advance for considering this request.

Warm regards,
Amy Kline
Subject: Amy Kline Invites your Participation

Dear [Faculty Name],

Last week I sent you a message inviting you to participate in the research study I am doing for my dissertation.

I would really appreciate the chance to speak with you for my research, if you have a moment. Please email me at kline.am@husky.neu.edu if you are willing to participate.

Thank you so much for considering this request.

Warm regards,

Amy Kline

(This a follow up email will be sent one week later, only to those who have not answered yet. The first email will be forwarded as well, as a reminder about the details of the original request.)
Appendix C

Confirmation Email (To Faculty Member)
Northeastern University College of Professional Studies
Doctor of Education Program

Subject: Research Study with Amy Kline

Dear [Faculty Name],

Thank you for your interest in my research study. I am currently working on my dissertation for the Doctor of Education degree program at Northeastern University with Dr. Diletta M. Masiello.

I am researching faculty motivation in academic program assessment. I am particularly interested in how the division-wide inquiry-based process has informed the faculty’s experience. With my research, I hope to increase higher education administrators’ understanding of how to support faculty to be engaged in program assessment. Given the demands for assessment data from accreditors and federal and state reporting requirements, program assessment work is often shadowed by external compliance requirements. I am interested in studying the faculty experience with inquiry-based assessment as a way to understand how this may or may not relate to their motivation to engage in this work.

For this study, I am looking for participants who are full time faculty members who have been involved in division-wide programmatic inquiry work at least one year.

Should you agree to participate in this study, you will have three meetings with me. The first meeting will be in person or via Zoom video call and last approximately 10-15 minutes. I will provide you with an informed consent form in which you will be provided an overview of what to expect for the study. The second meeting will be either an in person meeting or via Zoom that will last a bit longer, at about 45 minutes. This will be an interview about your personal experience with inquiry-based program assessment and how you have experienced it. This interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. I am attaching the questions that I plan to ask you so you have time to read them in advance if you wish to do so. For the third interview you may also choose whether you wish to meet in person or via Zoom. During this last meeting, I plan to share with you two items: the transcripts from our previous meeting and preliminary coding of the themes I noticed. You may provide any additional thoughts as well as let me know of any corrections or points of clarification in what I have shared with you. I expect that our three meetings will take one and a half to two hours total.
I would like to meet as soon as your schedule allows. I will send a Doodle poll to you with possible times over the next couple of weeks. Please let me know if you prefer to meet in your office or mine.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my study. It means so much to me to be able to learn from your experience. Please email me (kline.am@husky.neu.edu) or call me (212-875-4442) if you have any questions.

Warm regards,
Amy Kline
Appendix D

Informed Consent Form
Northeastern University College of Professional Studies
Doctor of Education Program

Title: A Case Study on Faculty Motivation in Program Assessment

Principle Investigator (PI): Dr. Diletta M. Masiello, Northeastern University
Co-Investigator: Amy Kline, Northeastern University

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to understand the faculty experience with engaging in an inquiry-based process for programmatic assessment with the added goal of learning what has impacted faculty motivation to engage in this work. I hope to contribute to the research of higher education administrators who are charged with supporting faculty in this work.

This study will involve three points of contact with the researcher. The first point of contact will be an initial meeting with the researcher (approximately 10-15 minutes). The second point of contact will be an in-depth interview with the researcher (approximately 45 minutes). The third point of contact will be a follow up conversation to review preliminary coding with the researcher (30-45 minutes). The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed to facilitate analysis.

Procedure: If you decide to take part in this study, I will ask you to participate in individual interviews. As noted above, we will have three points of contact and you will have the option to meet either in person or via Zoom video call. For in person interviews, you may select a location that is convenient and comfortable for you. All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed into writing. Any information you provide in writing will also be analyzed. All materials will be stored securely and your name will be omitted. Instead, a pseudonym, which you may select during the initial meeting, will be used to organize the information.

Risks: The primary risk associated with this study is the discomfort you may feel discussing your experiences with programmatic assessment and inquiry-based assessment processes. The researcher will be mindful to respect your reactions. You will have the option to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

Benefits: There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study. However, the researcher hopes that the understandings constructed from this study will help higher education administrators to support faculty to engage with assessment. This study will be shared on ProQuest, with the goal of adding to the research on faculty motivation. The study, or portions of it, may also be adapted for publication.

Confidentiality: Your participation in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers will see information about you. If you decide to participate, you will have the option to select a pseudonym that will be used throughout the study to protect your identity. If you do not pick one, one will be assigned to you. Any material resulting from this study (dissertation, online or printed articles, or conference presentations) will use the pseudonym and will not include any personally revealing information about you. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed into writing. The researcher will code the written transcript to identify large ideas within your
interview and across interviews with other participants. All physical documents or files related to
this study will be stored in a locked file drawer in the researcher’s office. All electronic files will
be stored under a password protected account that is accessible only to the researcher. Consent
forms will be kept for seven years and then destroyed after that. All other documents and files
will be kept for three years after the completion of the study and destroyed after that.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not
obligated to participate and you may stop participation at any time. During the interviews, you
may skip any question and may end the interview at any time.

**Will I be paid for my participation?** No monetary compensation will be provided.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?** Your only cost will be the expense of travelling to the
college, should you choose to meet in person. You have the option of picking dates that fit into
your schedule, so that you do not need to make additional trips for the study. If you prefer to
meet virtually via Zoom video conference, then you would not be required to travel to the
college.

**Contact Person:** Please contact Amy Kline at (212) 875-4442 or via email at
kline.am@husky.neu.edu or Dr. Diletta M. Masiello, Principal Investigator at
d.masiello@northeastern.edu if you have any questions about this study. If you have questions
about your rights as a participant, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject
Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University Boston, MA 02115.
Telephone: 617-373-7570, email: irb@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

**I agree to take part in this research.**

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Appendix E

Interview Questions
Northeastern University College of Professional Studies
Doctor of Education Program

1. How long have you worked at Bank Street? What do you enjoy the most about your work?
   Possible prompts: What do you wish you could change, if anything?

2. One of the key concepts of my research is this idea of faculty inquiry groups. If you were to think about how to define a faculty inquiry group, what would you say?
   Possible prompts: How much experience have you had with faculty inquiry groups?

3. A second key concept of my research is academic program assessment. How would you define program assessment?
   Possible prompts: How important do you feel program assessment is to the work you do? Why?

4. Can you walk me through how the inquiry group process works currently at Bank Street?
   Possible prompts: Could you describe who is involved and what parts they play in the process?

5. How would you describe your impressions of being involved with the inquiry group process?
   Possible prompts: What do you like most about the inquiry group process? What do you like least?

7. I’m wondering if you can tell me more about your role specifically in the inquiry group process. How involved were you in deciding the questions that are asked and the kinds of evidence that are discussed?
   Possible prompts: How much say do you have in what you discuss at the meetings? How comfortable are your ability to contribute to the meetings?

8. I’m curious to hear your thoughts on the group aspect of the work. What do you see as the benefit of working in a group for this kind of assessment work?
   Possible prompts: How relatable are the ideas that other faculty members share to your work?

9. How would you describe the connection, if at all, that the inquiry groups have with accreditation?
   Possible prompts: In what ways has accreditation influenced your experience with inquiry?
10. Is there anything I haven’t asked you that you would like to add?