A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HAWAII INDEPENDENT SCHOOL TEACHERS' USE OF ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS

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AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT

DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this completed work to my mother, Dr. Christina Black. Mother, you been my hero since I was a child. I am a teacher because of your example. I am a parent because of your Godly leadership. I have undertaken this academic effort in your footsteps. I complete this degree because of your encouragement. You are an incredible example of diligence and excellence.

I love you.

ABSTRACT

Research indicates that teacher voices are not well represented in educational policy and change. Education has changed dramatically in a short time, and it continues to change at a fast past. Classrooms are increasingly diverse. External standards are placed on teachers. A chorus of stakeholder voices is levied at educators, and these voices include parents, school leadership, colleges, and the future workplace students will find themselves in. This research engages with educators in the Hawaii independent school setting that experience the push and pull of these many voices in education. This study gives voice to seven educators working in Hawaii's independent school setting. The focus of this study is how Hawaii teachers in the private sector experience alternative assessments and it is framed by two guiding questions: (1) What are the perceptions and lived experiences of Hawaii independent school teachers with regard to alternate assessment? (2) How does Hawaii independent school teacher alternative assessment impact future education practice? Phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology that seeks to know the lived experiences and perspectives of research participants regarding a given phenomenon.

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Chapter I

Introduction

This research undertaking will allow the reader to view the experiences of private school educators in Hawaii with regard to the implementation of alternative forms of assessment in the context of independent Hawaii schools. Assessment is a major topic discussed and debated across the world of education (Carter, 2019; DeWitt, 2016; Tefera, Hernández-Saca, & Lester, 2019; Wormeli, 2018). It can be defined as the process of evaluating a learner's ability or performance of a defined standard or level expectation; they evaluate the results of working toward a desired learning outcome (Guangul, et. al, 2020; Wormeli, 2018). In literature, the conversation around this topic is often driven by a focus on education policy makers advocating for increased high-stakes, cumulative testing (Guskey, 2018; Madaus, et. al, 1980; Wang, 2015). A focus on performance puts pressure on students and teachers to perform well on high-stakes tests that are used to inform choices made regarding education policy, financial awards, and ultimately student college and career trajectories (Hikida & Taylor, 2020; Tefera et. al, 2019). These assessments seem, for some education stakeholders, to serve as a means to rank-order students, teachers, and schools for the purposes of accountability (Guskey, 2018).

New perspectives in assessment are welcome as much research is also devoted to seeking new and alternative methods of assessing student learning (Astika, 2014; Barrot, 2016; Lau, et. al, 2020; Petre, 2017). Driving the conversation and the need for additional perspectives in educational assessment, is the reality of the collective responsibility of education providers at all levels to prepare students for an uncertain future (Ann, 1999; Abidi & Joshi, 2018; Beier, et. al, 2018; Stanley, 2015). This pressure for innovation has driven research toward the trenches of the classroom. Many studies have been devoted to assessment practice, resulting in a nearly

exhaustive library of research existing around trends in assessment practice, its impact on learning, and the history and reasoning of how educators assess for learning in formal education (Adesope, et. al, 2017; Brookhart et al., 2016; Spector et al., 2016; Timmis, et. al, 2016). This fervor for cutting edge education practice has fueled the expanse of assessment innovation not only in how teachers instruct, but also when and how they should measure and evaluate the learning taking place in their classroom (Alonzo, et. al, 2018). Buzz words like project-based learning and standards-based assessment fill the pages of education journals as some educators and policy-makers embrace innovation in assessment (Alonzo, et. al, 2018; Kokotsaki, et. al, 2016: Revelle, et. al, 2019). Some experts in the field of education pose big questions about how assessment is used in classrooms in order to inform policy and drive curriculum development, specifically in the area of formative and alternative forms of assessment (Carter, 2019; Dixon & Worrell, 2016; Lok et al., 2016; Kibble, 2017; Wormeli, 2018).

This study seeks to examine assessment in the context of private school pedagogy in the State of Hawaii with teachers working in member schools from the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS). Member schools are asked to adopt the HAIS commitment to excellence in the teaching profession and a commitment to the growth and development of each child (Hawaii Association of Independent Schools, 2019). Educators in this context work to prepare many of Hawaii's students for college. HAIS provides membership to around 100 of the roughly private schools in operation across the Hawaiian, islands serving roughly 30,00 students (Hawaii Association of Independent Schools, 2019). Total private school enrollment in the state is 36,000. The Hawaii Department of Education reports an enrollment of 180,000 students in both private and public schools (HAIS, 2019). Private schools in Hawaii educate 15% of all students in the state, above the national average of ten percent private school enrollment

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). In fact, Hawaii has the highest ratio of private school enrollment versus public school enrollment in the nation and enrolls more students per capita in private education than any other state in the United States of America, tied only with Louisiana with both states seeing nearly 20% of students choosing private school options (Baker, et. al, 2017).

Background

Research on assessment indicates a trend in examining the impact it has on student achievement as well as meeting the needs of ethnically diverse student bodies (Graham, 2018; HAIS, 2019; Knifsend & Juvonen, 2017; Levin-Epstein, 2015; Tajalli, 2018; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The body of literature on assessment is extensive and increasing, with the conversation often revolving around public education and mainly centered on schools in the continental United States (Bossert, et al., 2020; Tefera, et. al, 2019; Torres, 2019; U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2014). Other studies have examined the goals and motivations of parents and stakeholders in the private school sector; attention has been given to the success and advantages these students secure (Culatta & Carter-Warner, 2021; DeAngelis, 2019; Joshi, 2019; Torres, 2019). A large body of literature exists about what assessment is and what role it plays in the field of education (Abrams, et. al, 2016; Broadbent, et al., 2018; Carter, 2019; Corzine; 2016; Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Schoenfeld, 2015; Timmis, et. al, 2016; Wormeli, 2018).

Teachers are at the front lines, implementing the directives and policy of educational leaders, and much research has been devoted to assessment practice, with a nearly exhaustive library of research existing around trends in assessment, its impact on learning, and the history and reasoning for assessment in education (Guskey, 2018; Tefera et. al, 2019; DeWitt, 2016). The target can feel like it is moving in education with new terms and strategies arising. Teachers

feel the pressure of needing to meet the goals and new targets that are thrown at them, they are pressured to bring action to theory in the classroom (Alonzo, et. al, 2018; Revelle, et. al, 2019) New perspectives in assessment are welcome with much research also being devoted to seeking new and alternative methods of assessing student learning (Carter, 2018; Petre, 2017; Wormeli, 2018;). Some studies have taken a look at teacher experiences. These studies focus on the relationship of teachers to students when assessment is taking place, the understanding teachers have of assessment, and the application of assessment outcomes to inform teaching practice (Alonzo, et. al, 2018; Di Tommaso, et. al, 2018; Ham & Dekkers, 2019; Schut, et. al, 2019; Schut, et. al, 2020; Smaill, 2020; Xie, 2021).

Research is not equally spread across the full spectrum of assessment. A large cross-section of research in the area of assessment practice focuses on formative and summative assessments and the positive and negative impact of both approaches (Carter, 2019: Dixon & Worrell, 2016; Lok et al., 2016; Kibble, 2017). Further, a significant influence on where research is directed in education is steered by the necessity of focusing on diversity in student populations. This has fueled research on best practice in assessment to meet the needs of classroom populations made up of students ethnically diverse and diverse in educational needs (Graham, 2018; Knifsend & Juvonen, 2017: Yin, et. al, 2020). The need to measure success in meeting the needs of diverse student bodies has led to an emphasis on the importance of school accountability and the weighting of test scores while educators seek to evaluate the success of educational approaches to assessment (Adesope, et. al, 2017; Hart et al., 2015; Walsh, 2017). In line with meeting the needs of diverse student bodies, some research is devoted to trends in education practice often labeled as alternative forms of assessment like standards-based assessment, project-based assessment, and growth-based assessment (Boser, et. al, 2016; Fink,

2015; Koktsaki, et. al, 2016, Avenell, 2016; Wormeli, 2006). Here we find the focus for this study.

Research demonstrates assessment is important for informing educational practice as educators document student learning through recorded assessment outcomes (Brookhart, 2017; Carter, 2019: Dixon & Worrell, 2016; Lok et al., 2016; Kibble, 2017; Wormeli, 2018). Types of assessment used are often categorized under the umbrella terms summative, formative, and alternative (Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Lok et al., 2016). Summative assessment has historically been one of the more polarizing areas of education assessment and has fueled many discussions on assessment as school funding is often tied to the results of high-stakes, summative assessments in the United States (Mathis & Trujillo, 2016; Reed, 2016). A focus on summative assessment practice is partially driven by the federal government's use of financial incentives attached to state compliance in many areas including high stakes testing (Hikida & Taylor, 2020; Tefera et. al, 2019 Mathis & Trujillo, 2016; Reed, 2016; US Department of Education, 2020).

While not bound by funding concerns related to testing outcomes, private education exists at the behest of special interest groups and individual community goals they perceive are not being met by the public-school system, as well as possible religious and societal concerns regarding the trajectory of education policy and planning (Joshi, 2017; Torres, 2019). A study by the National Association of Independent Schools identified four themes common to parents of private school children (National Association of Independent Schools, 2017). Parents look to independent school education when they believe their children's educational needs are not being met, they believe their child is advanced, when they perceive a heavy focus on test scores and curricula, and some families seek independent school education for increase college

opportunities (DeAngelis, 2019; National Association of Independent Schools, 2017; Torres, 2019).

Further compounding the challenges faced by educators is the increase of student diversity in classrooms across the US. While classroom diversity is not a negative, it does present challenges to educators needing to meet the needs of ever-increasing ethnically diverse student bodies (Graham, 2018; Knifsend & Juvonen, 2017: Yin, et. al, 2020). Schools in Hawaii represent a wide range of ethnic diversity and the range is greater in Hawaii schools than the classrooms of other states (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2020; US News and World Report, 2021). Hawaii's student population is majority Asian and Pacific Islander with both groups comprising 27 percent of student bodies. White students make up only 12 percent of the Hawaii student population, edged out by students identifying as Latino and multiracial at 15 percent in both categories. This is in contrast with the national average of 48 percent white students across all schools in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2020; US News and World Report, 2021).

However, this study does not solely center on ethnic diversity in Hawaii's classrooms. Classroom diversity as a concept may also include diversity of learners and such diversity presents educators with challenges in meeting the needs of a wide range of learners (Yin, et. al, 2020). Teachers face individual leaner behaviors, ranges of academic ability, and the pressures of diverse stakeholder needs and expectations. These realities present the necessity of shifting practice in many areas such as tracking leaner progress, recording grades, and communicating success to families (Graham, 2018; Knifsend & Juvonen, 2017). This reality presents classroom environments in great need of alternative forms of assessment that equip teachers with the tools and knowledge needed to focus the assessment process on the unique and diverse learners they

are instructing (Jones, et. al, 2018; Yin, et. al, 2020). In Hawaii, private independent schools share in the responsibility of preparing many of these ethnically and learning diverse students for college (HAIS, 2019). In Hawaii, parents invest in private education at a higher rate than any other state (Baker, et al., 2017). The Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS) offers oversight for Hawaii's more than 100 private schools to ensure safe environments, wholesome community, and diverse curricula (Bossert, et al., 2020; National Association of Independent Schools, 2020). One of the main reasons for a high rate of private school attendance in Hawaii may be in part due to parental concerns about the quality of education students will receive in public schools and a desire for competitive college acceptance to mainland schools upon graduation (HAIS, 2019; Torres, 2019).

Statement of Problem

As indicated in this body of literature, the topic of assessment practice poses many challenges for both policy makers and educators who are tasked with implementing policy (Carter, 2019). Understanding the differences between testing, grading and assessment is important in order to maintain clarity when discussing assessment practice (Wormeli, 2018). Educators must understand various approaches to assessment practice and differentiate between summative, formative, and alternative assessment (Broadbent, et. al, 2018; Mastagli, et. al, 2020). High-stakes testing practices require summative assessments, while the demands of teaching students with individual needs and unique backgrounds requires knowledge of formative assessment practice (Kibble, 2017). The pressure to innovate and embrace an uncertain future means educators are seeking alternative assessments as a means to gauge student learning in the context of rapid change in the future of student college and career experiences (Petre, 2017; Lau, et. al, 2020). Teacher voices must be at the forefront of assessment discussions.

Teacher experiences and perspectives must be examined and qualified for education stakeholders.

Schools are populated with increasingly ethnically diverse student bodies (Knifsend & Juvonen, 2017). As such, schools both in the private and public sectors are concerned with the process of evaluating and then adjusting classroom practice to meet the needs of these diverse student bodies (Alonzo, Mirriahi, & Davison, 2018). Parents worry about opportunities students have upon graduation, and about the role schools play in helping students prepare for success in college and in their careers (Carter & Carter-Warner, 2021; DeAngelis, 2019; Joshi, 2017; Torres, 2019). Federal and state governments are focused on leveraging funding and policy to ensure each child has equality of access to a quality education (Greene & McShane, 2018; Heise, 2017).

Teachers are at the front lines, and this should mean that they are the focus of any discussion on assessment practice (Di Tommaso, et. al, 2018; Ham & Dekkers, 2019). Educators in the classroom are tasked with helping schools meet federal mandates on test scores and are by necessity adjusting assessment practice to reflect a culture of high-stakes testing (Decker et. al, 2018; Hikida & Taylor, 2020). Educators also wrestle with ensuring quality of instruction and meeting the needs of their students by leveraging formative assessment (Maxlow & Sanzo, 2018).

Innovation in assessment, in the vein of formative practice, has led to alternate assessment practice. Alternative assessment practice has been shown to have a positive impact on student learning as the individual needs of students are accounted for (Zulkifli, 2019). There is minimal literature exploring the perspectives and lived experiences of independent school teachers in the state of Hawaii with regard to alternate assessment practice and this is reflected in

a general lack of teacher voice in educational change and reform (Aydarova, et al., 2021; Bergdahl & Langmann, 2017; Di Tommaso, et. al, 2018; Ham & Dekkers, 2019). In order to give voice to this subset of the education community, and add to the sparse educator voices on assessment, a phenomenological study was conducted.

This phenomenological study was designed to identify the elements of assessment practice inherent to Hawaii independent school teachers, their use of alternate assessment, their own unique perspectives on alternate assessment, and the lived experiences of these teachers regarding alternate assessment. Research about Hawaii's education system often focuses on the number of students enrolled in independent schools, the goals and motivations of Hawaii education stakeholders, and perceived the weakness of the public-school system in Hawaii (Bossert, et. al, 2020; Ginder, et. al, 2017; Torres, 2019). This research undertaking will seek to add to the conversation with educators' voices on the topic of alternative assessment and their experiences implementing assessment in the independent school classroom.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research project is to provide education stakeholders with new perspectives on the implementation of alternative assessments through the eyes of practicing private school educators. In order to add to the body of literature around the topic of assessment practices, a qualitative phenomenological study using Moustakas' (1994) Modified Kan Kaam method was used to investigate the unique perspectives on assessment held by independent school teachers in Hawaii. The following research questions were explored:

1. What are the perceptions and lived experiences of Hawaii independent school teachers with regard to alternate assessment?
2. How does Hawaii independent school teacher alternative assessment impact future

education practice?

Description of Terms

Terms can easily be confused when moving between disciplines or discussing terms in a new discipline. It is important to be specific in defining terms to ensure reliability and validly in phenomenological research (Heale & Alison, 2015; Skinner, et al., 2020). The following terms will differentiate some ambiguity in language while creating new meaning for other words for the purpose of this study. Provided here are a list of terms used throughout the body of this paper.

Alternative form of Assessment: Assessment practices or procedures deemed to be emerging or non-standard formative and summative assessment in the classroom (Gozuyesil & Tanriseven, 2017).

Assessment: Measures of learning used to gauge instructional success and student information retention (Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Högberg et. al, 2019).

Diversity: Ethnic, socio-economic, or learning differences in student body populations that necessitate adjusting classroom practice (Graham, 2018; Knifsend & Juvonen, 2017; Yin, 2020).

Education Policy-Maker: State and district education leaders across the executive and legislative branches of both state and federal governments, including district or building administrators tasked with making policy regarding wide-ranging education goals such as increasing enrollment, increasing graduation rates, improving high-stakes testing scores, or allotting funding (Greene & McShane, 2018).

Education Stakeholders: Members of the education community to include parents, students, teachers, administrators, and members of the surrounding community (Buchanan, et. al, 2016; Nthontho, 2017).

Formative Assessment: Assessments designed to measure how students are doing during the course of instruction in order to gauge student comprehension early as foundational aspects of content delivery are covered **(**Lok, McNaught, & Young, 2016).

Grading: Grades are judgements levied on student performance relative to some external scale of evaluation and used as a cumulative report as evidence of student learning for a set period of time (Wormeli, 2018)

Growth-Based Assessments: Personalized assessments are an individually-focused alternative to standards-based assessments and help pupils achieve a personal best. Students benefit from differentiated approaches focused on maximizing student engagement (Avenell, 2016).

High-Stakes Testing: A testing process relying on external criterion-referenced standards often linked to school funding in the public sector. High stakes testing is used to measure students' progress toward those high standards. (Tajalli, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2020; Hikida & Taylor, 2020).

Independent School: The term most often used for private schools in Hawaii by the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools, the main governing and accrediting body for over 100 independent schools in the state of Hawaii (HAIS, 2019).

Project-Based Learning: Project-based learning (PBL) is a student-centered educational approach to learning used to leverage or even require student autonomy. PBL relies on the

teacher as a guide and participant in the learning process and results in a public product at the end of the project (Kokotsaki, et. al, 2016; Revelle, et. al, 2019).

Standards-Based Assessments: Standards-based assessments replaces traditional approaches to assessment with evaluation of learning being linked directly to educational standards adopted by a school or school system. Standards based assessment aims to help education stakeholders become more aware of standards linked to curricula (Alonzo, et. al, 2018).

Summative Assessment: Summative assessments are grade-focused forms of assessment used to provide education stakeholders with data to be used for comparing learners, or ensuring standards are being met. Cumulative final summative assessments can be used to understand the quality of both instruction and the learning taking place (Broadbent, et. al, 2018; Dixson & Worrell, 2016).

Testing: The process of applying an educational measuring tool, often in written form, used the gathering of data about students learning and performance against expectations (Ghaicha, 2016; Wormeli, 2018).

Significance of the Study

As established in this introductory chapter, the focus of this study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of educators who have encountered the phenomenon of alternative assessment practice in the context of independent schools in Hawaii. There is a lack of attention to teacher perspectives in educational reform, change implementation, or innovation (Aydarova, et al., 2021; Bergdahl & Langmann, 2017; Di Tommaso, et. al, 2018; Ham & Dekkers, 2019). There is an unfortunate common thread in educational research that teacher voices are not leading the conversation on innovation and change with regard to policy and planning (Bergdahl

& Langmann, 2017). Due to the conversation around assessment being driven by federal government policy, the need to innovate in the assessment space, and the diverse approaches to assessment available to educators, policy makers and administrators need foundational knowledge of assessment practice (Dennis, 2017; Kim, et. al, 2019; Martinez-Arboleda, 2021). In addition, empirical knowledge gleaned from the arena of classroom assessment practice is necessary for administrators and policy makers to maintain a consideration of the impact of policy on practice (Looney, et. al, 2017). The goal of the research in this study is to share lived experiences and perspectives from practicing educators with regard to assessment practice.

In order to provide education leaders clarity when reading this work, the researcher used a narrowed the focus of this study to educator experiences with alternative assessment practice in the context of independent schools in the state of Hawaii. This narrowing of focus ensures the research is relevant to an actual teacher population, and allows future researchers to replicate the study in other contexts (Creswell, 2013). It is the focus of all phenomenologists to give life to the experiences of under-studied populations in order to better understand their experiences and perspectives while offering insight into other forces acting upon the group under study (Van Manen, 2016; Quotoshi, 2018). In this case, education policy makers and leaders in the field of education will be provided with more knowledge with regard to teacher implementation of alternate assessment in private education. This is due to the need for more teacher voices in the educational reform and change space (Di Tommaso, et. al, 2018; Ham & Dekkers, 2019).

It is the aim of this researcher to establish, within the literature, the significance and importance of alternative assessment practice as a means of meeting diverse student needs, preparing students for an uncertain future, and meeting the needs of parents and other special interest groups connected to private schooling (Carter, 2019; DeWitt, 2016; Tefera, Hernández-

Saca, & Lester, 2019; Wormeli, 2018). This research might be read by a wide range of education stakeholders as it is focused on sharing information about the challenges of assessment practice across the spectrum of education. Parents will gain an understanding of the pressures and significant influences placed on school systems and indirectly, their students. Teachers may glean useful techniques and perspectives on assessment applicable to their own classroom practice. Education leaders and policy makers alike may be able to understand the impact their decisions make on the success or failure of education policy impacting assessment practice.

In the literature review, the researcher shared a historical perspective on both private and public education and how the history of education in the United States has shaped assessment practice (Augustyn et. al, 2018; Duncan & Stevens, 2011; Gershon, 2015; Scott, 2000; Smith & Woodruff, 2000). The strands of government policy and planning were woven together in the context of addressing the universal challenge faced by education systems to both meet the needs of parents and students as well as the external pressure of the aforementioned government regulations and financial incentives (Timmis, et. al, 2016). Educators are innovating in the assessment space, embracing alternative forms of assessment in order to meet students and stakeholder needs, and maintaining the status quo of high-staking testing practices demanding summative assessment (Adesope, et. al, 2017; Guskey, 2018). Readers of this research will be able to propose policy better suited to individual student and school needs, and appreciate the unique approaches to assessment taken by practicing educators in independent schools in Hawaii.

Overview of Research Methods

Not enough research exists about educator perspectives on educational practice (Bergdahl & Langmann, 2017; Di Tommaso, et. al, 2018; Ham & Dekkers, 2019). This study used

Moustakas' (1994) Modified Van Kaam approach for the purpose of engaging with independent school educators in Hawaii. in order to identify and describe their unique experiences and perspectives on alternative assessment practice as independent school teachers. The researcher selected seven participants for this research through a social media drive. Using a survey, the researcher identified teachers that are career educators in the Hawaii independent school setting. The selected participants represent a range of educators all actively use alternative forms of assessment. The phenomenological interviews were conducted using an interview protocol outlined by Castillo-Montoya (2016) in which the researcher pilots questions, ensures alignment of interview questions with research questions, maintains an inquiry-based conversation, and is externally checked for non-biased feedback. A blend of both traditional phenomenology and hermeneutical phenomenology was applied to the research. Using the established interview tool, the researcher conducted interviews lasting around 30 minutes apiece. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed for further analysis. The analysis followed the seven-steps outlined by Moustakas (1994). Upon completion of the data analysis, the researcher compiled the finding in a textural-structural description in written form.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Educational Assessment

Assessment in education refers to systematically documenting data gleaned from the learning process, examining the data for use in refining education programs, and using the results to inform further instruction (Alonzo, et. al, 2018; Broadbent, et. al, 2018; Smaill, 2020). The practice of education assessment is meant to engage students in productive learning while producing feedback useful for improving student learning. Students and teachers are active participants and partner in the learning process to produce data representative of student achievement (Alonzo, et. al, 2018; Smaill, 2020).

Two leading approaches to assessment in education are formative and summative assessment (Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Lok et al., 2016; Mastagli, et. al, 2020). Both of these common approaches are criterion-referenced assessment methods, referencing established standards for grade levels (Lok et al., 2016). Formative assessments are designed to assess students during the course of teaching to gauge student comprehension early as foundational aspects of content delivery are covered; summative assessments are more cumulative and high-stakes in nature (Dixson & Worrell, 2016.) An example of a formative assessment would be a teacher taking a low-stakes poll of the class to gauge their understanding of a concept the teacher directly addressed in the course. The teacher might also have students produce work not perfectly aligned with normal testing tools, such as drawing a picture, or producing another artifact of learning outside of a traditional written test or quiz (Maxlow & Sanzo, 2018). Other examples include self-reflection activities like journaling and low-stakes interviews. A teacher can consider talking to students with the express focus on gauging understanding of a concept to

be formative assessment. The data or information gleaned along the way in formative assessment should be used to redirect or focus classroom instruction (Maxlow & Sanzo, 2018). Data taken from the cumulative final summative assessment can be used to understand the quality of both instruction and the learning taking place (Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Maxlow & Sanzo, 2018).

Summative assessments are often given at the end of an academic endeavor. Summative assessments are connected to a grade or some other concrete objective measure of learning, are not frequently administered, and come at the end of a set period of time connected to learning or instruction (Dixon, & Worrell, 2016). These cumulative assessments are used to measure the outcome of a lesson or series of lessons (Wormeli, 2018). These end of the line measures of learning are high-stakes in nature for all education stakeholders involved (Dixon, & Worrell, 2016; Kibble, 2017; Wormeli, 2018). The results of summative assessments are useful for driving future adjustments to curriculum, examining or ensuring best teaching practice, or providing data for accreditation (Broadbent, et al., 2018; Kibble, 2017). Summative assessments are grade-focused forms of assessment often in the form of multiple-choice tests, true or false tests, short answers, and essays (Wormeli, 2018). However, they do not have to be of these traditional formats to still function as a summative form of assessment. Summative assessments provide education stakeholders data for comparing learners or ensuring standards are being met (Broadbent, et al., 2018). Non-traditional forms of summative assessment can be referred to as performance-based assessments. Performance-based assessments are high-stakes displays of knowledge or skill such as plays, recitals, or other demonstrations of learning which go beyond a paper-based or other forced-choice test (Broadbent, et al., 2018; Wormeli, 2018).

However, it is important for the reader to note, a discussion on formative and summative assessment can lead some to consider them in opposition to one another. This is not necessary or

relevant when discussing summative and formative assessments. Rather, the discussion should focus on what tool is correct in the context of the learning process. Standardized testing is summative and serves to inform education stakeholders of the standings of students or an education system versus other students or education systems and can be helpful in reflecting on what changes or improvements can be made in the education process (Broadbent, et al., 2018; Shavelson, 2018). Formative assessments are contextualized assessments used to give immediate, relevant information to the educator or education stakeholder about how the student, teacher, or overall education system is ping in a given moment of time or with regard to a specific lesson or piece of content (Broadbent, et al., 2018; Shavelson, 2018).

Formative assessment may not be universally understood, although the terminology may be familiar to educators. I may be defined as partnering with students to build and support learning (Maxlow & Sanzo, 2018). Students can learn without tests, but teachers cannot help students learn without a formative approach to assessment during the learning process (Wormeli, 2018). This perspective is not unique as Spector et al. (2016) found formative assessments are valuable for educators as they reduce student anxiety and help the educators keep students focused on learning rather than assessments. Specific to Spector et al.'s (2016) research was referring to these types of measurements as stealth assessments. Included could be such approaches as gamification, teacher observation of student participation, and homework selection for assessment grading rather than explicit tests and quizzes (Maxlow & Sanzo, 2018). Traditional assessments like tests and quizzes often fall into the category of summative assessments and can be high-stakes in nature. Data gleaned along the way in formative assessment should be used to reinforce what has been previously taught while data taken from a cumulative final summative assessment should be used to understand the quality of both

instruction and learning taking place (Shavelson, 2018; Spector et al, 2016). An understanding of formative assessment is helpful as later in this review of literature on the topic of assessment, alternative forms of assessment will be discussed. Formative assessments often fall into the category of alternate assessment (Di Stasio, et. al, 2019). This conversation leads to a dichotomy in the education world between traditional high stakes and summative approaches to assessing student learning and approaches deemed less traditional, formative, and often receive the label of alternative assessment (Shavelson, 2018). In order to better understand what is meant by alternative assessment, first a discussion of the difference in the terms testing, assessment, and grading should be examined.

Testing, Assessment, and Grading

Any discussion of student measures of learning often sees the terms testing, assessment, and grading used interchangeably or without clarity (Hickey & Harris, 2021). These terms are used to describe the gathering of data about students learning and performance against expectations (Ghaicha, 2016; Hickey & Harris, 2021; Högberg et. al, 2019; Wormeli, 2018). Researchers can look to some clarifying voices in the education world.

Rick Wormeli (2018) offers some differentiation of terms on the topic of assessment, grading, and testing and clarification of these terms. Educators can define grades as judgements levied on student performance on some sort of evaluation. A grade is a cumulative report which evidences student learning for a set period of time. Think of a grading period or semester. The intent is to provide information to assess the proficiency of a teacher or pupil. Grades are not a source of feedback, they are end of the line descriptive signals for content or performative mastery (Wormeli, 2018). Assessment is the process or the steps taken to collect and then examine data from any evaluation of classroom practice or participation (Wormeli, 2018). While

a grade is the end quantification of work, the fabric of assessment consists of describing learning, collecting data about learning, making scores along with the process of teaching and learning, and ultimately interpreting the data collected (Högberg et. al, 2019; Wormeli, 2018). Assessment is the comprehensive process of producing and analyzing data from the teaching and learning process while a test is a snapshot or sampling of students' performance or behavior at a given time in that process (Högberg et. al, 2019; Wormeli, 2018). Tests produce data and can be norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, and performance-based, or what can be simply defined as traditional. Traditional tests are multiple-choice, short answer, essay, or any other basic paper-based measure of learning (Wormeli, 2018).

Proponents of standardized testing in the United States speak of its positive impact on student achievement, champion its reliability as objective means to measuring student learning, and speak to its merits as a method for moving an entire system of education in a single direction with measurable outcomes (Levin-Epstein, 2015). Some parents have historically reported increased stress in students regarding school use of high stakes testing (Turnbull, 2016). Some research has indicated a detrimental effect of high stakes testing on the breadth of content, morale of staff, and even general student well-being (Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016; Turnbull, 2016; Volger, 2005). The impact of high-stakes approaches to education can extend to the health and well-being of students, even leading to a high suicide rate among high scoring students in South Korea and Latino students in the United States for example, as well as many other students around the world (Högberg et. al, 2019; Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016; Wang, 2015).

Research has shown negative impact to student health, higher incarceration rates, suicidal tendencies, and various other grave repercussions in student populations when students do not perform well on tests (Baker & Lang, 2013; Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016; Wang, 2015). This

indicates a need for teachers to adjust their assessment practice to meet the needs of these students. This can be a struggle for educators in educational settings, pressuring students score well in order to bolster school image and secure school funding (Tajalli, 2018). Parents pressure students to score well to enhance college options and scholarship opportunities (Shen, 2015). A pattern of pressure on students can have an adverse impact on student performance in the area of testing and shows a need for education policy-makers to acknowledge no one sized approach to assessment will work to help students achieve success. A diversity-approach is needed with individualized assessments being aimed at populations of students across education systems must having their individual needs met (Högberg et. al, 2019).

Educational Assessment in the US

The earliest discussion educators have on assessment comes from Socrates and what is referred to as the Socratic Method, his assessment of what those under his tutelage could speak about regarding their learning (Scott, 2000). Socrates lived from 470 to 399 BC. He was a philosopher; yet there is no record of his writings. Instead, researchers must rely on the writings of his students. Socrates was a Greek philosopher and his method of assessing for learning was fueled by questions. This Socratic Method employs chains of questioning to help students come to an awareness of gaps in their own thinking, any lack of knowledge, or false hypotheses (Zare & Mukundan, 2015). Notably, Plato writes of his methods of questioning to ensure comprehension of what was taught (Smith & Woodruff, 2000). These were spoken evaluations, not formal. They were practically used to ensure those who sat under the teachings of Socrates understood the essence of what he was teaching.

While the measure of learning used by Socrates was verbal, as education and learning progressed through time, written examinations of knowledge emerged. The first recorded written

examination was used in 7th century China by applicants wanting a government posting. These applicants were asked to submit a written work on the topic of Confucian philosophy, a kind of entrance exam (Duncan & Stevens, 2011). These examinations occurred during the Tang dynasty where from 618 to 907 A.D, a system of local schools was established. Those who wanted to gain government postings sat for Jinshi exams (Augustyn, et al., 2018). These exams and the system of promotion based on Jinshi imperial examination was expanded during the following Song Dynasty from 960 to 1279 A.D. with public schools being established throughout the country. By this time, most government officials were recruited through the Jinshi system (Augustyn, et al., 2018).

However, this move toward written examinations in ancient China was not the end of oral examination. In fact, even though we do know that Socrates used oral testing in his measure of learning, it is worth repeating there is no historical documentation of when oral exams were first used. Researchers have indication the Socratic Method was an evolution of verbal assessment predating Socrates (Smith & Woodruff, 2000). Oral examination was common throughout history in both Europe and in the early days of the United States' formal education. Many historians credit Horace Mann who lived in the 1800s with the idea of using formal written exams to measure knowledge in the United States (Duncan & Stevens, 2011; Gershon, 2015; Huddleston & Rockwell, 2015). In the classrooms of North America during the 1800s, it was common practice for students to recite facts out loud for the teacher as a means of demonstrating learning to the teacher, and this is still prevalent in classrooms today. However, the move toward written examinations was a marked step toward conformity, measuring students against a uniform set of questions. As testing and educational assessments began to be used more frequently, the necessity to develop a way to document student learning became evident

(Brookhart, 2017; Schneider & Hutt, 2014). The gradebook emerged in the early 1820s as a method of documenting the achievements of students as well as other details like chapel and class attendance, as well as any conduct issues (Schneider & Hutt, 2014). These original gradebook entries were written descriptions, and were not mathematical calculations of student academic achievement until later in the 1800s (Brookhart, 2017). As mathematical calculations were beginning to emerge in the form of grades as educators know them today, a ranking system also emerged as a means of motivation and even communication of achievement (Schneider & Hutt, 2014). This ranking system based on grades calculated was not only used to communicate the achievement of individual students, but also for use in communicating the rank of schools, or school districts, and ultimately nations.

This was especially true of the United States' 1950s space race and cold war with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). In an effort to achieve more success in all possible areas than the USSR, US education was driven toward an emphasis on uniformity, spurred by what some had perceived as a falling-behind of US students when compared to their peers in the USSR (Zhao, 2011). This was part of a wave of change and conformity ongoing in the US during the first half of the 20th century. This period of change and conformity included the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), created in the 1920s and used as it is today to measure student readiness for college admittance (Shepard, 2016; Zwick, 2019). This trend continued through the 1930s with the use of paper-based assessments becoming more common as a means to evaluate student's retention of information and their ability to apply skills (Faniran & Ajayi, 2016). A reliance on high-stakes testing methods continued through the 1960s as the culture of education in the US began to rely on achievement test scores as a measurement of a school system's ability to educate students (Shephard, 2016). In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law a

sweeping educational bill aimed at remapping the federal government's role in guiding and shaping the future of education labeled The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). As new legislation, this law was a promise from the federal government of ensuring quality and equality in the schools across the nation (Paul, 2016; Reed, 2016). Johnson promised one billion dollars in yearly aid aimed at K-12 students in school systems with poor funding. This law focused federal financial support focused on school libraries, state departments of education, education research, and later aid aimed at bilingual education and students with disabilities (Hikida & Taylor, 2020; Reed, 2016; Tefera et. al, 2019).

The federal funding meant to lift education districts across the nation did not remain in this format, however. Eventually the funds became a means of accountability. In 2001, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which reauthored President Johnson's ESEA (Heise, 2017; United States Department of Education, 2015). NCLB was considered by many to be too heavy-handed as schools were then held accountable for low assessment scores and punitive measures were promised against schools that could not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Further, states were threatened with corrective action if they did not adopt an assessment system approved by Title I. This was a major step away from ESEA's offer of assistance to states and toward an increase in federal regulation. This shift was considered by many to be hard and even reductionist as it limited the power of state and local school districts to focus on the individual needs of each region, school and child (Mathis & Trujillo, 2016).

Not all groundswell movements in the area of uniformity in education came at the direction of the federal government, however. The often-discussed Common Core State Standards (CCSS) was a state-led effort to develop a common set of standards for math and

English language arts (Anderson-Levitt, 2020). The CCSS were proposed in 2009 at a meeting of state leaders including governors and state commissioners of education representing 48 states, two territories and the District of Columbia as members of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (Frank, et. al, 2020). These standards were intended to help schools embrace real-world learning goals in preparation for college, career, and life. An implied vein of 21st century skills were imbedded in these common standards as a way for teachers and schools to evaluate the extent to which students were prepared for college, career, and life (Anderson-Livett, 2020; Frank, et. al, 2020). While state-led, the federal government has been involved with CCSS, by leveraging federal funds from the Race to the Top program as an incentive to states to adopt these standards (Zarra, 2016). President Obama's administration offered more than one billion in funding to schools for adopting standardized testing and committing to the preparation of America's students for success in college and the workforce in the context of a globalizing economy. Further, this funding was meant to create data systems measuring student growth and success, was for recruitment of workers, and also targeted professional development for staff and faculty, all culminating in the turnaround of low-achieving schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2016; Zarra, 2016).

Due in part to a rise in the use of standards-based approaches to curriculum and assessment, standards-based assessment (SBA) has made its way on to the landscape of education (Alonzo, et. al, 2018; Kokotsaki, et. al, 2016). SBA has been examined for its merits in contrast with traditional approaches to assessing. Some research indicates it has no merit over a traditional approach with students score lower or equal to students in a traditional grading system when external high-stakes testing scores are compared (Fink, 2015; Decker, Kleppinger, &

Pewitt 2018; Weinhold, 2015). However, there is indication the assessment average for students in a standards-based classroom accurately reflects what students really know and can show as internalized knowledge (Fink, 2015). When using SBA, teachers might be more aware of standards linked to curricula, develop a better understanding of student individual needs, and therefore vary instructional approaches to meet student needs (Corzine, 2016). More than 40 states have adopted standards for school districts causing an increase in dependence on standards-based high-stakes testing and cumulative assessment (Boser, et. al, 2016; Hikida & Taylor, 2020). Yet, an achievement gap remains, with minority students still not reaching scores equal to their peers, adopting curricula that references and tests against an agreed upon set of standards is not enough (Boser et al., 2016). Policy-makers are still determining how best to mandate practice to schools.

The federal government's involvement in education continues in this vein now by building on the education policy foundation of decades of federal mandates in education. In 2015, President Barack Obama' Department of Education issued the current federal education mandate called Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Brown, et. al, 2016; Dennis, 2017; Mathis & Trujillo, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). ESSA includes several themes centered on assessment including specific language about student graduation rates and college readiness, teaching to established standards universally across school systems in the nation, ensures vital information is given to education stakeholders by way of yearly statewide assessments used to measure the progress students make toward the set standards (Hanushek, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2020). ESSA built on the legacy of President Johnson's ESEA from 1956; unlike NCLB, ESSA shifted from a prescriptive top-down approach to accountability and shifted or reverted back toward a focus on students, specifically in the area of college and career readiness.

This shift from the language and posture of NCLB droving school systems toward more summative, high-stakes testing practices put more power in the hands of the states (Mathis & Trujillo, 2016). ESSA provides states with the opportunity to develop testing practices best matching the needs and goals of each school system or state (Hanushek, 2019; Brown et. al, 2016). However, while more power does lie with states under ESSA, the current system is still a test-based accountability system aimed at intervention in the lower five percent of schools, based on test scores (Hanushek, 2019; Mathis & Trujillo, 2016).

School districts in the United States require summative state exams aligned with federal mandates like ESSA (Digest of Educational Statistics, 2017). The tests are a form of federal, state, and district accountability. These tests are also used at the school building level in some schools as a form of accountability for teachers and administrators (Adesope et. al, 2017; Hart, et al., 2015; Walsh, 2017). This routine testing takes up much time and for some education stakeholders it is a point of tension, taking away from valuable instructional time and widening the gap between school districts of means and those with less financial resources to invest in students (Walsh, 2017). Educational leaders in school districts should understand the needs of diverse students, but traditional classroom tests do have merit as some research indicates traditional tests can be valuable tools to help students learn, this requires focused and intentional use of the data derived from assessments to be used to redirect or improve teacher instructional practice (Adesope et. al, 2017).

However, in spite of the federal mandates for achievement tests as a summative assessment of how schools and students are doing, many reports are showing colleges no longer universally look for the results of high-stakes testing and have moved to a test-optional model when evaluating student applications, and while the worldwide COVID-19 virus certainly

contributed to this move, it was underway well before the pandemic (Baker & Rosinger, 2020; Burd, 2020; Jaschik, 2019). Summative assessments like the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) were once used almost universally as a means for evaluating students' college readiness. Colleges are now reconsidering the role of high stakes assessments. These evaluations are being called unfair as they disadvantage low-income students and do very little in the way of predicting a student's ability to succeed in college (Baker & Rosinger, 2020). It could be assumed the implications of this movement away from high stakes assessment practices by colleges would lead schools to universally move away from these forms of assessment. However, the requirements of ESSA have not been lifted with President Biden stating clearly the federal government will not be waiving its requirement for schools to administer achievement tests for the purpose of assessing school and student success (Ujifusa, 2021; Kamenetz, 2021).

In fact, around 70 percent of U.S. schools in a survey by Hart, et al. (2015) required end of course assessments (EOCs) in many core subjects. This is often a method for ensuring students are exposed to the same content across schools in a given school district (Digest of Educational Statistics, 2017; Hart, et al., 2015). In the same report, more than half of schools surveyed reported districtwide formative assessments were also mandated at either the state or district level with many schools having full control over these formative exams or other non-high-stakes tests at the building level (Hart, et al., 2015; Schneider, 2017). These formative assessments are used to gauge teacher alignment and student understanding of state standards in most cases. Educators in these schools are asked to both assess for learning with summative high-stakes methods as well as formative assessments. This push for assessment in both summative and formative formats has served to increase the national conversation about how students best learn and has fueled an increase in other forms of assessment, like alternative

assessment practice (Lau, et. al, 2020; Petre, 2017). The last two decades have seen educators turning toward these other means of assessment, like project-based learning and other hands-on competency or skills-based assessments (Beier, et. al, 2018; Kokotsaki, et. al, 2016; Mohamadi, 2018; Schneider, 2017; Zulkifli, 2019). In a later portion of this review of literature on the topic of assessment, we will look at these alternative forms of assessment.

Private Education in the United States

A better understanding of the current trends and challenges in the practice of assessment in the United States can be had when a full understanding of the history of private education in the United States is also achieved. The first school established in the US was the Boston Latin Schools which began operation on April 23, 1635 (Boston Latin School, n.d.). The Boston Latin School was a college preparatory school with instruction in both Greek and Latin in the humanities (National Geographic, n.d.). This school and others of its era were formal settings for parents to partner in prepare students for college entrance and was not considered the sole source of learning. School attendance was not mandatory, and was restricted to white, male pupils. A fee was paid as schooling was not yet free (Urban, et. al, 2019). Education at the time was not a universal system for all, but it did lay the groundwork for both referencing European systems and for normalizing education beyond the home in United States culture.

Free education emerged as common and mainstream under the leadership of Horace Mann in the 1830s in the state of Massachusetts (Duncan & Stevens, 2011; Gershon, 2015; Huddleston & Rockwell, 2015). Horace Mann was given leadership of the first Massachusetts Board of Education. He previously served as a state representative for Massachusetts. His work was focused on infrastructure (Cremin, 2019). In his role as secretary of education, he brought that same focus to the infrastructure of education, building a public and free system of schools in

the state modeled after the Prussian system he admired and toured for inspiration (Cremin, 2019). His model for public education was applied in every state in the United States of America by 1918 with the state of Mississippi becoming the last to pass a compulsory education law. Horace Mann for many will always be regarded as one of the greatest founders of our American system of free public schools. It can be said, no one person has had more influence on the American mindset with regard to the necessity of free public education (Cubberley 1919).

By the middle of the 20th century, the tradition of solely white male education had died off and was replaced by a version of Mann's universal free education for all. However, this model of education relied on a system of segregation. White pupils were educated in separate facilities from other races, such as African American students (Frankenburg, et. al, 2017; Kizer, 2017). A landmark court case labeled Brown v. Board of Education saw a decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954 to end this segregation and replace separate but equal with simply, equal (Frankenberg et al., 2017). This ruling was not without controversy, or resistance. There was physical harm threatened toward African Americans now legally allowed to attend the desegregated schools, governors at odds with the federal government over the ruling, and even soldiers being sent by president Eisenhower to ensure safety and compliance (Kizer, 2017). While this very short description of desegregation does little to provide a backdrop of historical information, it does serve as a key stepping off point for a discussion of the rise of private education in the United States.

Desegregation had varying degrees of initial success, from full compliance by some school systems to the complete closure of schools in other locations. One county in Virginia, Prince Edward County, chose to shutter their public schools and instead issued financial vouchers to white students used to fund attendance at Prince Edward Academy, a private school

while not providing vouchers to African American students (Ford, et. al, 2017; Magness & Surprenant, 2019). While this particular approach to funding private school attendance was ruled illegal, private schools remained and grew. Private school attendance and the start of private schools saw a boom during the period right after World War II, reaching a full 15% of all schools in the US by 1958. This percentage was not maintained, but by the 1970s, private schools still made up 10% of all schools in the US and of that 10%, nearly 90% were private Catholic elementary schools (Alvarez, 2018; Murnane, et al., 2018). This is an indication private schooling has persisted due to education stakeholders with a desire to educate students in a context supportive of their worldview (De Silva, Woods, & Kong, 2020). Other factors for why parents may be choosing private school education for their students can extend beyond the religious or worldview perspectives and can include motivations in the area of college acceptance goals and issues of health and safety (Culatta & Carter-Warner, 2021; DeAngelis & Erickson, 2018).

Educational Assessment in Hawaii

For the purpose of this study, which will focus on the assessment practices of independent school teachers in Hawaii and how they experience and perceive alternate assessment, an understanding of the history of education in Hawaii is needed. The first record of formal education of Hawaiians in the islands is from the 1820s during the reign of King Liholiho. This education system was made up of Hawaiians sent out by the king to teach reading throughout his districts. These first formal schools were modeled after the tradition of Hawaiian hulau hula, meaning hula schools, and reading and writing were taught in the same way as oral histories were passed down through the chanting of syllables known as hakalama (‘Aha Pūnana Leo, n.d.). Reading and writing was learning based on the alphabet system gifted to the Hawaiian

people by early missionaries from New England. In 1840, King Kamehameha III established a formal public-school system which continues today (Hawaii Department of Education, n.d.).

The islands were home to many Americans during the 1800s due to the waves of missionaries, traders, and agricultural developers. Early missionary families worried their culture and language, English, would die out due to the influence of the Hawaiian language. These families worked together to start a private school in 1842, Punahou. This private school continues today and is the largest private school in the United States. It is located in Honolulu. Native Hawaiian of the ruling class, the Alii, began sending their children to Punahou also, beginning a cascade of private school openings such as Iolani and later St. Andrew's Priory. These schools hired faculty who spoke British English in the early years. The missionary families and ruling class of Hawaiians considering British English to be a higher brand of English and a status symbol of their position and privilege (‘Aha Pūnana Leo, n.d.). Following the Hawaiian Kingdom overthrow in 1893, the Hawaiian language was banned from all schools, both private and public in 1896 (Hawaii Department of Education, n.d.).

In 1919, a law was passed by the Hawaii legislature making it a requirement for the Hawaiian language to be offered as a foreign language for all public school students (‘Aha Pūnana Leo, n.d.). The damage was already inflicted, however, and by the 1970s, only around 2,000 native speakers of Hawaiian language remained. Many members of the education community partnered together to create Hawaiian language immersion schools in the 1980s, the first of which started in 1987 (‘Aha Pūnana Leo, n.d; National Public Radio, 2019). Today, the Hawaiian language has been kept alive through these immersion programs and the mandatory language courses taught in the public-school system.

Hawaii is first in the nation for percentage of students per capita attending private schools (State of Hawaii DOE, 2013). In spite of Hawaii's status as one of the highest cost-of-living states in America, it is listed as the worst state for generating household income equal to cost of living (Cohn, 2016; Gould, 2015). Yet, this financial strain does not limit Hawaii residents and families from across the United States from funding private school education. One of the main driving forces behind why so many families in Hawaii look toward private education seems to stem from concerns about the quality of education students will receive in the public-school system and a desire for competitive college acceptance in Hawaii's own colleges and colleges in the U.S. mainland (Murnane, et. al, 2018; Torres, 2019). Due to the lack of data on independent school college acceptance rates, a random sampling of 10 percent of the 100 school profiles provided by the Hawaii Association of Independent schools (HAIS, 2015) was taken. The results showed an acceptance rate to colleges for these schools to be at or very near 100 percent. This exceeds the public-school average of 60 percent in Hawaii (Ginder, et al., 2017).

In their most recent assessment, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation (2014) assigned the Hawaii Department of Education (DOE) a D grade for academic achievement. Graduation rates sit at around 80% for the Hawaii DOE, and only about 63% of graduates from the public-school system continue on to university after graduation. As it stands, the 100 plus independent HAIS member schools in Hawaii participate in the important role of educating college-bound students in the state (HAIS, 2015). Of these roughly 100 independent licensed schools, about half are accredited HAIS schools enrolling just over 19,000 students (National Association of Independent Schools, 2020). Punahou is the largest of the independent schools with an enrollment of over 3,700 students. This is one of the largest independent K-12 schools in the United States.

HAIS was founded with the goal of providing support for the Hawaii Public School system and is not in direct competition with public education. The core value of independence and mutual interest has driven independent schools to fill important roles in Hawaii like providing publicly funded schooling for students of Hawaiian descent and providing Christ-centered education for students of faith (Bossert, et. al, 2020). Further, many independent school parents express their desire for schools to offer a safe environment, wholesome community, and diverse curricula. This creates a tension between private and public education necessitating careful navigation by school leaders in both sectors. These parental goals are challenging for public education to offer in light of mandates for educating each student in a given population. Parents of means in Hawaii invest in private education for similar reasons to parents in mainland U.S. Schools (Bossert, et al., 2020; De Silva et al., 2020).

The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), which is the mother organization or national counterpart to HAIS, conducted a parent survey seeking to ascertain why parents send their children to independent schools (National Association of Independent Schools, 2017; Torres, 2019). Four themes emerged from Torres' (2019) research. Parents seek independent school education when they perceive their student's failing grade is a result of a school not meeting their children's educational needs. Parents seek independent school education when they believe their child is intelligent and emotionally mature and not being challenged in their current school environment (Joshi. 2017; Torres, 2019). Additionally, this research indicated schools are focused heavily on test scores, and academic curriculum, parents seek independent schools help to develop the whole child in the areas of sports, social development, and emotional maturing. Lastly, some families seek independent school education when a student has specific college enrollment goals they feel cannot be met in their current school

environment (Torres, 2019). These are all concerns and issues mirrored throughout US education (DeAngelis & Erickson, 2018; Torres, 2019).

Issues and Challenges in Assessment

Educators are still being asked to participate in the high-stakes testing practices of many school districts, even though as demonstrated in this body of literature, colleges are no longer looking for this kind of information on student applications (Baker & Rosinger, 2020; Burd, 2020; Farvis & Hay, 2020; Hikida & Taylor, 2020; Jaschik, 2019). At the same time, teachers are seeking to satisfy the drive for innovation in the assessment space (Alonzo, et. al, 2018; Schut, et. al, 2019; Schut, et. al, 2020; Smaill, 2020; Xie, 2021). This challenge to educators, to find how best to assess in the classroom is not a simple task, it is met with many roadblocks such as diversity of learners, federal guidelines in place from ESSA, student health, and equality of access (Graham, 2018; Hanushek, 2019; Högberg, et. al, 2019). Teachers are met with the realities of classrooms that are made up of students with diverse experiences needing help with their individual needs or handicaps and possessing talent that may not fit within the scope of what narrow markers a given testing tool measures (Sireci, 2020).

The United States is ethnically and culturally diverse, and its diversity is in constant change due to the dynamic nature of its economy, its leadership in innovation and development, and its relatively high number of immigrants (Bergsten, 2018; Devadoss, et. al, 2020; Wikström & Eklöf, 2019). This impacts schools as they shift their focus and accommodations to meet the needs of an ever-changing student demographic (Graham, 2018; Knifsend & Juvonen, 2017; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). An example of this shift in demographic can be seen in the ongoing reduction in Caucasian members of the United States population. Currently, the U.S. is home to around 200 million Caucasian citizens, this number is set to shrink to around 180 million in the

next 40 years during a time of overall population growth further signaling increased diversity in U.S. classrooms (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Citizens of two or more races are positioned to be the fastest racial group growing in numbers of citizens followed by single race Asians and Hispanics. The U.S. classroom will begin to look much different over the next 40 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

This diversity in the school setting offers educators the potential to meet the needs of a wider range of individuals as new behaviors, a wider array of values, and new perspectives are introduced and gain prominence in student bodies across the nation. (Graham, 2018; Knifsend & Juvonen, 2017). Identity and race have become an important area of consideration for educators seeking to find the best methods to assess for learning. A new and changing student body necessitates new and changing methods of gauging, tracking, and communicating learning (Graham, 2018; Knifsend & Juvonen, 2017). Alternative forms of assessment are needed in order to allow educators to tailor assessments to the individual needs of the unique and diverse classrooms they are teaching in (Jones, et. al, 2018).

Alternative forms of Assessment

Noting the attention policy makers give to assessment outcomes, Carter (2019) highlighted the importance of faculty input to create the best assessment instruments. Acknowledging that no one-size-fits-all assessment practice exists, the field of assessment must allow for the tailoring of measurement according to program, student, and institutional needs. The practice of incorporating adjustments to assessment and instruction based on observations of students and their needs in the moment is formative assessment (Carter, 2019; Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Shavelson, 2018; Spector et al., 2016). Information gathered from formative assessment is best used in the moment to redirect instruction during the course of

teaching. The teacher is gauging student comprehension early, as foundational aspects of content delivery are covered. This research seeks to find out what impact alternative forms of assessment have on educators in part, and there is indication in the literature on formative assessment, that having faculty input with regard to formative assessment and the use of the information it produces is an effective process for increasing the quality of instruction and ultimately the education outcomes of students (Carter, 2019; Shavelson, 2018). This is important, since there is an indication in that teacher voices are not often included when changes are made to system-wide education reform or change (Aydarova, et al., 2021; Bergdahl & Langmann, 2017; Di Tommaso, et. al, 2018; Ham & Dekkers, 2019).

Some educators are following a trend in education that steps away from common assessment strategies and moving toward alternative assessment strategies relying on student generated answers and innovations to see which ones are most viable or well-liked by students (Andersen, et. al, 2018; Childers, et. al, 2020; Di Stasio, et. al, 2019; Moore, et. al, 2020; Petre, 2017). These types of assessments do not elicit a precise answer, but rather see students generating work or products to be examined like public products or presentations of learning (Petre, 2017). A great example of alternative assessment fitting this description is Project-based learning (PBL). PBL is more than what may be implied by its name. It is more than just doing projects. PBL is an educational approach to learning which is student-centered, leverages or even requires student autonomy, relies on the teacher as a guide and participant in the learning process and results in a public product at the set end of the project (Beier, et.al, 2018; Kokotsaki, et. al, 2016; Mohamadi, 2018; Zulkifli, 2019). This trend is in line with the current movement in education to produce thinkers and members of society who can teach other thinkers, rather than just producing learners who are skilled content masters and memorization champions. In a world

marked by rapid change, conflict, new information, and the need to change is almost constant. Students with the skill and background in thinking beyond the classroom and curriculum are poised to be champions of conflict resolution, and valuable contributing members of society (Beier, et. al, 2018; Stanley, 2015). Equipping student with the ability to function in a society that is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) should be a goal for all educators (Abidi & Joshi, 2018). This societal reality is a challenge for educators working to evaluate and communicate what students know, understand, and can do (KUD) (Ann, 1999). Established learning goals tailored to each students' growth potential is an excellent place to begin when considering how to implement alternative assessments. These unique expectations for students can inform the key factors for what a teacher should look for when creating an assessment objective. This allows the educator to evaluate the ability or performance of a given students in the context of an exit level expectation, or desired learning outcome (Guangul, et. al, 2020).

Alternative assessments help educators ensure more than just academic knowledge is being developed (Di Stasio, et. al, 2019; Petre, 2017; Lau, et. al, 2020; Zulkifli, 2019). As mentioned previously, the VUCA world educators are preparing students for requires skills applicable to their future work and study lives. These skills have been labeled as 21st century skills (Anderson-Livett, 2020; Kim, et. al, 2019; Walan, 2019). 21st century skills are at the forefront of the educational discussion with stakeholders looking to advertise to future employers and potential colleges that students are equipped to achieve success in an uncertain future (Anderson-Levitt, 2020). These 21st century skills lists vary, but generally include such items as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, meta-cognition, communication, digital and technological literacy, civic responsibility, and global awareness (Kim, et. al 2019). The commonality of 21st century across schools and in the minds of education stakeholders is due in

part to the fact these skills are an implicit part of common core standards developed in 2009 (Anderson-Levitt, 2020; Frank, et. al, 2020). Educators are not only concerned with the academic learning taking place in their classrooms, they are also working to assess what skills they are addressing and seeking to evaluate students' ability to apply those skills within the context of lessons (Kim, et. al, 2019).

Educators need methods of teaching which leverages assessment data from their own classrooms in order to achieve this goal of aligning skills integration with academic content. Educators need approaches to teaching involving differentiation of instruction while embracing formative assessment (Corzine, 2016; Weinhold, 2015). Research indicated even though a wide array of models for measuring growth exist, no systematic approach to studying and comparing these models for their fitness exists; there is a need to understand the impact other forms of assessment have (Kaniskan, 2011; Tulgar, 2017). This is not to say education approaches should move from traditional forms of assessment completely (Hughes, 2014). Hughes (2011) encourages educators to focus on student empowerment, trackable progress, and growth-based assessments to inform best practice as a possible solution for the issues outlined in this study. Use of ipsative assessments may give useful introspection to students, measure of success in practice to educators, and encouragement to the family. Portfolios are an example of how educators can create a compendium of student work, showing the progress of learning through artifacts compiled by the teacher and student (Belgrad, et. al, 2008; Gozuyesil & Tanriseven, 2017; Tulgar, 2017).

Mabry (1999) was the first to mention the term ipsative assessment in any standing literature on the topic and began chapter four of his book defining normative, criterion-referenced, and ipsative assessments with the intent to give normalcy to the ipsative approach to

assessment. Ipsative assessments push students and teachers to focus on their own unique classroom environments and develop reflective teaching and learning (Hughes, 2014; Mabry, 1999; McDermott & Fantuzzo, 1992; Martínez-Arboleda, 2021). In simple terms, ipsative assessments and post-method practice seek to move the student from where they are to where they individually and uniquely need to be (Martínez-Arboleda, 2021; Hughes, 2017). Grading should be personalized, relative to each student's base of knowledge and individual ability rather than an external arbitrary standard (Hughes, et. al, 2014).

Ipsative feedback is an assessment approach meant to enable learners to invest in self-referenced goals toward attainment from an intrinsically motivated source of growth focused on what an individual can uniquely do (Hughes, 2017; Martínez-Arboleda, 2021). In a classroom using ipsative assessment, other areas of instruction and assessment are impacted; teachers are more likely to use higher quality forms of other assessment strategies like formative assessment or summative assessments. Teachers can harness the power of curriculum design to create waypoints or transitions in students' workloads as steps toward success (Collier, 2018). Students have fear when they approach learning. They are not always certain what is required of them regardless of how many directions are given; it is the fear of the unknown (Collier, 2018). This seems to indicate a need for including students in the definition or goal of success for a given course of study.

Conclusion

Assessment has been part of the conversation in education since the earliest recorded formal instances of teaching and learning (Scott, 2000; Zare & Mukundan, 2015; Augustin, et. al, 2018). Formally training learners and then applying some form of assessment allows the community of stakeholders in the education process to know what impact the instruction or

learning process has (Gaicha, 2016; Wormeli, 2018). The assessment process has not remained this simple and the conversation in education currently tends to revolve in part around high-stakes, summative forms of assessment linked to the financial futures of schools and ultimately the entrance of students into higher education (Broadbent, et. al, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2020). At the same time, educators are being asked to innovate or at least apply innovative assessment strategies in the classroom (Avenell, 2016; Gozuyesil & Tanriseven, 2017; Kokotsaki, et. al, 2016). Factors contributing to the conversation on assessment includes a drive toward asking teachers to meet the individual needs of students while also embracing cutting-edge assessment techniques. Techniques such as standards-based grading, project-based learning, and growth-based grading are aimed at pushing teachers to innovate in the assessment space.

There can be potential for confusion on the definitions of terms used almost interchangeably when assessment is discussed. Testing, grading, and assessment are not always clearly defined (Wormeli, 2018). Further, umbrella terms apply when discussion assessment. Formative, summative, and alternative forms of assessment are all a part of the conversation (Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Lau, et. al, 2020; Lok, et. al, 2016; Petre, 2017). While some studies have examined the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers with regards to assessment, very little research exists in this space. Hawaii schools educate more than 15% of the state's student population, above the national rate. (Baker, et. al, 2017). The classrooms of Hawaii's independent schools are marked by diversity (National Association of Independent Schools, 2017). These schools are college preparatory and they are large, much larger than most of their mainland counterparts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Just like their peers around the world, these educators are asked to meet the requirements of standardized testing

while also innovating and applying alternative assessment strategies in an effort to innovate in the assessment space. No research exists on the lived experiences and unique perspectives of these independent school educators with regard to alternative assessment practice.

CHAPTER III

Design and Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the assessment practices of independent school teachers in the state of Hawaii in order to identify their perspectives and gain insight into their lived experiences. This effort seeks to add to the lack of teacher voices in educational change and reform (Bergdahl & Langmann, 2017; Di Tommaso, et. al, 2018; Ham & Dekkers, 2019). Examining the impact of assessment on student success in the independent school setting may provide useful information to educators and education policy makers who shape the use of assessment in educational settings as the world of education has always faced a challenge in attempting to know if students are learning or not.

Traditional assessment practices focus on written work testing students on the body of knowledge they have amassed during a period instruction. The work produced by the student is then used to generate a grade to commutating learning in the educational context (Ghaicha, 2016; Wormeli, 2018). This practice is labeled high-stakes by some educators and denotes a win or lose approach to the learning process. This results in high levels of pressure on students pushed to perform well on tests (Adesope, et. al, 2017; Walsh, 2017; Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016; Tefera, et. al, 2019)

In contrast to the high-stakes nature of some assessment practices, many educators have turned to alternative assessments, labeled alternative due to their contrasting focus versus traditional high-stakes testing (Astika, 2014; Barrot, 2016; Petre, 2017). These alternative assessments include producing collections of student work as artifacts of learning in the form of portfolios, students working on projects to tackle real-world problems or complex questions, and

any other form of testing not seeking to push students toward a precise answer (Carter, 2019; Kibble, 2017; Wormeli, 2018).

School populations are increasingly diverse and have diverse needs (Williams 2014). Yet, assessment practices being maintained are uniform due in part to federal mandates, in spite of many colleges now moving toward a test-optional application process (Baker & Rosinger, 2020). However, the education world is acknowledging the need for diverse approaches to learning assessment and the buzz words of alternative assessment practice often surfaces in educational research (Petre, 2017; Rivera & Loebick, 2017; Tulgar, 2017). With this in mind, this research undertaking seeks more voices, specifically the voices of educators in private schools in Hawaii, in the discussion of assessment and best practice in a diverse and changing educational landscape. With this educational reality in mind, this research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions and lived experiences of Hawaii independent school teachers with regard to alternate assessment?
2. How does Hawaii independent school teacher alternative assessment impact future education practice?

Research Design

For this study, a descriptive phenomenological study was chosen, following the Modified Van Kaam methodology popularized by Moustakas (1994). This method consists of seven steps and provides the reader with a rich understanding of each participant's lived experiences with the phenomenon under study without altering their perspectives or unique personal stories. Phenomenology is best for this type of research because it allows the researcher to describe the lived experiences of participants in a research undertaking (Christensen, et. al, 2017; Giorgi,

1985; Husserl, 1970). This study identified key aspects of the assessment practices of independent school teachers in Hawaii in order to glean impactful themes, methodologies, and foundational pedagogies for use in schools from other contexts. Phenomenology is ideal for this type of inquiry as it allows the researcher to address big questions without knowing all the variables within a given topic (Creswell, 2013). In phenomenology, the researcher seeks to identify and describe what is true for the research participants involved in a given study and organizes those truths into themes deemed essential (Vagle, 2014).

The Modified Van Kaam method is structured around conducting interviews, and then examining participants' descriptions in the context of an established phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). The descriptions are examined for significant statements. Then meaning is formulated from significant statements. These meanings are grouped and organized into themes. The identified themes are used to create an exhaustive description. Creswell (2013) notes phenomenological research seeks to gain an understanding of the personal experiences of an individual or group.

Phenomenology is reflective in nature; the researcher and participant reflect on and engage with the phenomena being examined. Bracketing takes place in order for the researcher to isolate meaning, identify themes, and suspend the researcher’s own bias or preconceptions about the phenomena under investigation (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2014). Traditional phenomenologists seek to suspend their own bias and perspectives and become a living part of the instrument, seeking to identify and describe phenomena experienced by their research participants (Chan, et. al, 2013; Eddles-Hirsch, 2015; Fischer, 2009; Laverty, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenologist seeks to determine a collective experience held by the participants in a study by examining the spoken words of the research participants (Eddles-Hircsh, 2015;

Marshall & Rossman, 2016). At its center, the field of phenomenology seeks to know how participants see a phenomenon, how they describe the phenomenon, and then the phenomenologist interprets the participants' involvement with the phenomenon (Van Manen, 2016). Hermeneutical phenomenology rejects the notion that the researcher can be separated from the process of making meaning from the words of participants (Laverty, 2003). Martin Heidegger explored the methods and philosophy of Edmund Husserl, referred to as the father of phenomenology and while he agreed with the definition of phenomenology given by van Manen (2016), that it is the study of lived experience, he disagreed that the researcher could be divorced from the process of definition or interpretation (Laverty, 2003). This new approach to phenomenology was labeled hermeneutical phenomenology and uses a researcher's subjective interpretation of research findings to make meaning of text, art, or observed culture (Laverty, 2003; Sloan & Bowe, 2013). For the purposes of this research, the process of collecting data will adhere to a traditional Husserlian approach to phenomenology that sees the researcher exercising bracketing through mindfulness and reflection. However, as the researcher conducts analysis of the participant's words and makes research findings, hermeneutical phenomenology in the style of Heidegger's philosophy will be applied. The researcher will reflect on the ways their experience informs their interpretation of the phenomenon (Sloan & Bowe, 2013).

This research examines the experiences educators in Hawaii have working in the independent school context with assessment along the continuum of high-stakes testing and alternative forms of assessment. The phenomenological approach to qualitative research allows the researcher to gather authentic perspectives from participants in the form of transcriptions of their own words analyzed for themes, those themes are compared to other peer opinions, and ultimately meaningful statements about shared experiences emerge (Giorgi, 1985; Quotoshi,

2018). Speaking to practicing educators in the independent school setting is of particular importance to the researcher who currently works in this setting. While bracketing will be of great importance to maintain a non-biased state of mind while conducting this research, the researcher hopes the experiences of other independent school teachers will shed light on his own educational journey as a teacher in Hawaii's private school field.

This need for bracketing, or setting one's own perspectives and opinions aside, is one of the main challenges to phenomenological research (Fisher, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). The researcher must maintain an awareness of their own bias (Chan, et. al, 2013; Creswell, 2013; Husserl, 1970; Vagle, 2014). Pivotal to this process, the researcher maintained mindfulness and reflected on their own experiences and perspectives while conducting the interviews and designing the research during the course of this study. While his writing on the subject of self-consciousness in phenomenology is philosophical in nature, Gallagher (2019) highlights this need for self-awareness in the researcher by noting only through pre-reflective self-consciousness can the researcher implicitly note their own ideas and concepts about a given subject. This reflective process allows the research to ensure reflection on their own ideas has taken place.

Participants

In descriptive phenomenology, participants are selected because of their connection to a phenomenon, are willing and able to share their experiences, and have experiences which add to the study of the phenomenon for the sake of sharing these experiences with readers (Christensen, Anthony, & Jennie 2017). The data generated from participants comes in the form of their own words recording in interviews with the researcher. In this study, participants were educators working full time in college preparatory schools in the state of Hawaii. These practitioners are all

employed by schools that are members of the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS, 2019). The HAIS annual report for school year 2018-2019 stated there were 93 private schools in operation on the island of Oahu serving over 35,000 students (HAIS, 2019). The seven independent school educators selected for this study hold a range of positions in HAIS member schools as referenced in table 1. Each participant identifies as a full-time teacher, and has been engaged in full-time employment with an independent school in Hawaii for at least three years.

Table 1

Composition of Teacher Participants

Participants	**Gender**	**Education**	**Experience**	**Subject Area**
Abby	Female	BA	7	Pre-School
Ben	Male	MA	21	History Electives
Chris	Male	DMin	10	Math/Bible
Dave	Male	BA	4	Social Studies
Erica	Female	MA	21	French
Frank	Male	BA	9	Technology
Grant	Male	MA	19	Science/STEM

Using the database of member schools from HAIS, 25 schools were contacted (HAIS, 2019). Of these schools, only three offered to participate in this study. Of the three schools that gave consent, only one head of schools returned the required consent form. The schools selected were from different geographical areas of the Hawaiian Islands. See Table 2 for reference. The schools that consented to being included in the study were not ultimately the source of interview participants, but they do fulfill a role in contextualizing the contents of this research as all three

participating schools are good examples of their sister independent schools. These three schools stand as model Hawaii Independent schools for the purpose of context and are from Oahu, Kauai, and Hawaii Island. The Hawaii Association of Independent Schools maintains a database of schools as mentioned in this study. A brief survey of that list indicates that much diversity exists within the community of independent schools in Hawaii (HAIS, 2019). Schools range in enrollment from 20 students all the way up to 3700 students. According the HAIS website, for school year 2022, there are 26 high schools, 41 elementary schools, and 30 preschools with HAIS memberships. Of these member schools, over 50 percent are religiously affiliated (HAIS, 2019; Private School Review, 2022)

Table 2

Participant School Details

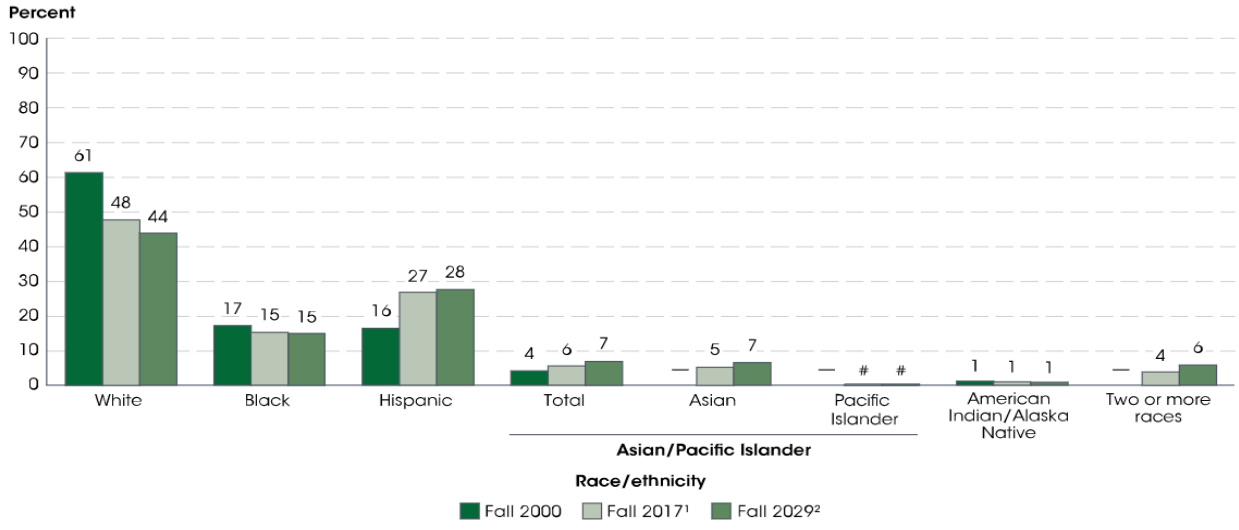
School	**Description**	**Demographics**	**Enrollment**
Kauai School	Pre-K to 12 Grade College Preparatory School	Multiracial 52.4% Pacific Is. 22.4% White 16.5% Asian 7.3%	424
Oahu School	Classical School Rooted in the Liberal Arts Tradition	White 43.4% Asian 33.9% Pacific Is.15.5% Hispanic 5.6%	360
Hawaii Island School	Coeducational College Preparatory School Serving Grades 5-12	White 50.3 % Multiracial 26.7% Pacific Is. 18.2% Asian 2.2%	457

Note. Demographics from “School Profiles” by niche.com, 2021.

The demographic breakdown of Hawaii's independent schools included for context somewhat resembles both the demographic makeup of students enrolled across the states' public schools (see Figure 2) and the total student diversity of students across the United States (see Figure 1). The schools from Hawaii Island and Oahu as shown in Table 2 both have higher white enrollments, mirroring mainland United States enrollments. The school from Kauai shows a diversity enrollment more in line with Hawaii's published numbers shown in Figure 2. Not all participants in this research teach at the school that gave consent to be included in this study as example schools. From the words of the participants, the reader can infer that their schools fit into categories that align with the example schools profiled here. Hawaii's demographics indicate a diverse body of students in both the public and private sector. This is not reflected in the demographics of most other states with the national breakdown being comprised heavily of white students with generally less ethnic diversity as seen in figure 1.

Figure 1

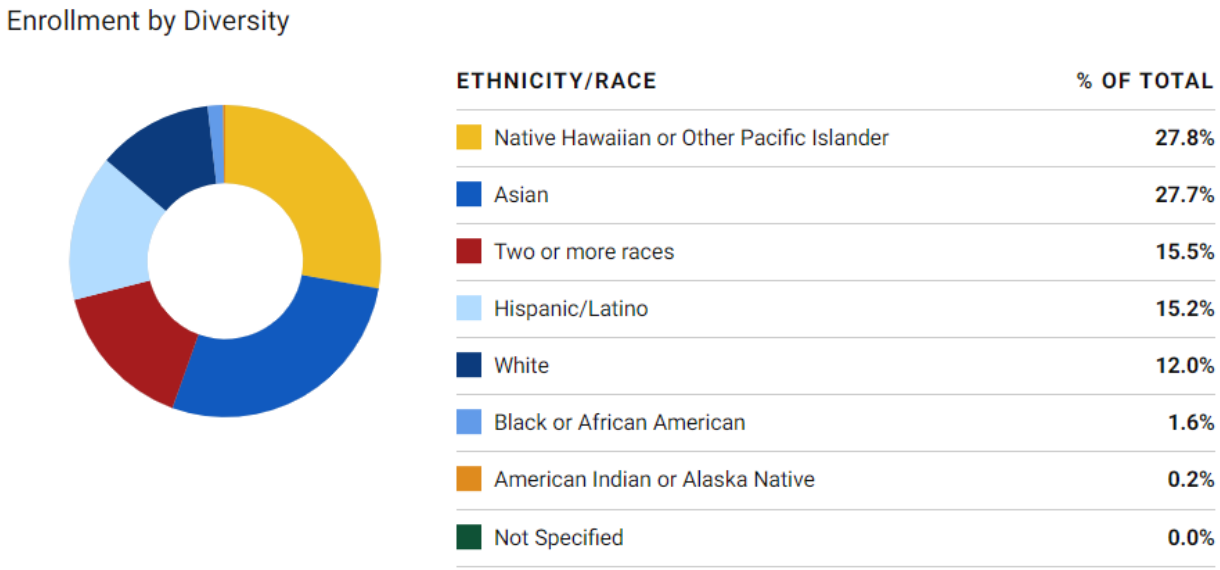
United States Student Diversity



Note. From "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary and Secondary Education" by National Center for Educational Statistics, 2020.

Figure 2

Hawaii Department of Education Demographics



Note. Graphic taken from "Overview of Hawaii Department of Education" by US News and World Report, 2021.

Data Collection

The researcher began the process of securing participants with an email sent to the head of schools for each of the target schools (See Appendix A). These emails explained to the head of schools what the study was about, who the intended participants might be by defining what the researcher means when referring to an independent school teacher. The researcher included a template for site permission that the head of schools could use with their own letter head, granting the researcher permission to contact teachers at the target school (Appendix B). For this study, the researcher refers to independent school teachers as educators who work in the independent school setting for at least three years. The researcher informed the head of schools of a survey (See Appendix C) to be issued to teachers at the school in order to identify teachers

using alternative assessments who also self-identify as career independent school teachers and were willing to participate in the interviews.

The researcher was not able to select for potential interviewees from among the targeting schools, as no surveys were completed. Had any teachers responded, a letter would have been sent (See Appendix D) by email containing the survey and providing the teachers with a general overview of the dissertation topic and focus for the potential interview. After an initial explanation of some key terms like alternative assessment, and the purpose of the study, the survey consisted of questions regarding teacher self-identification as an independent school teacher in Hawaii. The survey question included questions regarding years of experience in the Hawaii independent school context and subject area specialty. The final suite of questions focused on assessment practice with specific focus on alternative forms of assessment. Educators were selected based on the aforementioned criteria of self-identification as a full-time teacher within the context of independent schools in Hawaii for at least 3 years.

The researcher received an insufficient number of participants from contacting participating schools. As an alternative means of acquiring research participants, the researcher engaged in a social media drive to collect research participants from online teaching communities, respondents to online social media posts, and through recommendations made by educators that saw the social media posts (See Appendix J). As indicated in the attached appendix, Northwest Nazarene's internal review board approved a gift card or purchase of dinner as an incentive for participation in the study. This social media campaign was successful and lead the researcher to acquiring enough participants to move forward with the study. The survey and letters were sent directly to teachers that chose to participate via the social media drive, shifting away from the need for schools and school leadership to provide teacher participants.

The researcher was able to secure seven participants and generated quality in-depth interview recordings for the purpose of analysis in this study.

Once the researcher completed the selection process for participants, an email (See Appendix F) was sent out to both inform the potential participants of their selection for interview and to provide each one with an informed consent document (See Appendix F). The participants signed the informed consent and the researcher followed up to establish a time to interview each participant one on one.

When doing a phenomenological study, the researcher conducts in-depth interviews with a small, manageable number of participants and the researcher carefully selects for participants who have experienced the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2013). In order to best give voice to the perspectives of the interviewees, a semi-structured interview protocol was designed using Castillo-Montoya's (2016) refinement framework (See Appendix G). This protocol was developed following four steps. First, the interview questions were examined by the researcher to ensure alignment with the research questions. Then, the questions were evaluated by the researcher to ensure they resulted in an inquiry-based conversation (Patton, 2015). The protocol was checked through piloting with the researcher's coworkers and by the dissertation committee in order to ensure the strength of the line of questioning. Last, the protocol was piloted outside of the research study in order to both give practice to the researcher, and to insure the protocol produced the kind of data needed for the study. Piloting an interview protocol is important because the more you ask or practice the interview questions, the more you can ensure what you will learn from the interview, or what data will be gathered (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Majid, et. al, 2017). There is a high degree of nuance in being either too general or too detailed in the wording of an interview question and a pilot test of questions can help the researcher decide how

to frame the questions (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) emphasized the importance of the participant's experiences and voice being the sole focus of phenomenological studies.

Each interview was recorded using the imbedded record feature in Zoom. The researcher also used a separate recording device during the interview as redundancy in order to avoid losing the recorded data. The interviews were conducted over Zoom video conference due to ongoing concerns about social distancing during the global COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher conducted one interview per participant lasting 30 minutes to 1 hour and informed each participant of this intended recording length ahead of time. The ideal length of time for a semi-structured, in-depth interview is anywhere from 30 minutes up to several hours (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The researcher aimed for a 30-minute interview in anticipation of teacher zoom-fatigue from a period of online teaching across the world of education due to the worldwide coronavirus pandemic ongoing during the course of this research. The researcher also desired a high degree of participation within the target population and considered a 30-minute request to both be within the realm of agreeableness for potential participants while aligning with what is common in the field of qualitative interviews for research purposes. Upon completion of the recordings, they were transcribed into written form for later data analysis following the aforementioned seven-step Van Kaam method. A transcriptionist was hired for the labor and skill-intensive process of accurately converting audio files into written transcripts for the purpose of data analysis. See appendix K for the signed transcriptionist confidentiality agreement.

Analytical Methods

For this study, the researcher used the Modified Van Kaam method of data collection and analysis (Moustakas, 1994):

1. Horizontalization. The researcher analyzed the transcribed recordings taken from the interviews with the research participants. In a process referred to as horizontalization, every expression relevant to the phenomenon, alternative assessment, was noted for further analysis in a later step.
2. Reduce and Eliminate. Each expression is put to a two-question test to determine if it (a) contains a moment of experience necessary and sufficient for understanding it and (b) is possible to define and label. If both questions are satisfied, then the expression is considered a horizon of the experience and can be kept as a constituent of the experience. Any overlapping or vague expressions are removed in this second step.
3. Cluster and thematize the invariant constituents. The expressions are organized according to a thematic label. These organized expressions and the emergent themes become fundamental to describing the phenomenon.
4. Checking themes against the data. The invariant constituent themes are checked against the complete record of the research participant. The researcher ensures the expressed themes are plainly evident in the transcript. If not plainly expressed, are the themes at least compatible? Should they be neither compatible or plainly expressed, then they are deleted.
5. Individual Textural Descriptions. Using the validated invariant constituents and themes, the researcher creates a textural description for each participant including verbatim examples from the transcriptions.
6. Individual Structural Descriptions. The researcher writes an individual description of the experience, grounded in the textural description.

7. Structural-Textural Descriptions. A textural-structural description of the experience of each participant is created in order to produce a composite description of the meaning and essence of the experience representing the entire group.

The researcher referenced the data on assessment from the literature review on the subject when examining the interview transcripts for emergent themes. Triangulation is achieved when more than one research strategy is used to produce findings (Creswell, 2013; Noble & Heale, 2019; Moon, 2019). Triangulation is necessary especially in qualitative research due to the inherent subjectivity of this field of inquiry. In cross-referencing findings and gathering data from multiple points of view and diverse sources of data, the researcher can gather meaningful and bias-free data. Creswell (2013) directs researchers to develop significant statements from the transcribed data collected from interviews as a first step in building a foundational understanding of an emerging phenomenon. This was fulfilled by step three of the adopted Moustakas (1994) modified Van Kaam method when the researcher clustered and the thematized the invariant constituents identified in the transcription texts. The expressions were organized according to a thematic label for later analysis. These organized expressions and the emergent themes became fundamental to describing the phenomenon.

Next, the significance statements were studied to help the research write a description of what the research participants experienced in relation to the phenomenon under study. Creswell (2013) calls this step a textural description and it includes the exact words of the participants. Creswell (2013) says the researcher should seek the essence of the experience by describing how participants experience the phenomenon a structural description. In synthesis of the how and what of both the structural and textural descriptions, Creswell directs researchers to write an all-encompassing statement describing what the participants have experienced (Creswell, 2013).

Moustakas (1994) leads the researcher to develop this structural-textural description in the seventh and final step of analysis. The multi-step (Table 3) approach to analysis fit this study well as it allowed the researcher to both analyze and describe the lived experiences of the participants (Anderson & Eppard, 1998). Of the seven steps, four are used for analysis, and three allow the researcher a method of describing the emergent themes related to the phenomenon under study (Moustakas, 1994).

Table 3

The Steps of Phenomenological Study as According to Moustakas (1994)

Steps	Description
1. Horizontalization	Listing quotes relevant to the phenomenon
2. Reduction and Elimination	Two question test, find invariant constituents
3. Thematize the Invariant Constituents	Themes from latent meanings and excerpts
4. Checking Themes Against the Data	Themes checked as representing experiences
5. Individual Textural Descriptions	Verbatim descriptions for each participant
6. Individual Structural Descriptions	Interpret socioemotional/cultural connections
7. Structural-Textural Description	Synthesis for comprehensive lived experience

Note. From "Phenomenological Research Methods" by C. Moustakas, 1994, P. 118.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher conducting this phenomenological study has been educating for 14 years, in three countries, and across all levels of education from kindergarten to university and has provided professional training for adults. This range of experience opened the researcher's mind to diverse approaches to teaching and learning. From the formal written exams for college entrance in South Korea, to the place-based learning being pioneered in Hawaii's local schools,

the researcher has been challenged by how best to measure, track, and gauge learning through traditional and new forms of assessment. These professional experiences lead the author to seek a deeper understanding of how teachers assess for learning, the impact these assessment practices have, and how sharing these assessment approaches can impact the field of education.

In descriptive phenomenology, researchers are encouraged to observe while bracketing themselves away from the lived experiences of the participants in the research (Creswell, 2013; Fisher, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). Smith and Noble (2014) outline several ways in which researchers can ensure bias does not influence research findings. First, the researcher acknowledges their own bias as covered by Creswell (2013) through the act of bracketing. There is bias present in the process of sampling as well as the methods chosen. Just because a method is established in the field, it does not mean the researcher does not chose that method due to some inherent bias (Smith & Noble, 2014). In order to best understand and analyze the data collected through interviews, the researcher engaged in private reflective journaling through the literature review, methodology design, and interview processes. The researcher reflected on their own experiences with the phenomenon under study and actively worked to avoid influencing research participants by maintaining a verbal posture of questioning and listening rather than engaging the interview participants in active one for one conversation. In this way, the analysis of data, the observation of themes from the data, will not be in contrast or comparison to the researcher's own bias and perspectives, ensuring bracketing (Chan, et. al, 2013; Creswell, 2013; Vagle, 2014).

Through careful record keeping in the form of a personal journal, the researcher maintained a record of their decisions and why and how they chose each step they took. In this record, the researcher ensures the perspectives of the research participants shine through, the

accounts of the participants are clear, and when interpreted, maintain the participant's voice and meaning. This process of setting aside the researcher's own perspectives is an attempt to achieve epoché, or the suspension of one's own bias (Moustakas, 1994).

Limitations

Presenting research findings is hard work, especially in the area of validity and reliability. Phenomenology is an area of qualitative research (Skinner, et al., 2020). Research is not without its limitations in this field of study. In order to produce useful findings, qualitative phenomenological research requires the researcher to produce a large amount of data (Creswell, 2013; Skinner, et al., 2020). For this data to then be useful for study, the researcher ensures its validity and reliability. The researcher does this by examining the how accurately a concept is being measured in the context of a study and ensures its reliability by choosing an instrument with proven accuracy (Heale & Alison, 2015). Meaning, the extent to which a research instrument consistently has the same results if it is used in the same situation on repeated occasions (Heale & Alison, 2015; Skinner, et al., 2020).

The reliability of a study like this one can be determined when readers encounter the experiences of the participants and recognize it (Skinner, et al., 2020). Meaning, part of the researcher's burden is to present the research participant's experiences and fit their representation of those experiences to the reality of the participant (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). For descriptive phenomenology, the researcher ensures this key limitation in credibility is secured by conducting member-checking as a final step before presenting findings. While this will help to ensure credibility, this study is still limited in its scope as it was set in the context of private schooling on a pacific island far removed from mainland United States Schools. This limits the study's ability to be applied to a wider audience. In addition, there may be some limitation to the

study as it relies on individual teachers' understanding of assessment. As an example, the researcher indicated in the body of literature, the terms testing, grading, and assessment are sometimes used interchangeably and some confusion exists on how they are different (Wormeli, 2018). Further, some of the literature on assessment indicates a lack of unity across educational practice in how teachers use assessments, and even the role of teachers in the assessment process with some systems looking toward outside assessments rather than teacher-run assessment approaches. Further and perhaps ultimately, phenomenological research can be labor extensive as the research generates exhaustive written descriptions of participant's experiences taken from recorded and then transcribed interviews (Creswell, 2013). In phenomenology, the human factor is both the greatest strength as well as the greatest possible weakness, and it is up to the researcher to acknowledge the limitations of a study in regards to the participants' natural imperfections as a textural-structural description is sought (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015).

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a worldwide pandemic that has taken the lives of over 6,000,000 people around the world and impacts every facet of life (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). One major impact was to the collection of data for academic research This study was not immune to the impact of COVID-19. When setting up interviews, the interviewer faced obstacles to meeting in person with interviewees. To cope with the need to be physically separate from participants, video calls were used. Gaining access to participants was also inhibited by the quarantines and lock downs throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Some trouble came in contacting heads of schools to gain access to schools and teachers. One potential reason for not receiving many replies from heads of schools may have been a result of the additional work load and schedule disruptions that these important school leaders faced. There may have been some hesitation to allow research with teachers due to the potential stress

and time needed to participate. The researcher relied on social media recruitment as a means of securing participants to offset the lack of direct contact and permission from individual schools. This singular source of participants due to COVID-19 thus needs to be mentioned as a limitation to the study.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of independent school teachers in Hawaii with regard to alternative assessment practice. There are several problems faced by educators in the area of assessment practice as addressed in the literature for this study. First, policy makers and education leaders do not include the voices of teachers in their decision making to the degree other influences shape choices (Aydarova, et al., 2021; Bergdahl & Langmann, 2017; Di Tommaso, et. al, 2018; Ham & Dekkers, 2019). Second, research conducted in the Hawaii Independent School setting exists, but is aimed at a narrow cross section of topics (Bossert, et. al, 2020; Ginder, et. al, 2017; Torres, 2019). Third, alternative assessment is not only poorly understood by many members of the education community, assessment in general is not well defined or understood (Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Ghaicha, 2016; Högberg et. al, 2019; Wormeli, 2018). This chapter presents the results of data analysis following Moustakas' Modified Van Kaam Method (Moustakas, 1994). Data was gathered through one on one interviews with a total of 7 participants. The chapter begins with a profile of each participant followed by the themes that emerged through following Moustakas' (1994) process of data analysis. The themes that emerged were used in order to create a textural description followed by a structural description and culminated in a textural-structural description or synthesis of the phenomenon, alternative assessment in the Hawaii Independent School setting.

In this study, the aim of the researcher was to identify themes common to Hawaii independent school teachers as they verbally reflected on their experiences in the context of private school teaching while practicing assessment. The researcher did not directly address

alternative forms of assessment in the flow of the interviews, but the questions and probes were designed to allow educators who participated to voice their experiences with the phenomenon. The following two questions were used to design the interview tool used to conduct the interviews:

1. What are the perceptions and lived experiences of Hawaii independent school teachers with regard to alternate assessment?
2. How does Hawaii independent school teacher alternative assessment impact future education practice?

According to the literature on the impact of teachers on education policy and change, the perspectives and experiences of educators are not well represented in education policy and mandated practice (Aydarova, et al., 2021; Bergdahl & Langmann, 2017; Di Tommaso, et. al, 2018; Ham & Dekkers, 2019). This study seeks to give a voice to Hawaii independent school teachers by identifying themes universal to their lived experiences as educators practice assessment in Hawaii's independent schools. This chapter is an overview of participant responses organized into themes. These themes provide insight into the research questions that guide this study.

Participant Vignettes

Participant 1 (Abby). Abby is a native of California. Born to Russian parents, she speaks Russian and English with equal fluency. She moved to the state of Hawaii to marry a property manager. This property manager is an awesome supporter of her work as a private school educator in Hawaii, and is involved in many aspects of school life. His involvement includes handyman work around the school, fundraising, and interacting with students in the role of community uncle. Abby is the preschool director for a small private school on the island of

Kauai where she has the awesome opportunity to help “littles” grow as learners. She is passionate about partnering with parents to see academic, spiritual, and personal growth in her students both inside and outside the classroom.

Participant 2 (Ben). Ben is a seasoned educator in one of Hawaii’s top schools. He is active in politics and leverages that experience inside his social studies classroom. He leads his school’s Model United Nations Program and travels with this group both across the Hawaiian Islands and around the world. Ben is passionate about seeing his students grow as critical thinkers, rigorous researchers, and talented writers. As a grounding member of his school’s upper classmen electives courses, Ben seeks to help educators across Hawaii grow as content experts. He accomplishes this goal through leading the Model United Nations League as its advisor, maintaining membership with several professional learning communities, and participating in educational conferences across the island. Ben often shares resources from his years of teaching advanced placement (AP) courses with new or developing AP teachers.

Participant 3 (Chris). Chris pulls double duty as both a math and a Bible teacher in his small private school. He is well connected with other educators in Hawaii. He wishes there were more resources available to educators in Hawaii so that students could take more educational trips. Chris is passionate about his students developing critical thinking skills and going beyond the bare minimum requirement to pass a class. He provides his students many opportunities to engage with him beyond the assignments he gives them. For example, he offers extra credit opportunities through the creation of challenging questions generated by students. He uses these questions and discussions, that are linked to his course content to further develop student understanding of the concepts in the course beyond the required assignments. In math, he seeks to help his peers grow as educators. He challenges his peers on campus to attend conferences and

engages in professional development for his peers that do not have education degrees but are subject area experts. This is one of the areas he has identified that his school can grow in. So, he is actively seeking to support the growth of his peers through helping them become more than just experts in their subject. His team are growing as educators.

Participant 4 (Dave). Dave grew up in Hawaii as a young man. He is a French Canadian with a passion for travel. He works in a catholic school as the department head for the history department. Previously, he was a member of the United States armed forces. This experience informs his worldview and education practice. He seeks to help parents understand the importance of letting young minds wrestle with current events in the context of civics and preparing for the future. He wishes schools across the islands had more internal standards for helping students transition in and out of private education. This movement of students between private and public schools was mentioned by several participants in this research. Dave made clear mention of a need for school to coordinate better about this ongoing transition of learners between the public and private sector of education. As an educational leader in his school, he is working to create a set of standards that reference public school standards in order to help evaluate student learning needs when they move into the independent school setting.

Participant 5 (Erica). Erica is a native of France. She lives in the far west of Hawaii and travels from one end of the island to the other in order to work at her school. She loves helping students learn to speak her native language. Her school uses the International Baccalaureate Program (IB). Erica is the IB French teacher at her school. IB puts students through a two-year course of study in the 11th and 12th grades in preparation for college and career. She is an innovative teacher with more than 20 years of experience in Hawaii's independent schools. She is able to both maintain traditional methods of teaching while remaining open to new and

exciting ways of helping her students communicate their learning. Erica attends conferences regularly and engages with her school's professional learning community (PLC) to gain new ideas for how best to evaluate her students' learning.

Participant 6 (Frank). Frank is a young and energetic educator that teaches primarily non-traditional technology courses. He was concerned about participating in this research since his background and experience are non-traditional. He was assured by the researcher that his experiences as a tech teacher with a subject area degree was representative of other peer educators in the context. Frank is an avid rock climber and computer game nerd. He brings his enthusiasm for physical activity and engaging content to his classroom. He encourages his students not to focus on grades, but rather on producing quality work that could meet the needs of real clients. Frank works hard to create a learning environment that is not based in the abstract, but connects students to actual problems and scenarios that they will face in their futures as members of society and the workplace.

Participant 7 (Grant). Grant is an eloquent, thoughtful educator that is enthusiastic about education best practice. In the Science and STEM courses he teaches, he seeks to promote research and collaboration across departments and between schools. One of his passions is including the voices of students in the creation of course content. He has piloted student-led rubric creation at his school. He uses a wide range of assessment in his own classroom and is a resource and encouragement for other educators as they grow in assessment practice in their own classrooms. Grant wants all educators to know that their voices are as important as any other voice in the education community, "Let your administrators know what you think."

Analysis

To find out how teachers in Hawaii's independent schools experience and describe assessment in the classroom and how assessment impacts educator practice, the researcher explored the results of teacher interviews using a modified Van Kaam method of analysis designed by Moustakas (1994). The process of horizontalization provided the researcher 405 meaningful quotes that were relevant to the phenomenon of alternative assessment in Hawaii independent schools. From this initial coding, topics or primary themes emerged. Some primary themes from these statements included diversity of learners, parental input, a wide range of comments about alternative assessment practice, teacher autonomy, administrator and school oversight, and professional development.

The meaningful comments also diverged somewhat from comments connecting to assessment and involved participants commenting on shortcomings of their peers, issues with curriculum, and access to resources. While all comments from participants were deemed to be meaningful, not all comments connect to the phenomenon being addressed by this research, alternative assessment in the Hawaii independent school setting. The researcher put the meaningful statements through a process of reduction and elimination, the second step in Moustakas' (1994) modified Van Kaam method. This process yielded 298 statements that were deemed to be well connected to the phenomenon of alternative assessment and were given the label, individual constituents.

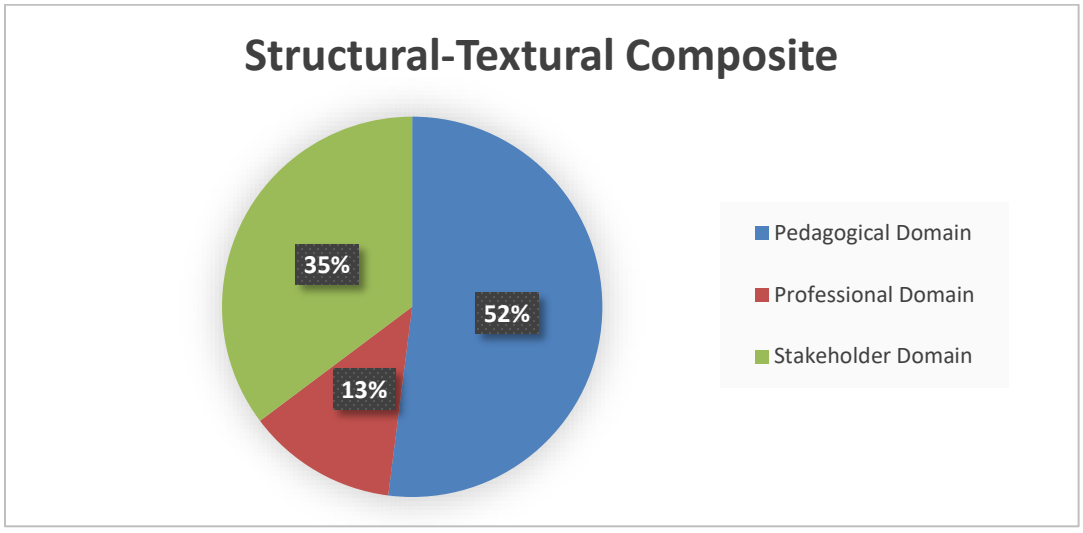
The next step involved creating individual, textural descriptions from the 298 invariant constituents. Examining these sets of data, the constituents were organized into 12 themes. These themes were reduced to three domains for the purpose of creating conclusion from the analysis: stakeholder domain, professional domain, and pedagogical domain. The breakdown of themes

was heavily weighted toward to pedagogical domain with five themes and 155 individual constituents, followed by the stakeholder domain with five themes and 105 individual constituents, and trailed by the professional domain with two themes and 38 individual constituents. This was not a surprising outcome, as phenomenology deals with participants lived experiences and perspectives. An outcome that contains invariant constituents dealing with a teacher's classroom practice is in keeping with this research concerned with give voice to educators and their experiences with assessment.

The final step in analyzing the data collected from the interviews was the creation of a composite textural and structural description in order to form a complete understanding of the phenomenon of alternative assessment for all seven interview participants. The synthesis of the data into the three themes is depicted in figure 3.

Figure 3

Occurrences of Invariant Constituents



Stakeholder Domain. The words the participants contained overlapping themes of external pressures, supports, and influences on classroom assessment practice. These invariant constituents included statements about parental input, education standards, school and

administrator oversight, curriculum, colleges, accrediting bodies, and the voices of students. A synthesis and frequencies layout can be seen in table 4.

Table 4

Themes in the Stakeholder Domain

Stakeholder Domain	**Number of Invariant Constituents Total 105**
Parental Input	36
Education Standards	24
School and Administrator Oversight	11
Curriculum	9
Colleges	9
Accreditation	8
Student Voice	8

Parental Input. The results of analysis in the stakeholder domain yielded more responses dealing with the role of parents in education with connection to teacher assessment practice than any other area of this domain. However, participants mentioned parents throughout the interview both before and after the researcher addressed the topic directly. Analysis identified 36 meaningful statements by the participants in this study related to parental involvement with the assessment process. This was evident in the statements given by participants regarding parental input. Participants Abby, Chris, Dave, Erica and Grant all indicated that rather than caring about the assessment process and the data yielded from evaluating student work, parents were mainly concerned about grades. Grant said:

> They want a quick check, like hey, my kid has a D-, okay, I better check in with him. You know, there's always that question about how can my kid get an A? And that's the wrong question. Or what does my kid need to know to get an A? I'd rather the parent worry more about skills and behaviors in class than the A or the grade, you know, what are they actually learning? Can they articulate what they're learning and have questions?

Erica provided a similar quote:

> I think the parents are mainly concerned about where the students will go to college, and although, a GPA, that's also what's different about our school. A GPA is not calculated from the ninth grade to the twelfth grade, but more so from the eleventh to the twelfth.

One of the questions posed to all participants was about what each participant thought parents should say about assessment. Participants universally expressed that parents do not look at assessment results enough, as mentioned before parents seemed to the participants in this study to be mainly concerned with grades. Chris said, "They need to look at what their students are doing and then reason, like, how do I help my kids prepare for this? I think a lot of our parents, and I'm guilty of this too, I hardly ever check my kids' work." Erica indicated the same sentiment, saying "Although, we do have a ManageBac, which is how we report our grades, and in there we have rubrics and we have everything. But I wonder how much parents really go into ManageBac." Other participants mentioned a complete lack of parental involvement or expressed interest in the assessment process, with sentiments revolving around the previously identified concern about what grades students are achieving.

Education Standards. The researcher did not directly address standards as a point of conversation in any questions or probes, yet 24 invariant constituents emerged from analysis of the teacher's reflection on assessment. The researcher did have on line of questioning regarding

teacher reflections on private schools not being held to the same education policies as their public-school peers. None of the participants chose to discuss education standards in the context of that question. Rather, participants primarily referred to education standards in the context of referencing state or federal standards when planning courses and conducting educational assessment. Dave noted, like many of his peers in this research, that state standards are a point of reference:

> We do use State, we use the DOE standards for history. And so students who come from public schools to our school and vice versa, they're not going to be completely lost because the progression is the same and the standards are going to be the same. Whereas if it's completely different, because that often happens, they go back and forth between public and private schools.

School and Administrator Oversight. A theme running through the interview transcripts was the role school administration plays in shaping assessment practice. Input from school and administration was mentioned 11 times across the interviews. This was apparent in the words of participants in regards to both school culture and policies. Grant said, "Too often, educational decisions are made at the administrative level and then they're deployed to the teacher and then down to the student." Dave echoed this, "My previous school was still pretty traditional with emphasis on higher-stakes, mid-term and final exams, but the school I'm at currently is trying to put more emphasis on formative." This highlights the important and prolific role schools play in how teachers undertake the important work of assessing for learning in their classrooms.

Curriculum. Ben noted that curriculum had impacted his ability practice assessment in a meaningful way at one point in his career. The opinion of Ben's department chair was that one test a week should be standard. This meant, in Ben's estimation, "one-fifth out of the curriculum,

like time in class, was spent in assessment." Erica noted her responsibility to the curriculum as well, indicating that her school's adoption of the International Baccalaureate program informs her assessment process from the beginning. She noted four criteria in her subject area, French, that are explicitly addressed, "I'm a Diploma Program teacher, I teach with that in mind from the get go. So, we do have four criteria, which is listening, speaking, writing, and reading." Besides these two examples, all together the participants in the study mentioned curriculum nine times.

Colleges. Interview participants made mention of college in the context of the researcher asking participants if there were any outside influences beyond what was mentioned in the flow of the interview otherwise. The responses for this question varied, but three made specific note of the influences college hold on how teachers assess for learning totaling nine meaningful statements. Participants Ben, Frank, and Grant brought up colleges when asked about outside influences. Grant spoke to his school's status as a college preparatory program, "Well, first of all, college. We are a college preparatory school, so that is one major influence. And we often have a discussion about that." Also, Ben responded to this line of questioning by saying, "I do think where they're going to college makes a big difference." Frank said:

> We are a college prep school. We're following a lot of trends with the colleges, but that's all within the College Career Counseling Office. They know the trends, they know which colleges are getting rid of SAT's, you know, all that kind of stuff.

Accreditation. Abby was the first to bring up the topic of accrediting bodies and their influence on assessment practice, this topic was not addressed again except in the interview with Chris. Between the two of them, there were eight significant statements made that resulted in the theme emerging for reflection. Abby mentioned it in the context of the researcher inquiring about what the biggest influence is in assessment in each participant's context. Abby said, "The biggest

influence on how we asses is based on what you're accredited with and what they require." She went on to explain that this accreditation influence drives other factors mentioned across the domains, like curricular choice, staffing in the administration to ensure oversight of teacher practice in the classroom, and ensuring students are meeting academic standards. Chris noted the accreditation reports that schools receive during visits from members of the accrediting bodies. He noted that there are staffing issues that impact curricular oversight and that it shows up on his school's accreditation report. This topic was not addressed in the body of literature reviewed, but it bears importance to the participants in this study and therefore finds a place in giving voice to the lived experiences and unique perspectives of the participants. Dave did not use the term accreditation, but did note oversight and testing that is in place due to requirements that are placed on his Catholic school by The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) and Erica noted oversight in place from The International Baccalaureate (IB) program her school is a part of. This emergent theme dealing with accreditation was almost cut by the researcher during analysis as in every case it seemed to branch or connect to other themes, like curriculum or administration. However, since two participants mentioned it explicitly, it remains.

Student Voice. The researcher did not directly address student voice in the interview tool, though it is no surprise that this theme emerged, as the primary work of a classroom teacher is with students and assessment is chiefly concerned with data gleaned from student work. There were eight individual statements connected to this theme. The focus of this research was on independent school teachers' experiences with alternative assessment. This may be why, though it exists in the analysis, there are not more instances of student voice present in the stakeholder domain.

Participants made mention of students across the interview, including many instances regarding student voice. It is noteworthy and included here in the themes under the stakeholder domain because several participants expressed a desire to see students play a larger role in decisions about assessment practice. Grant said:

> I think the voice that is probably the most important that is underutilized is the actual student. I'm a big believer that at the very beginning, at the very top, students should be part of that conversation. I think we need to do better in actually getting student voice into some of the assessment decisions that schools make.

Frank indicated that he includes students in the analysis of learning during assessment. He spoke to this directly in the interview, "You just ask them what was wrong with the course. They'll tell you what was wrong with the course, and then you fix it." This was echoed by Dave who made mention of giving students choice in how they want to demonstrate their learning. He said, "I think giving students more of a choice is overlooked. Within certain parameters, how do you want to do this?" He went on to discuss offering students an opportunity to design a project, or even to divert to a more traditional assessment tool if that is what the student is most comfortable with and able to express their learning through.

Abby indicated that teacher sometimes underestimate their students. Reflecting on her team, and the students they interact with in the classroom, she noted, "you learn how different kids learn, to figure out what works for the kids and assess them in their area of where they're good at. So, if a child is good at sitting down and focusing and writing, that works. But if a kiddo can't do that, not just saying they don't know." This connects with the concept of student voice and many other aspects of best practice in education, and is the backbone of leveraging formative assessment to make instructional changes. Dave mirrored Abby's discussion regarding the

concept of including student voice in making instructional decisions as he reflected on student voice in the assessment process. He said:

> There are teachers who really give them a lot of choices, which would relate to metacognition. Within certain parameters, but like, you know, how do you want to do this? Do you want to take a test? Do you want to make a different project? If they really don't seem like they're getting, then I change how I teach it. Maybe I spend more time on it. Maybe show them different videos or something. I make adjustments.

Professional Domain. While less invariant constituents exist in what has been defined as the professional domain, two themes were common to all participants that fall under this domain. The participants in the research noted both professional development and interactions with other educators as major influences or considerations in the practice of assessment in their classrooms. The frequency of these two invariant constituents are depicted in table 5.

Table 5

Themes in the Professional Domain

Professional Domain	**Number of Invariant Constituents Total 38**
Professional Development	30
Teacher Collaboration	8

Professional Development. The researcher did not directly address teacher training in this study, nor was it a part of the interview questions. The participants in this study brought up training, professional development, and other concepts the led the researcher to identify a

professional development theme in the analysis of the interviews. These comments on professional development totaled 30 individual meaningful statements.

The participants' universal reference to required or provided training in educational best practice spawned this theme. In fact, due to its prevalence in the analysis, it gave birth to the professional domain as a key group of invariant constituents. Ben was the first to explicitly use the term professional development in regards to assessment practice. The researcher asked all participants where they get different types of assessments used in their classrooms. Ben listed several workshops and conferences he attended, noting, "from those kind of professional development things, I gather some ideas in there." Chris also used the words professional development when responding to the researcher's question about outside influences on education practice. Chris stated, "I would say professional development opportunities in our core subject areas would be number one in impacting choices about assessment practice." He later stated that professional development was the most important resource available to teachers in the independent school setting. While she did not use the words professional development, Abby noted a required 16 hours of ongoing education as a yearly requirement for teachers in her program. As the program director, she ensures that these hours are used to help teachers develop skills in assessing learning. Other participants referred to professional development in a number of ways. Frank noted the widely available resources for teachers:

> We're kind of living in the post-information scarcity age. I don't have to go to the library at the college to get the old, dusty book that has, "here's a list of grading rubrics". I can just go to the MTI Media Lab, go to the Coursera, go to the Stanford online school, enroll in one of their classes for ten minutes, get a copy of all the curriculum, lesson plans, and grading rubrics, and just be like, sweet, well it works for Harvard.

Teacher Collaboration. Many participants mentioned their peers in the course of discussion. This was another unsolicited theme encountered by the researcher during interview analysis. The interviewees made eight separate meaningful comments about working with other educators. The participants in this study indicated that interactions with peers was an integral part of best practice in their context. Some comments came as a result of the researcher asking teachers what they wish other educators knew about assessment. Some participants brought up their peers on their own. What was clear was that independent school teachers are concerned with assessment practice not only in their own classroom, but also across the field of education.

Participants Abby, Ben, Chris, Dave, and Grant all noted that if they could offer any advice to other teachers it would be that educators should vary the types of assessment done in the classroom. One representative quote that aligns with all of these responses came from Grant. He said, “Make sure you have a diverse toolbox of assessments. Open your world to different types of assessment and you might find something you really like that fits your style.”

Pedagogical Domain. For the purpose of this study, the pedagogical domain deals with a teacher’s classroom practice with regard to assessment. The invariant constituents that comprise this domain were teacher mentions of specific alternative assessments used in their classrooms, teacher definitions of assessment, teacher autonomy in the classroom, classroom learner diversity, and the impact of assessment on future practice. These invariant constituents are depicted in table 6.

Table 6

Themes in the Pedagogical Domain

Pedagogical Domain	Number of Invariant Constituents Total 155
Alternative Assessments	68
Student Diversity	42
Defining Assessment	16
Teacher Autonomy	16
Impact of Assessment on Practice	13

Alternative Assessments. In a reflection on analysis for a dissertation on alternative assessment practice, finding this as a theme seems obvious. However, the researcher worked to avoid asking participants directly about alternative assessment practice. Instead, questions used in this research with the chosen participants dealt with assessment in general and encouraged participants to reflect on assessment practice in their context and generally in private education. The researcher identified 68 instances of participants making specific reference to alternative forms of assessment as defined in this study. Alternative assessment refers to practices or procedures deemed to be emerging or non-standard formative and summative assessment in the classroom (Gozuyesil & Tanriseven, 2017).

One great example of alternative assessment came from Abby who spoke of a nonverbal student in her classroom that was unable to complete normal activities assigned, so she created an alternative assessment to allow that student to demonstrate their ability to count using an assessment tool based on writing. Ben used the example of simulations and trials in his history

classes as alternative assessments used to assess student speaking ability. Chris reflected on his Bible class and how he has started doing his tests open book. He was not interested in students just stating or regurgitating facts. Rather, he used this alternative means of assessment in order to allow students to demonstrate analysis on a deeper level, in his words. Dave offered a great quote that was very much in line with what his peers shared regarding alternative assessment:

> There are some students who are very behind grade level in writing. And then if it's a timed assessment, time management is an issue for some students. Do you just treat everybody the same and it's like, well, too bad, you should have written faster? Or do you give them maybe an alternate assignment, or do you let them come back the next day and continue?

Ben indicated that coming up with alternative assessments that fit individual student needs through a Socrative approach was much better than adhering to a formal assessment strategy. He commented on this balance when sharing that his school formerly required traditional assessments that took up about one-fifth of his class time. He commented, "One-fifth of time in class is, to me, quite high. Th informal assessment that I do when I do Socratic discussions is incredibly invaluable and needs to be done far more often by probably myself as well as other colleagues.

Some of the participants in this study, like Chris, work in smaller schools and have classes made up of very diverse students in terms of academic ability. As a result, the tests administered in a course may not be equally challenging for all students. To cope with this disparity of ability and challenged, Chris sees a need for separate tests for some students, in order to collect data that reflects those more advanced students' learning. Though he has not implemented separate testing tools, he does prepare activated that help him produce assessment

data. He reflected, “I will do other activities in class. I can ask harder questions, for example, or deeper questions that would affect, past performance will tell me and how they have been learning in the classroom.”

Mandated curriculum is part of a few of the participants classroom. As outlined, there are teachers in the International Baccalaureate program, Accelerated Placement, and Catholic Dioses. These are examples of organizations that give specific directions on testing. Dave meets the challenged of teaching to a test by coming up with alternative assessments for his students when they do not do well within the formal parameters of the assigned curriculum. He noted, “I allow my students to use their notes. I provided them guidance on what information they needed. And so instead of a very stress inducing high-stakes test to cap off the quarter, it was, you know, it was open note. They had all the tools they needed to succeed.”

Erica teaches French. She brought up a Swiss student she is working with in her French classes who is not only an international student, but also is dyslexic. This student struggles to produce written work for her. As a result, she has an assessment challenge. She cannot evaluate his learning in writing skill. So, she has this student create written work in French using Google Doc’s speech to write. She said, “He dictates his assignment and the Google Doc writes it down. So then from what he produces, I teach to him.”

Frank who is a technology teacher shared about two students he paired up in order for him to best assess their learning. Two students were new to computers and keyboards and also didn’t know how to use a mouse. These students were paired with an advanced computer user in the class, and they worked as a team to complete assignments and tests at the beginning of the course. Grant shared, “the program that I teach within, is trying to find alternative methods of assessment than the traditional test taking methods of assessment.” He reflected on the use of co-

created rubrics with students creating rubrics used to asses their own learning. In addition to innovative approaches to assessment like this, he also uses in his words, “checkpoints, observations, conversations, lots of verbal feedback, written feedback” to create a portfolio for learners that demonstrates their learning.

Grant’s example came from his school’s push for alternative assessment strategies. He works in a setting that is encouraging the use of alternative means of collecting student learning data, beyond traditional testing methods. His school is providing teachers with assessment guidelines to help in this endeavor. Grant is a proponent of co-constructed rubrics as alternative assessment tools. He said in response to the researcher’s question about what types of assessments he uses, “A wide variety. We have a lot of co-constructive rubrics for our project work that we use in class.” Co-constructed rubrics are rubrics created as a result of collaborative efforts between both the teacher and the student to produce expectations for a given project. They are used for assessment proposes to inform education stakeholders if course goals are being met (Ghaffar, et. al, 2020).

Student Diversity. The researcher addresses diversity directly through asking participants to describe the diversity in their classrooms. Though, several participants noted diversity in the classroom at other points before and after this line of questioning. 42 separate comments were identified to form this theme. This led the researcher to include student diversity as a theme in the pedagogical domain. It was a universal theme across all seven interviews. The main type of diversity mentioned by participants was a diversity of academic ability. Other types of diversity mentioned included socio-economic diversity and racial diversity.

Grant shared about his classroom, “The biggest diversity that I think I’ve focused on is types of learners. Having a wide range of assessments in a class is really helpful for the diversity

of learners that we get." This was similar to what Abby stated about her learners, "Kids come in with different levels of academic knowledge, some kids are easier to assess." Ben noted the diversity of learners in his class and how having a mix of learning styles impacted the decisions he makes regarding assessment:

> I think in terms of diversity, when I think of diversity in assessment, certain kids who are better at speaking than writing, some kids are better at recall or not recall, kids are better at a take-home versus an in-class time pressured. So I try to provide a diversity of all of those kind of assessments to make sure that I'm hitting all of the learning or assessment styles, if I may use that term.

Frank considers diversity in his classroom to be a strength. He noted, "The more interesting life you lead compared to the norm brings much better opinions and ideas to the table than the bell curve." This was similar to what Chris said. He considers the diverse abilities in his classroom to be an asset. He said, "I'm constantly interacting with high performers. I encourage them to ask me questions, let's go deeper. They're really just doing it for their own personal edification."

Defining Assessment. The researcher asked each teacher to define assessment in the course of the interviews. This theme was included in the research analysis as the researcher deemed the definition of assessment to be very important to the study, as alternative assessment as a phenomenon experienced by these independent school teachers in Hawaii is under study. More than seven comments emerged from the transcripts, however. Several of the participants offered statements that constituted defining assessment at other points in the interviews. There were 16 total comments connected to the definition of assessment. The participants in the study defined assessment in a number of ways as shown in table 7. However, in the researcher's

analysis of the transcripts, all participants except for Erica defined assessment with accuracy according to the literature. Erica may not have understood the question, and the researcher chose not to press the participants at any point to force an opinion on them. This was in keeping with avoiding bias in the study. The consensus was that assessment is a process of measuring students' progress, knowledge or understanding.

Table 7

Defining Assessment

Participant	**Definition**
Abby	It is testing the students on the knowledge that they know.
Ben	Assessment is how we measure a student's progress in a particular course.
Chris	It's a gauge for where they're at and maybe do we need to make adjustments.
Dave	It's recall and part of it is just like checking for understanding.
Erica	Assessment is formative and summative.
Frank	Assessment is a snapshot of current student understanding and learning.
Grant	It is a way of measuring a student's progress and achievement.

Teacher Autonomy. None of the researcher's questions addressed teacher autonomy directly. However, the participants mentioned autonomy with regard to assessment practice in the classroom 16 times during the interviews. Abby reflected on the freedom she has in her program to choose what standard she wants to set for her kids, based on what she decides is best for them. She offered this comment when asked about state mandated policy not being a factor in the independent school setting. This was one of several instances across the conversations with the participants where the researcher's analysis indicated that independent school teachers

recognize their autonomy and value it. Ben spoke to autonomy directly when asked what the major influences on assessment are in his context. He stated, “There are very little actual outside influences on my assessment, I do pretty much whatever I want.” Short of making the participants in this study sound like wild mavericks, the researcher’s analysis indicates that this autonomy is viewed as a strength and not as an issue of freedom and lack of standards. The participants wield this autonomy and use assessment to meet the needs of their learners.

Dave considers this freedom in the classroom to be a short-coming. He said, “There’s not much oversight. It’s kind of up to individual teachers, which is a problem, I think. There should be more guiding.” This statement was in relation to the researcher’s question about who issues guidance at his school for assessment practice. Ben also mentioned a concern about lack of oversight in assessment. He stated, “We don’t have a curriculum coordinator at our school, that’s a weakness at our school.” This was a statement made in response to the researcher asking about who should be considered when making decisions about assessment practice.

Impact of Assessment on Practice. The final theme from the analysis deals with how educators in Hawaii’s independent schools see assessment impact future practice. Abby addressed the impact of assessment by saying, “After the assessment, we see where they’re low and then when we do activities, then we scale the activity to where they’re able to do what we ask them to do.” Teachers talked often of correcting course, changing assessments to meet student needs, or assessing to meet the needs of stakeholders like colleges and parents. Participants in the interviews gave examples of this. Chris said, “I don’t always use the same assessments year to year, I see which questions students are not getting right and I do clarification or change the question. The same idea was communicated by Frank who shared, “So I actually just ask them because they’re the ones who have to go through it. They’ll tell you what

was wrong with the course, and then you fix it." If a question was missed by many students, the educators in this study used that as an indicator that the test question was not a good measure of what students know, or was not written well. The participants offered many instances of reflecting on how their practice of assessment informed future classroom practice with the total number of comments regarding this theme equaling 13.

Summary of Findings

Chapter IV was a detailed overview of the major findings of the researcher's analysis of the participant's own words regarding experiencing and perceiving alternative assessment in the context of Hawaii independent schools. The seven participants in this study represent a wide cross-section of the independent school teachers in this context. The participants ranged from a newer independent school teacher with just over three years of experience in the context, to three teachers with around 20 years of experience as independent school teachers in Hawaii. Two of the seven participants were female. Five were male. One participant was a program director, one was a department head. Of the seven participants, three had master's degrees, one had a doctorate, and the other two earned bachelor's degrees. This selection of educators taught from preschool age students all the way up to upperclassmen electives. These teachers who participated in the study taught both the humanities and STEM programs at their schools. Their words offer the reader a rich perspective on assessment practice in the independent school setting in Hawaii.

Chapter V

Discussion

Introduction

Moustakas' (1994) modified Van Kaam method was an excellent tool for analyzing the participant's words regarding alternative assessment practice in their context. The researcher found the themes which emerged from the interviews were an excellent mix of both naturally occurring invariant constituents and invariable constituents. The emergent themes were expected based on the interview tool used. The resulting themes created a holistic body of domains covering the professional setting the educators found themselves reflecting on, the stakeholders these educators interact with regularly, and the classroom where the participants practice assessment. These domains are supported by the literature and by the words of the participants.

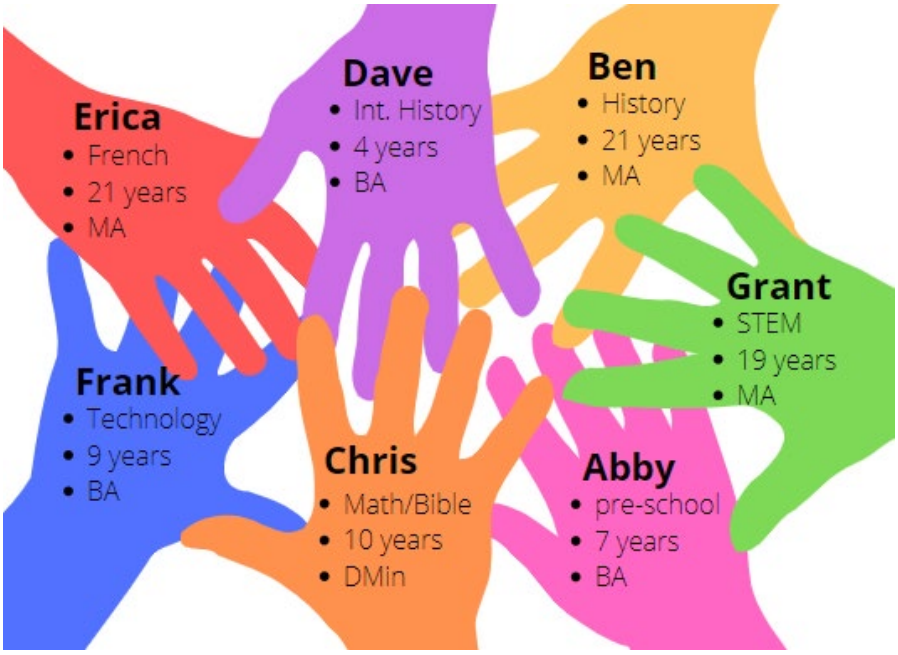
This study began with a survey of the history of both education and assessment and traced its shifting journey through many changing policies and influences (Gershon,2015; Schneider & Hutt, 2014; Urban, et. al, 2019). These influences included themes like the influence of the federal government and the various needs of educational stakeholders. The literature identified a lack of teacher voice in education policy and change (Aydarova, et al., 2021; Bergdahl & Langmann, 2017; Di Tommaso, et. al, 2018; Ham & Dekkers, 2019). The researcher chose to conduct phenomenological research with teachers in his own context. Taking careful steps not to influence the study, the researcher produced transcripts of recordings that are a record of the lived experiences of Hawaii independent school educators experiencing alternative assessment as a phenomenon. Very little effort was required on the part of the researcher to produce lengthy teacher commentary on the influences steering classroom

assessment, the practices of their peers, and their own choices and self-determination in educational assessment.

The aim of this research was to understand what teachers in Hawaii's independent schools say about the practice of alternative assessment. There are many studies about assessment, and about alternative assessment practice assessments (Beier, et. al, 2018; Di Stasio, et. al, 2019; Shavelson, 2018). Much of that research deals with federal government funding and influence, with little of the body of literature recoding teacher's perspectives and needs (Bergdahl & Langmann, 2017; Ham & Dekkers, 2019; Mathis & Trujillo, 2016). There is very little research given in particular to the independent school setting for Hawaii. This research undertaking aimed at adding to the body of literature on teacher voices and experiences with educational assessment. The analysis of teacher reflections on assessment has produced some meaningful themes for the reader to consider.

Figure 4

Research Participants



The seven participants (see figure 4) in this study represented a wide cross-section of educators in Hawaii's independent schools. They hold a range of degrees and represent both newer teachers in the context and the seasoned 20 year plus practitioners. From teaching courses on religion to running technology courses, these participants stand as representatives from many corners of the independent school context. The researcher worked to gather voices that were both foreign born and natives to the islands. The participants also represent both elementary, middle, and high school teaching. Though, it should be noted that only one middle school teacher and only one elementary school teacher was included. These two teachers were included in order to include the important voices of those who teach younger students. The researcher also worked to include voices beyond just the central and most populous island of Oahu. There were two participants from neighbor islands.

All participants in this study are from Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS) member schools. They represent populations from three of Hawaii's four most populated Islands. The Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS) offers leadership for many of Hawaii's more than 100 private schools. The organization helps to ensure safe environments, collaborative community, and expand and maintain a diverse curriculum across the participating schools (Bossert, et al., 2020; National Association of Independent Schools, 2020). Teachers in this context are supported through a yearly Schools of the Future Conference held in partnership with both public and private schools.

The researcher is a member of the population under study. He has been working in an HAIS member school for the past 7 years. As a member of this population, the researcher's own experiences and perspectives on alternative assessment practice in the Hawaii Independent school setting inevitably colors the discussion of findings. Martin Heidegger's thoughts on this

inevitability of input via the researcher's own bias or philosophy gave rise to the concept of hermeneutical phenomenology in the 1920s (Laverty, 2003). This was in contrast to traditional phenomenological research pioneered by Husserl that instructed researchers to identify and separate personal bias or experience with analyzing findings and discussing research outcomes (Laverty, 2003; Sloan & Bowe, 2013). The researcher offered a detailed differentiation between the two schools of thought or philosophical approaches to phenomenology in the research methods outlined in chapter three of this study. For the sake of clarity and the benefit of the reader here in this final chapter, the researcher adopted a traditional phenomenological approach to research in the overall design and creation of the interview tool as well as in the data collection steps of the study. This included seeking outside feedback on the interview tool to identify bias, and exercising mindfulness about undue influence on the participants when collecting data. When conducting analysis and discussing research findings, the researcher took a hermeneutical approach. While the researcher actively works to keep the participant's words at the forefront, some discussion of expectations, reactions, and explanations from the researcher's perspective are present.

This research addressed two questions. The domains and themes below allow the reader to formulate meaningful knowledge on the topic of education alternative assessment practice in Hawaii's Independent Schools. The questions are as follows:

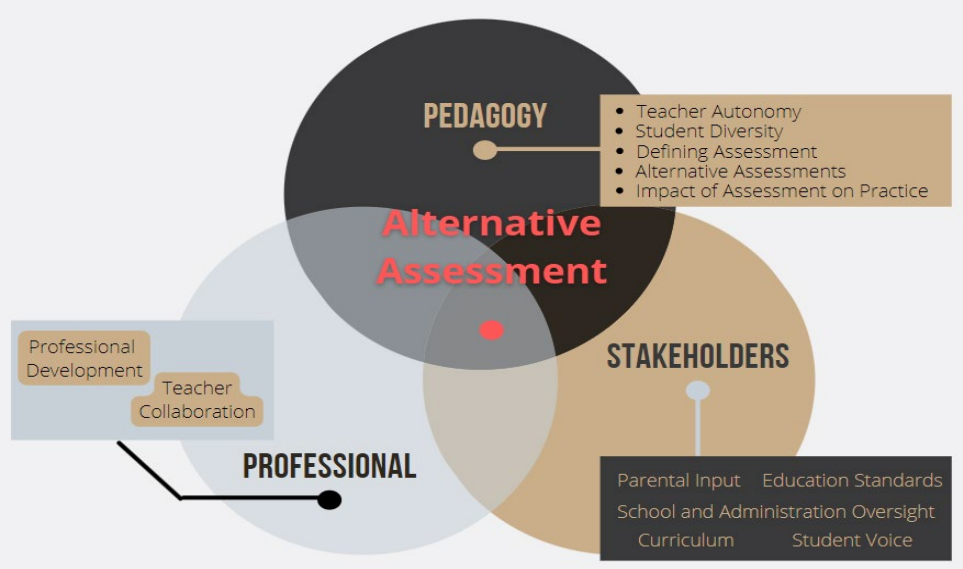
1. What are the perceptions and lived experiences of Hawaii independent school teachers with regard to alternate assessment?
2. How does Hawaii independent school teacher alternative assessment impact future education practice?

Results

Several studies from the literature on assessment indicate a range of concerns for educators when engaging in the practice of evaluating student learning in the independent school classroom. These included, but were not limited to, input from education leadership at the school, the needs of education stakeholders, and education best practice in the classroom (DeAngelis & Erickson, 2018; Greene & McShane, 2018; Kibble, 2017). These three topics are pulled from the literature on assessment for the purpose of this study because the researcher identified these topics as key domains in the lived experiences and perspectives of practicing independent school teachers in Hawaii (See Figure 6). The participants in this study spoke on assessment with a range of unique and meaningful statements. From the analysis of their own words, the researcher worked to create a set of domains and subsequent themes that weave together the perspectives and lived experiences of Hawaii independent school teachers along with relevant literature on their perspectives.

Figure 5

Themes and Domains



Phenomenology is the study of lived experiences and personal perspectives of participants that experience a given phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2014). For this study, the researcher chose alternative assessment as a phenomenon that he thought many independent school teachers may be experiencing. The balance required in this undertaking came in making sure that the researcher's own experiences as an independent school teacher in Hawaii did not color the themes and domains that emerged. Phenomenology uses recorded interviews with selected participants to create transcripts of participants own words. The researcher then analyzes the transcripts to identify meaningful statements that are then reduced to a selection of statements that are in some way connected across all participants. These statements are used to create themes. An example of a theme in this study is parental input. All participants made at least one meaningful statement about parents in the context of discussing assessment practice with the researcher. So, the researcher created a theme for the study that centered on parents. This step by step analysis was continued until a series of themes emerged. The researcher then analyzed the resulting themes and created three domains. In this case, the resulting domains are definitive shared experiences between members of the participant group.

Research Question #1. The first question formulated by the researcher dealt with finding out what the experiences of independent school teachers were with regard to alternative assessment. The question was worded this way, "What are the perceptions and lived experiences of Hawaii independent school teachers with regard to alternate assessment? The researcher worked to make sure their own perspectives and experiences did not color the results, themes, and domains in this study. However, a hermeneutical approach to discussing the findings and conducting the analysis was used. The researcher was mindful of undue influence on the participants, going as far as avoiding the terminology, "alternative assessment" throughout the

interview tool. Rather, the researcher worked to engage the participants in a conversation about assessment, and then analyze the transcripts afterwards to identify instances of experiences and perspectives that connect in some natural way with alternative assessment practice. An example of this was when Dave described an ongoing problem with time management in his classroom for some students. The researcher's line of questioning was dealing with perceived barriers to success in the area of assessment that educators have to work through. Dave noted his need to come up with an alternative way of assessing these slow-working students, outside of the established testing method. From the following step by step explanation of domains and themes, the reader will encounter a detailed description of how Hawaii independent school teachers experience the phenomenon of alternative assessment and what they each have to say in their own words about these experiences. The researcher was able to collect and present these findings authentically through the use of the applied interview tool.

What are the perceptions and lived experiences of Hawaii independent school teachers with regard to alternate assessment? Hawaii's independent school teachers experience input from many voices in the education stakeholder community, leverage professional development and networking to achieve academic success, and enjoy a high level of autonomy in the classroom that allows for the implementation of alternative assessment strategies.

The Hawaii independent school teachers in this study experience a lot of input from education stakeholders. Chief among these voices are the voices of parents. While participants indicated that parents are not concerned directly with assessment practice in word, their general involvement with the education process produces an influencing effect on the way teachers instruct and collect assessment data. Examples of this included teachers noting parents speaking

to them about low grades, homework loads, and making sure that students meet benchmarks. This means, parents are focused on students not falling behind their peers.

Teachers in this study addressed standards in education when discussing assessment practice. The consensus across all participants was that while each classroom is influenced by some form of standardization via curriculum, departmental or administrative input, or teacher-adopted standards, no uniform standard exists for Hawaii independent schools. As a result, some participants desire more standardization across the curriculum. Hawaii's independent schools see students moving between the private and public sectors, the lack of standardization presents a problem for accommodating these students and helping them integrate into the independent school classroom. Some participants indicated that the freedom and autonomy they experience in classrooms not bound by mandated standards was a strength. They have the freedom to choose what external standards are best in their own professional opinion.

School administration at all levels have a high degree of input with regard to assessment practice in Hawaii independent schools. Analysis of the research participants words regarding school administration's involvement in assessment practice indicates a strong hierarchy of leadership married to a lot of trust in individual teacher application of guidance. Meaning teachers are able to make many of their own choices about assessment practice, but coordinate with department heads, academic deans, and principals when making their own decisions. Teacher autonomy was a theme later in this study and connects well to this discussion on school leadership involvement in assessment practice.

These Hawaii independent school teachers spoke about the role curriculum plays in the process of evaluating students learning. Some examples of curriculum used were International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, and curriculum connected to school membership in other

organizations, like the Catholic diocese. Teachers did not speak negatively regarding the efficacy or challenge of working in these curricular parameters. Rather, the participants merely noted the reality of accommodating the curricula in the process of assessing for learning in the context of these adopted forms of course content.

Participants in this study mentioned professional development often as an important consideration in how they learn about best practice in assessment. Learning about assessment practice discussion in the interviews produced no comments about pre-career training in college or any other degree study. Rather, these teachers spoke about the importance of being an active learner throughout their careers both in fulfilling school required professional development yearly and also as the challenges of educational practice warranted learning more to be best equipped to meet assessment needs. Participants spoke both about free and open source materials available in the information age online as well as school provided training and conference attendance.

Working with others in the context of assessment practice came up several times during the interviews. The educators interviewed said that working with other teachers was both a benefit and a challenge. There were practices like refusing to innovate in assessment even when their peers were not able to produce data to show success in instruction and not accommodating diverse learners that gave them pause. However, many comments were made about the benefit of working closely with peers to learn about innovative ways of assessing for learning. Examples of this included coteaching courses and interacting with others in professional development sessions like at conferences and professional learning communities.

Throughout the course of the interviews, teachers offered many examples of alternative assessments used in their classrooms. Examples include altering traditional testing tools when

students are not able to produce useful data for the teacher to evaluate, like turning a written test into a speech to text tests for students that are dyslexic, having students create their own rubrics in order to communicate their learning instead of using the rubric that came with the course material, and requiring students to not just write the correctly memorized phrase down but to also include an explanation of why or how they came to that answer. Analysis of the teachers' discussion on assessment practice produced nearly 70 instances of teachers speaking about alternative means of assessment used in their classrooms in order to produce data for evaluating student learning. In line with the overall discussion on assessment both traditional and alternative, teachers offered definitions of assessment in the interviews. They defined it in a number of ways, but all definitions given were similar enough to allow the researcher to create a unified definition. The teachers in this study define assessment as measuring the knowledge students have and progress made toward educational goals. While teachers did not include themselves in defining assessment, they did offer many statements on the impact assessment has on future educational practice.

Research Question #2. The second research question created by the researcher came from a suggestion made by one of the research committee members overseeing this study. After listening to the researcher's dissertation proposal presentation, and after reading chapters one, two, and three, the committee identified a thread of inquiring throughout the study that dealt with the impact of assessment practice on educator future classroom practice. This research question shaped the interview tool, leading to a question that directly addressed how educators that participated in this study see the process of assessment impact future practice in their classrooms. Beyond the direct line of questioning taken by the researcher, there were other instances when the participants spoke to the impact their assessments had on choices they made after evaluating

their students' learning. Grant provided a great example of a participant naturally bringing up the impact of assessment on future practice at the very start of his interview. The researcher asked each participant to define assessment in their own words. When Grant was asked, he defined it as a way of measuring how well educators taught something and how well students received that instruction. He did not stop there, though. He continued on to say that, "if they didn't really get it too well and it's foundational for the next unit, math is like this, right? Then sometimes we have to pause. It tells us, okay, we need to spend a little more time on this subject." This statement exemplifies how educators use assessment to impact future practice in the classroom.

How does Hawaii independent school teacher alternative assessment impact future education practice? Alternative assessment practice in Hawaii's independent schools provides educators working in this context the data needed to adjust practice to incorporate stakeholder interests, implement professional best practice, and achieve academic excellence in the classroom.

The teachers in this study noted the influence of students on their choices regarding assessment. Student voice or input was of particular note. Comments regarding students in the context of making choices regarding assessment practice included teachers reflecting on the diversity of student learning ability in their classrooms. Many participants spoke about meeting the challenge of diverse academic abilities in their classes. Some statements about students noted ethnic, economic, and cultural diversity in the classroom. However, the majority of comments about classroom diversity dealt with the diversity of learners in the classroom. These comments overlapped with comments made about parental input both directly and indirectly. Teachers noted that parents that were more involved with students helped students excel academically, while parents that did not support learning in the home both did not help students excel in school.

This was born out in what data teachers collect through the assessment process. The participants indicated that students with strong parental support were more apt to meet standards in the classroom after assessment was applied to see where they were in the process of learning and communicating their learning.

When dealing with teacher pedagogy discussions throughout the course of the interviews, teachers discussed accommodating diverse academic ability in their classes. This study was concerned with alternative assessment practice and the teacher in this study leverage the autonomy they have in the classroom to alternate and innovate in assessment to meet the needs of the broad range of diversity they experience in the area of student academic ability. Connected to this theme was the role parents play in helping students achieve academic success. Several participants noted the increased academic ability of students with parents that are involved in their students learning.

Teachers spoke about adjusting instruction using student voice as data for the assessment process. After adjusting assessment through alternative assessment practice and ultimately securing the data needed to establish whether or not learning had taken place in line with the adopted standards, changes are often needed. Some teachers choose to candidly discuss instruction with students to mine for adjustments in the future. Others applied their knowledge of teaching and the results of assessment to identify areas to improve. Examples of this included adjusting timelines for assignments, types of testing tools, and even content. If a given course year over year has an identified gap in student general knowledge that is not being covered in other grades, the teacher cannot simply rely on previous practice and course content, an adjustment must be made to accommodate these gaps. Several teachers spoke to this need to adjust instruction based on shortcoming they believed were present in their peer teachers'

practice, challenges presented as a result of the movement of students between the private and public sectors of education, and changes in how students learn and retain information in a highly wired and connected society.

Education Stakeholders. When evaluating the emergent themes, the researcher identified a series of meaningful statements all having to do with various education stakeholders. Education stakeholders is an umbrella term used in this study to define all members of the education community including parents, students, teachers, administrators, even other groups like colleges and career destinations (Buchanan, et. al, 2016; Nthontho, 2017). The participants in this study mentioned a range of these influences in their own words.

"I think parents want their kids to hit every mark and they see the assessment as maybe the quality of education the kids are getting," Abby said in reflection on the important role parents play in shaping education practice. The voice most prevalent in the stakeholder domain of this study was the input and feedback teachers receive from parents. This was no surprise, literature indicates parents concern about student performance and grades may be due to family goals for their children in achieving acceptance into colleges (Culatta & Clay-Warner, 2021; DeAngelis, 2019; Joshi, 2019; Torres, 2019). This was reflected in how often the research participants mentioned parental influence. All participants made mentioned of the role of parents in part due to the researcher addressing this topic direction through questioning. As indicated in the literature, some education stakeholders entangle the terms grading, assessment, and testing (Hickey & Harris, 2021; Wormeli, 2018.)

"Students go back and forth between public and private schools. So, if the standards are completely different, there might be a lot of confusion," Dave spoke about the importance of Education Standards. Analysis of the interviews produced a running thread of discussion

regarding the theme of education standards and the impact they have on assessment practice. The researcher was surprised to find that in the stakeholder domain, education standards was the second most common theme. Many members of the education community consider standard-based approaches to teaching and learning to be the realm of public education (Alonzo, et al., 2018; Decker, et al., 2018; Frank, et al., 2020). In fact, many education stakeholders choose private education as a result of personal goals that they believe public education cannot meet (Joshi. 2017; Torres, 2019). The participants in this study referenced education standards in several ways, including easing the transition of students between the public and private sector. Dave noted his desire to see state standards adopted as reference material across his school's curriculum so that in his words, "students who come from public schools to our school and vice versa, they're not going to be completely lost because the progression is the same and the standards are going to be the same." The literature for this study indicated that standards are in widespread use in education as a means of ensuring quality in teaching and learning (Alonzo, et. al, 2018). Educational practice is often linked directly to educational standards and producing a high-stakes testing environment for students (Tajalli, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2020; Hikida & Taylor, 2020). High stakes testing is often a result of how summative assessments are used, and do not inherently make summative assessments neagtive. End of course tests for assessment purposes do have an important role to play in education, educators and education systems can use data from summative exams to compare learners, or make sure standards are being met (Broadbent, et. al, 2018; Dixson & Worrell, 2016).

School and Administrator Oversight. The third theme in the stakeholder domain was perhaps predictable by any reader of this study. The literature indicates that administrators and school leadership play the largest role in shaping education practice (Greene & McShane, 2018;

Guskey, 2018; Looney, et. al, 2017). Administrators and peer leaders were mentioned in various instances by the participants throughout the course of the interviews. While no single position held assessment authority across all participants, school administrators do hold considerable influence over assessment practice. Some schools in this study have curriculum leaders, deans of academics, assistant principals over academics, or place the responsibility for classroom assessment practice under the guidance of department heads. From analysis of the participants answer to who gives oversight to assessment practice, it seems there is not a consensus on who is in charge, though it does rest in some figurehead up the chain of command.

"In the International Baccalaureate program, in order for me to be successful, students need to have some kind of growth. You need to assess the student's growth at the end of each unit and what needs to be worked on," Stated Erica. Her experience in making adjustments or accommodations for mandated or adopted curricula emphasizes the influence of curriculum on assessment practice in Hawaii's independent schools. The literature review for this research indicated that curriculum plays a universal role in shaping assessment practice as it drives future classroom practice (Alonzo, et. al, 2018; Broadbent, et al., 2018; Kibble, 2017; Kokotsaki, et. al, 2016). Participants noted a range of curricular influences from International Baccalaureate (IB) to Accelerated Placement (AP). This was another perhaps expected theme. Though later in this explanation of findings, participants reflected at length on the autonomy they enjoy in the independent school setting, many mentions of the influence of curriculum plays in tension to teacher freedom to choose how to assess in their own classrooms. In fact, several made mention of a high degree of autonomy, in some cases wishing for more uniformity among teachers and wishing for changes in how their peers teach and assess.

"I think the voice that is probably the most important that is underutilized is the actual student, but I'm a big believer that at the very beginning, at the very top, students should be part of that conversation," Grant responded when asked who should be considered when making choices regarding assessment practice. Like Grant, the teachers in this study spoke at length about student voice in the assessment process. Research on assessment includes much information on the role assessment plays in shaping educational practice as educators adjust assessment and instruction based on observations of students and their needs (Carter, 2019; Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Shavelson, 2018; Spector et al., 2016). From referring to directly asking students to evaluate courses verbally to using the results of assessment to guide future education practice in formative assessment, teachers in this study noted on many occasions how students influence their practice.

Professional Practice. At the beginning of analysis, the researcher was not sure what themes would emerge. The themes of professional development and teacher collaboration were both not expected. Though some themes in this study were predicted, due to the interview tool's inevitable directing influence, the length of the recordings, and the formulation of the research questions left participants in the interviews to a possible wide range of themes. The researcher worked hard not to levy any undue influence on the participants. As an educator in the Hawaii independent school setting, the researcher focused on achieving epoché through self-reflection throughout the research, formulation of the interview tool, and application of it in one on one interviews. The interview tool was reviewed by the dissertation committee and piloted. The review and pilot process allowed outside minds not participating in the research to identify weaknesses or bias in the process. This mindfulness was important to ensure that the domains and themes that emerged as significant statements were all relevant to participants' lived

experiences and unique perspectives on alternative assessment in Hawaii independent schools and not a reflection of the researcher's own thoughts and ideas. This process of creating themes both from topics addressed by the researcher and also from naturally occurring statements by participants is noted here because the domain of professional practice was not anticipated by the researcher.

"I've attended AP workshops, and I attended the American Historical Association Conference in New Orleans. So from those kind of professional development things, I gather some ideas," shared Ben regarding professional development in assessment practice. The participants brought up both required professional development at their school and opportunities they took on as their own choice. One example given by Frank was about his use of open source content to learn about best practice in teaching, learning, and assessment. The review of literature on assessment did show that assessment practice poses many challenges for educators in the classroom and this reality would necessitate constant professional development and training (Decker et. al, 2018; Hikida & Taylor, 2020). The researcher knows that part of Hawaii independent school accreditation requirements is for teachers to pursue professional development hours yearly. This may be an influence on why teachers in this study identified professional development as a key aspect of the assessment process. Many of the teachers brought up professional development when the researcher asked about the archaeology of their practice. They were asked about specific examples of assessment in their classroom with an additional question about where they found those assessment ideas. Ben used an example of gamification for reviewing key terms, dates, or important figures from history in order evaluate his student's knowledge of a list of Accelerated Placement curricular items when his tests were not connecting well with a certain class. Frank used an example of having one student write code for another

student early in the learning process because that student did not yet possess the physical ability to use a keyboard and mouse, but understood the course concept even better than his peer assisting him.

"Independent schools are usually pretty positive about networking. As a math teacher, I've reached out to my local public school; I actually have a friend who majored in Math alongside of me, so I've gone to his classroom to watch how he teachers, Chris offered in reference to the researcher's question about resources available to teachers regarding assessment practice. The participants in this research spoke about the importance and value of working with other educators. In their own words, collaboration is key to best practice in education. While the researcher did ask participants directly via one of the interview questions to comment on the assessment practice of other educators, the teachers in the study brought up their peers in other instances during the interviews. For example, Erica mentioned the importance of passion for a given subject, "I found that the science teachers take science into the forest, everybody's trying to do something that matters to the students because you get better results." This statement was connected to assessment via the researcher's asking about what resources are available to teachers in her school to support assessment. Literature on the subject of best practice in this study centered on the standards created by the National Governor's Association Venter for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (Frank, et al., 2020). These standards encourage educators to meet the needs of 21st century students by preparing them for college, career, and life (Anderson-Livett, 2020; Frank, et. al, 2020). They emerged as a result of collaboration between high level education leaders and administrators to stand as a resource for teachers. While there are no uniformly adopted standards for independent schools in Hawaii, several participants mentioned their desire for a set of standards that could be

used as a reference. In this context, students move into private education from public education and from public education into the private sector. This is a common occurrence in their observation. Others in the study like Grant, mentioned personally choosing to reference state standards while coming up with their internal assessment benchmarks in the private school classroom. He said, “We do follow, especially for Science, NGSS standards. I personally like the freedom in which we can develop our assessments on our own, refencing these national standards.” There will be more on this lack of uniformity or standardization in curriculum later in this discussion. While no classroom is without some standard, analysis of the participant’s responses indicates that standards are not mandated from any central body for most of the teachers in this study. Dave, another participant, also mentioned standards in reference to working with other educators across school sectors. He mentioned that his school is part of a body of Catholic schools and there are standardized tests issued from that body, but no unifying set of standards is applied across the independent schools these teachers work in. He further addressed his own course content with regard to standards stating, “Perhaps align state standards with independent school standards. Because I do think you want there to be some alignment, like we do use State, at least my department, because I push for this hard because I’m the department head.”

Classroom Practice. Some grouping of themes around teacher pedagogy was anticipated by the researcher when planning this study, though exact wording for this domain came later after analyzing the transcripts. When attempting a study that deals with lived experiences of educators experiencing alternative assessment, the classroom and their personal pedagogy is perhaps predictable. However, the range of themes was not expected that fall under this domain.

Analysis of the participant's reflection on the researcher's interview questions yielding five themes of quality with enough mentioned to be included for the reader's review.

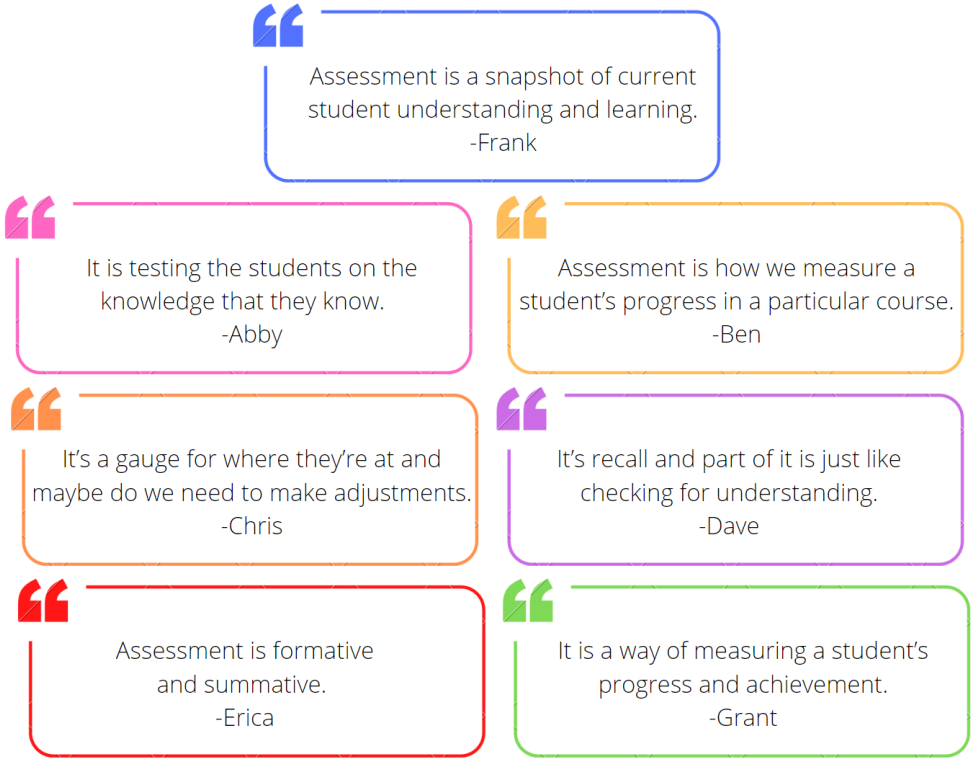
Abby who teaches in a preschool offered an example of alternative assessment in speaking about a student she had who does not speak well yet and is expected to count verbally. "I can ask them to count, and if they can't count, I'm not going to assume that they don't know how to. I'm sure they can count in their head because we've assessed them on that. So, I think the different ways to do it, like having them point." Though the researcher did not use the terminology alternative assessment in the interviews, the participants gave many examples of alternative assessment during the course of the interview. In the literature for this study, the researcher found that new perspectives in assessment are looked on positively and much research is being aimed at coming up with innovative approaches to assessing student learning (Astika, 2014; Barrot, 2016; Lau, et. al, 2020; Petre, 2017). The researcher mined examples of alternative assessment from the words of the participants that align with the definition of alternative assessment laid out in this study. Alternative assessments are practices or procedures deemed to be emerging or non-standard alternatives to formative and summative assessment in the classroom (Gozuyesil & Tanriseven, 2017).

"Assessment is a snapshot of current student understanding and learning," noted Frank. The researcher asked each participant to define assessment in their own words (See figure 6). As a result, this emerged as a theme under the pedagogical domain. Each participant's response aligned with the above definition of assessment. The research on assessment indicates that not all education stakeholders understand assessment. Even the terms assessment, testing, and grading are often not understood independently of each other (Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Ghaicha, 2016; Högberg et. al, 2019; Wormeli, 2018). Research on the subject of assessment defines it as

measures of learning used to gauge instructional success and student information retention (Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Högberg et. al, 2019).

Figure 6

Definitions of Assessment



"One of the biggest challenges with any of the programming and tech side is some kids have had the privilege of being introduced to coding and programming before," Frank observed regarding the diversity in his classroom. In speaking about assessing student learning, the participants in this study mentioned the diversity found in their classrooms without prompt. The literature on assessment indicates that ethnic diversity is increasing and presents a challenge to educators being tasked with meeting the needs of all students in their classrooms (Graham, 2018; Knifsend & Juvonen, 2017). Högberg et. al (2019) spoke to the need for a diversity-approach and individualized assessments aimed at populations of students that are presenting diverse needs.

Though, the research did include a question about diversity in the interview tool and every educator addressed it at that point in the discussion. The comments on diversity in the classroom had much to do with diversity of learners rather than ethnic or racial diversity. Abby noted the diversity of home support students have access to. She said, “It affects how much knowledge the kids have coming into the class. Some of the kids are learning everything in school and other kids, their parents work with them at home.”

“A lot of times in the small school setting, we have a little more flexibility. If my students didn’t really get the lesson, I can pause and spend a little more time on this subject, “Chris mentioned in reference to teacher control over classroom practice. There were many statements made about the freedom teachers have in Hawaii independent schools to make choices about education. The literature in this study did not directly address teacher autonomy, but it was noted in one study included here that in order for teachers to tailor assessments to the individual needs of students, some level of autonomy is necessary (Jones et al., 2018). This theme is one of the most participant-directed themes that emerged. Like a few others, it came as a result of many teachers in the study mentioning the autonomy they enjoy in the context of their teaching and assessment practice. Not all teachers referred to teacher autonomy as a purely positive reality, some noted a lack of uniformity as a weakness of their education context. Chris spoke about a lack a curriculum coordinator at his school, and how there’s “nobody actively looking at our curriculum and asking us questions.” He indicated that this teacher autonomy in the area of assessment was “a weakness at our school.” On the other hand, Ben indicated that he enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in making choices about his assessment in the AP courses he teaches, “There are very little actual outside influences on my assessment, I do pretty much whatever I want.”

"I think being reflective about points of assessment is very, very important because you can't just blindly move on and go forward," Grant stated. He went on to emphasize, "Data is not only measuring the individual student, but it's a snapshot of how the class is doing overall." The two themes that live closest to the research questions in this study are the theme of alternative assessment and the last theme that we will now address, the impact of assessment on future practice. This was a running theme throughout the interviews and in the literature. Research shows that educators need to be aware of the impact assessment can have on practice (Kaniskan, 2011; Tulgar, 2017). As noted in the literature review, educators are in the trenches of education and are tasked with implementing administrative directives and policies; this process of oversight and directed practice has a profound impact on educational practice (Guskey, 2018; Tefera et. al, 2019; DeWitt, 2016). The researcher asked teachers in the final interview question to speak about ow the process of assessment impacts future practice. Some participants addressed this in the natural flow of conversation. The researcher noted many instances of formative assessment being part of the culture of assessment in the Hawaii independent school setting. The teachers that participated here in this research were comfortable with the concept of not merely adhering to a curriculum or a traditional way of testing, but allowing the collection of data on learning in any form to then have an impact on how they would teach in the future. This included an ability to adjust instruction in real time as assessment indicated the progression of the teaching was not meeting students needs or the desired outcome.

Conclusions

The questions examined in this phenomenological study were:

1. What are the perceptions and lived experiences of Hawaii independent school teachers with regard to alternate assessment?
2. How does Hawaii independent school teacher alternative assessment impact future education practice?

Hawaii Independent school teachers experience input from many competing voices across a wide range of education stakeholders. These teachers do not present a singular uniform shared experience with perfectly overlapping views on how they experience alternative assessment. Rather, the results of this phenomenological inquiry present the reader with a wide range of experiences and perspectives from the recorded words of the educators that participated in this research. The researcher compiled a series of themes from nearly 300 statements that connect to the phenomenon of alternative assessment. These meaningful statements were organized into themes and from those themes, three domains emerged. The first domain dealt with the many voices of education stakeholders that result in a large volume of input that influence the participants' choices about assessment practice. The second domain focused on professional practice like doing professional development or working with other educators in collaboration about assessment. The third and final domain consisted of themes connected to the educators' classroom practice, like teacher autonomy and diversity of learners.

Participants in this study overwhelmingly identified parental input about education practice as a key consideration when making assessment choices. Though few mention parents specifically in relation to actual assessment they use, the participants indicated that parents have a wide range of goals for their students. This includes a perceived lack of ability in the public

sector to meet the needs of families as parents turn to private education when they believe their educational goals are not able to be met. This may also include instances when families believe their child may be an advanced student and the public-school curriculum is not challenging enough. Some families also seek private education as a reaction to what they deem to be a heavy focus on test scores and mandated curricula, and some families seek private schooling to increase their chances of securing college acceptance (DeAngelis, 2019; National Association of Independent Schools, 2017; Torres, 2019).

The participants studied in this research are concerned with a lack of standards in Hawaii's independent schools. More than once, they made mentioned of students moving between private and public education and how the process of assessing for learning across a population of students from diverse backgrounds greatly influences the choices they make regarding assessment practice. Educators working in Hawaii's independent schools are also responsible for meeting the needs of a very diverse group of students. Hawaii independent school teachers value their autonomy and the freedom to identify and meet their students' unique and individual needs. These teachers use the assessment process to change the way they instruct in the classes on a day to day, and year to year basis. The current set of standards given by the federal government for public education was meant to help schools embrace real-world learning goals in preparation for college, career, and life (Anderson-Livett, 2020; Frank, et. al, 2020). In this vein, a significant influence on where research is directed in education is steered by the necessity of focusing on diversity in student populations. This has driven research on best practice in assessment and aims it at meeting the needs of classroom populations made up of increasingly diverse student bodies (Graham, 2018; Knifsend & Juvonen, 2017).

While administrators give guidance and adopted school curricula are both factors in how Hawaii independent school teachers teach and assess students, the participants brought up both classroom autonomy and accommodating student voices as key aspects in how they choose to practice assessment. These Hawaii independent school teachers enjoy a great degree of freedom in their own classes. They talked at length about the advantages and challenges of this autonomy. This connects back to their stated desire for standards in assessment and their desire to meet the needs of students. Educators that find themselves in today's classrooms are in a constant state of working to ensure that their methods of instruction meet the needs of their students by leveraging formative and alternative assessment (Maxlow & Sanzo, 2018; Zulkifli, 2019). The participants in this study are part of a trend in educator that is taking steps away from common assessment strategies and moving toward alternative assessment strategies relying on student generated answers and innovations that seeks assessment practices that are more fit to desired outcomes or more-liked by students (Andersen, et. al, 2018; Childers, et. al, 2020; Di Stasio, et. al, 2019; Moore, et. al, 2020; Petre, 2017).

The teachers in this study reflected on the professional development they do in order to achieve success in assessment. The Hawaii Association of Independent Schools supports teacher professional development (HAIS, 2019). The researcher found that understanding the differences between testing, grading and assessment is not always present in the education community both inside and outside the classroom (Wormeli, 2018). The participants in this study universally understood assessment and offered definitions that align with the why it was defined for the purpose of this study. This may be in part due to the great focus on professional development present in the culture of Hawaii independent schools. In this study assessment is defined as

measures of learning used to gauge instructional success and student information retention (Dixson & Worrell, 2016; Högberg et. al, 2019).

Recommendations for Further Research

As established in the literature for this study, not enough research exists about Hawaii's independent school teachers. This is a largely unexplored population of teachers in any given subject area. For the purposes of this study, however, the researcher recommends more research about the impact that assessment can have on educator practice. This study could be replicated across other populations of educators in other states. Perhaps the experience of independent schoolteachers in the state of Louisianan that sees a similar enrollment rate in independent schools might be different from Hawaii's private school teachers. The circumstances for why enrollment are high in Louisiana are different from the reasons in Hawaii.

In this vein of considering replicating this study in other contexts, high poverty schools may produce different experiences and perspectives from educators working in that context. As established in this research, Hawaii private schools see a high rate of support from the population and see a considerable financial investment from parents in the context. Socio-economic diversity was also discussed in the study and while some diversity of financial means is represented in Hawaii's independent schools, the student bodies are not primarily made up of students from high poverty homes. Examining the experiences of educators in lower income educational settings may provide other researchers with a diversity of perspectives and lived experiences for analysis.

This study could also be repeated for other aspects of education practice in Hawaii's independent schools. One idea presented itself when participants in the study brought up the movement of students between the private and public sector. Teachers are experiencing

accommodating students from public education in their classrooms and are also in some instances tasked with preparing students for public education. A good example of this came from Dave who is a middle school teacher. He mentioned wanting a set of standards that would be used to evaluate students that are outbound or inbound. This is perhaps due to middle school students leaving private education to go to public high schools after studying with him in middle school courses. Further, Hawaii is home to several schools that are k-8 grade and this schools partner with other education institutions both private and public to accommodate their graduating 8th graders. One of the four stated primary activities of the Hawaii Association of Independent schools is to develop and maintain a public/private partnership (HAIS, 2019).

Much research has been devoted to the study of teacher impact on students. This research indicated that participants were greatly concerned with the impact their instruction had on students. The assessment process is mainly concerned with the success of instruction and the success of learning taking place in the classroom. Though the field of teacher impact on student is widely researched, more research is needed about the impact of alternative assessment practice on the academic success of students. The researcher recommends further research in this area.

In the initial stages of this phenomenological study, the researcher planned to contact heads of schools in order to secure research participants. However, most heads of schools did not grant site access to the researcher. As a result, no school sites were included in this study. The researcher recommends further research about assessment practice at individual schools in the Hawaii independent school context.

Implications for Professional Practice

Not enough teacher voices are represented in education policy and change (Bergdahl & Langmann, 2017; Di Tommaso, et. al, 2018; Ham & Dekkers, 2019). This phenomenological

study has yielded a description of some of the perspectives and experiences held by practicing educators in a unique and understudied setting, Hawaii independent schools. Education leaders, peers, and stakeholders in both the private and public sectors can use this research to inform choices they make in education policy at both the building level and across entire education systems. Mining from the discussion and conclusions within this study, the researcher presents the following implications for professional practice.:

Professional development is important. Most participants in this researched noted the importance of professional development with some saying it is the key influence on choices made in the area of assessment practice. The literature on assessment practice shows that many challenges exist for educators in the attempting to evaluate student learning across the curriculum that in order to meet these demands, teachers need regular professional development and training (Decker et. al, 2018; Hikida & Taylor, 2020). This does not mean that schools in the independent school setting do not value or even require professional development, it just means that teachers see the process of being required to participate in professional development to be beneficial. From the interviews, Frank tells us that we are living in a post-information scarcity age. He goes on to discuss leveraging technology to benefit professional development, “I can just go to the MTI Media Lab, go to the Coursera, go to the Stanford online school, enroll in one of their classes for ten minutes, get a copy of all the curriculum, lesson plans, and grading rubrics.” Ben mentioned workshops and conferences he attends and said, “from those kind of professional development things, I gather some ideas in there.” If you are an administrator trying to justify canceling classes to send your staff and faculty to an education conference, the findings in this research indicates much benefit to assessment practice as a result of this investment.

Working with other educators is both a benefit and a challenge. Providing teachers opportunities to work together to create innovation in assessment benefits assessment practice. Comments about collaborating or lack of teacher collaboration occurred eight times during the course of the interviews with the research participants in this study. Negative comments were centered on wishing there was more opportunity to engage others with how best to instruct or how to support teaching and assessing in their own classrooms through ensuring alignment between grades and classes. Ben indicated a desire to work with other educators at his school to "push the envelope to try and get a higher standard of answer out of the kids." He went on to indicate a difference between his assessments and his colleague's. He contrasted the two by saying his peer's assessment objectives were psychological, while in his class he tries to get the kids to see the standard for AP is very high. Teachers will benefit from assigned collaboration time. Professional learning communities (PLCs) are a great way for teachers to collaborate and gain new ideas for how best t0 evaluate student learning. Erica mentioned PLCs specifically as a great source of collaboration and growth for her own knowledge of educational assessment. If you are a school leader reading this study and you do not provide teachers opportunity to meet and collaborate during the school year, consider starting a PLC at your school. Teachers in this study say that their educational practice benefits from working together on assessment.

Parent voices are loud. Teachers in this study identified many competing voices in the stakeholder domain. The most prolific influence was the voice of the parent. Throughout the interviews, even without prompting by the interview tool, teachers reflected on the important role parents play in influencing educational practice. Some teachers desire that parents have more input specifically in the area of assessment practice. The researcher identified nearly 70 meaningful statements about alternative assessment across the interviews. Teachers in Hawaii's

independent schools are prolific in the area of alternative assessments. They are willing and able to adjust practice to accommodate diverse learners and adjust instruction to meet diverse learning needs. Grant spoke about parental input. He said, “Parents want a quick check and there’s always that question about how can my kid get an A? I’d rather the parent worry more about skills and behaviors in class.” Erica’s comments about parental input also highlighted a lack of concern with classroom assessment or even instruction. She said, “I think the parents are mainly concerned about where the students will go to college.” This is reflected in the literature on parental concerns regarding education and why some parents seek private education. Some families seek out private schools when they think their educational needs are not met, when they think their student is advanced and not challenged enough in public education, when they believe public education focuses too much on test scores and universal curricula, and some parents look to private education as an opportunity to increase college opportunities (DeAngelis, 2019; National Association of Independent Schools, 2017; Torres, 2019). Educational leaders reading these recommendations should seek opportunities to connect teachers with parents. Teachers are hearing from parents, but that interest and that zeal experienced by educators could be better directed toward classroom practices like assessment. Connecting parents and teachers in classrooms populated by diverse students might serve to equip teachers to better formulate alternative assessment strategies.

Uniformity in education standards is desired. Several educators in this research spoke about the movement of students between public and private education. It is the belief of some participants in this study that assessing students used to different standards is a challenge that can be met be if private schools adopted some form of universal standard for assessment. Abby indicated that the standards used in her school were not the same as state standards. She said,

"We don't have to have a basic standard. We can use the standards that the State has and see what we want to use from that. I think it gives us freedom to sometimes have a higher standard for kids because then we can decide what our standards are." This freedom to choose which standards are used in the independent school setting was never referred to in the negative, in fact just like Abby, several participants noted using state standards as their own chosen reference point for student academic achievement. Though, Dave said it best when referring to the challenge of accommodating students coming to his school from public education. He said, "Students go back and forth between public and private schools. So, if the standards are completely different, there might be a lot of confusion." As an educational leader reading this study, the final implication for professional practice is to have this conversation with your teachers and teacher leaders. Evaluate what standards you are using in the independent school setting. You may not adopt state standards, it may just be that you have a conversation with your team to see how to translate the adopted or created standards you use in order to see how your system of assessment aligns with the system in place where students are coming from. The well-known Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were created through a collaborative effort by educational leaders from nearly all 50 states. They were meant to help schools embrace the challenges of preparing for college, career, and life (Anderson-Livett, 2020; Frank, et. al, 2020). They are a resource for alignment, and teachers would benefit from being equipped to help students in transition from public to private education.

Hawaii's independent schools play an important role in providing families with a partnership in educating and equipping students to achieve success in college and career. The public-private partnership between the Hawaii Association of Independent schools serves to increase Hawaii's impact in the lives of these families. The educators in this study provided us

with unique perspectives and experiences that emphasize the importance of the parent in the education process, the voice of the student in the classroom, the role of curriculum in instruction, and affirmed the role of school administration in the assessment process. This research should challenge education leaders to provide freedom and opportunity for teachers to engage in the development and implementation of alternative assessment strategies in their own context.

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Appendix A

SURVEY FOR PARTICIPANT SELECTION

1. I have been teaching in Hawaii Independent Schools for:

A) 1-4 years

B) 5-9 years

C) 10+ years

2. My Subject Area (List any that apply)

   [Textbox]

3. I define assessment as:

   [Textbox]

4. In my classroom I use the following types of assessments:

   A) Project/Problem-Based Learning Final Products

   B) Student Portfolios

   C) Interviews

   D) Presentations

   E) Take-Home Tests

   F) Collaborative Tests

   G) Concept Maps

   H) Reflective Pieces

   I) Other (please list any other alternative assessments you use)

      [Text Box]

Appendix B

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

[Participant Name]: My name is Robert Black and I am an Upper School Teacher at Hanalani Schools. I am enrolled at Northwest Nazarene University in the Education Leadership Doctoral program and am beginning the research phase of my dissertation. With permission from your head of schools, [Head of Schools Name], I am requesting your assistance in the following study.

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HAWAII INDEPENDENT SCHOOL TEACHERS' USE OF ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS

My dissertation uses a phenomenological model centered on recording teachers' experiences to obtain comprehensive descriptions in order to create written themes. These themes will provide the basis for a reflective analysis to depict a portrait of teachers' experiences dealing with assessment practice. A substantial amount of research on assessment focuses on federal mandates on education policy and the need for innovation in assessment in order to meet the needs of students facing an uncertain future. Research indicates that while educator voices are welcome in the conversation on assessment policy and change, not enough educator perspectives are available to policy makers and education leadership. This study seeks to examine assessment in the context of private school pedagogy in the State of Hawaii with member schools from the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools. I would love to conduct a recorded interview with you for 30 minutes in order to learn more about your experience with alternative assessments and add to the body of literature on educator perspectives in assessment practice. If you are interested in participating in this research, please complete the attached survey.

Robert Black
[redacted]
robertblack@nnu.edu

Appendix C

EMAIL SETUP FOR PARTICIPANTS

[Participant Name]: I thankful that you are willing to participate in my dissertation research. I have complete Institutional Board of Review approval and full approval from the [School Name] administration. The information you present will be completely anonymous through the process and you have the right to withdraw at any time. I would like to set up a 30-minute interview at your convenience and at a location of your choice, Zoom is the default option if you are comfortable with that format. I have attached the interview questions, my findings from literature about assessment practice, and more information concerning my study. Your time and perspectives on this topic are appreciated.

Robert Black

robertblack@nnu.edu

Appendix D

INFORMED CONSENT

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Robert Black, in the Department of Graduate Education at Northwest Nazarene University is conducting a research study related to gaining insight into unique perspectives on education assessment held by educators that teach both Hawaii Independent School Setting. We appreciate your involvement in helping us conduct this research about assessment in Hawaiian Independent Schools. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a healthy volunteer, over the age of 18.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, this will be held as evidence of your willingness to participate in the study.
2. You will answer a set of interview questions and engage in a discussion on the use of assessment in the independent school classroom. This discussion will be audio recorded and is expected to last approximately 30 minutes.

These procedures will be competed at a location mutually decided upon by the participant and principal investigator and will take a total time of about 30 minutes.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. Some of the discussion questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.

2. The researchers will make every effort to protect your confidentiality. However, if you are uncomfortable answering any of these questions, you may leave them blank.
3. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. Any digital records will be kept safe on a password protected computer. All physical data from notes, audio tapes, and disks will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the Department and the key to the cabinet will be kept in a separate location. In compliance with the Federalwide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed or erased (45 CFR 46.117).
4. Only the primary researcher and the research supervisor will be privy to data from this study. As researchers, both parties are bound to keep data as secure and confidential as possible.

D. BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help educators develop new perspectives in education assessment based on the experiences of educators with diverse experiences.

E. PAYMENTS

There are no direct financial payments for participating in this study.

F. QUESTIONS

If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the investigator. Robert Black can be contacted via email at robertblack@nnu.edu, via telephone at [redacted], or by writing: [redacted]. If you have concerns

about the research, you can contact the research supervisor, Dr. Heidi Curtis at hlcurtis@nnu.edu.

Should you feel distressed due to participation in this process, you should contact your own health care provider.

G. CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status as a student at Northwest Nazarene University.

I give my consent to participate in this study:

_____ _____

Signature of Study Participant Date

I give my consent for the interview and discussion to be audio taped in this study:

_____ _____

Signature of Study Participant Date

I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study:

_____ _____

Signature of Study Participant Date

_____ _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.

Appendix E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Robert Black- Doctoral Student Northwest Nazarene University

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HAWAII INDEPENDENT SCHOOL TEACHERS' USE OF ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Interview Protocol

Header:

The purpose of this interview is to gather information related to the assessment practices of Hawaii independent school teachers with regard to alternative assessment practices. According to research, teacher voices are not adequately represented in policy and change for education practice. This is true of assessment practice and policy. Educators are asked to meet the needs of many stakeholders without their own perspectives and experiences being consulted. This study is focused on the unique concerns and perspectives of independent school teachers in Hawaii's independent schools.

Interviewer: Robert Black

Interviewee:

Subject Area:

Years of teaching experience in Hawaii Independent Schools:

Educational background:

Interview date/time:

Question #1: Considering your position as a teacher in an independent school, what are the major influences on assessment practice in this context?

Who issues guidance or directives regarding assessment?

What outside-the-school influences impact choices made at your school regarding assessment practice?

Question #2: Considering your position as a teacher in an independent school, what types of assessments do you use?

Where did you get the idea for those types of assessments?

Question #3: What are the barriers to successful assessment practice in your classroom?

What are your thoughts considering teachers in independent schools are not bound by state-mandated education policy with regard to testing, grading, and assessment?

Question #3: Considering your position as a teacher in an independent school, what are your thoughts on how teachers use assessment in their classrooms?

What resources are available to you for developing skill in assessment?

What do you wish more teachers knew about assessment?

Question #4: Considering your position as a Considering your position as an independent school teacher, what do you think is the view of parents regarding assessment?

What do parents say about assessment?

What should parents say about assessment?

What are parent's main concerns regarding your and your peers' practice of assessment?

Question #5: Considering your position as an independent school teacher, what changes would you make to assessment practice?

What other considerations exist regarding assessment practice?

Appendix F

ETHICS AND HUMAN SUBJECTS TRAINING

ACRP

FOR LEARNING FOR LISTENING FOR LIFE

Association of Clinical Research Professionals

CERTIFIES THAT

Robert Black

Has Successfully Completed

Ethics and Human Subject Protection (No CEU)

Certification Date:
January 23, 2019

ACRP The Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP) provides continuing medical education for the completion of this educational activity. These credits can be used to meet the certifications maintenance requirement.

Appendix G

SOCIAL MEDIA RECRUITMENT POST

Hello,

My name is Robert Black and I am an Upper School Teacher at Hanalani Schools. I am enrolled at Northwest Nazarene University in the Education Leadership Doctoral program and am beginning the research phase of my dissertation. I am requesting your assistance in the following study:

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HAWAII INDEPENDENT SCHOOL TEACHERS' USE OF ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS

My dissertation uses a phenomenological model centered on recording teachers' experiences to obtain comprehensive descriptions in order to create written themes. These themes will provide the basis for a reflective analysis to depict a portrait of teachers' experiences dealing with assessment practice.

A substantial amount of research on assessment focuses on federal mandates on education policy and the need for innovation in assessment in order to meet the needs of students facing an uncertain future. Research indicates that while educator voices are welcome in the conversation on assessment policy and change, not enough educator perspectives are available to policy makers and education leadership.

I would love to conduct a recorded interview with you and other educators in focus groups for 30 - 60 minutes via Zoom video chat in order to learn more about your experience with alternative assessments and add to the body of literature on educator perspectives in assessment practice. I may also invite you to speak with me one-on-one is a separate Zoom video chat for about 30 minutes.

Thank you,
Robert Black

robertblack@nnu.edu

Appendix H

TRANSCRIPTIONIST CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement

In order to maintain confidentiality, I agree to:

1. Keep all research information that is shared with me (e.g. audio or video recordings, DVDs/CDs, transcripts, data, etc.) confidential by not discussing or sharing this information verbally or in any format with anyone other than the principal investigator of this study;

2. Ensure the security of research information (e.g. audio or video recordings, DVDs/CDs, transcripts, data, etc.) while it is in my possession. This includes:
   - Using closed headphones when transcribing audio taped interviews;
   - Keeping all transcript documents and digitized interviews on a password protected computer with password-protected files;
   - Closing any transcription programs and documents when temporarily away from the computer;
   - Keeping any printed transcripts in a secure location such as a locked file cabinet;
   - Permanently deleting any digital communication containing the data.

3. Not make copies of research information (e.g. audio or video recordings, DVDs/CDs, transcripts, data, etc.) unless specifically instructed to do so by the principal investigator;

4. Give all research information (e.g. audio or video recordings, DVDs/CDs, transcripts, data, etc.) and research participant information, back to the principal investigator upon completion of my duties as a transcriber;

5. After discussing it with the principal investigator, erase or destroy all research information (e.g. audio or video recordings, DVDs/CDs, transcripts, data, etc.) that cannot be returned to the principal investigator upon completion of my duties as a transcriber.

Name of Transcriber: [redacted]

Title of Research Study: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HAWAII INDEPENDENT SCHOOL TEACHERS' USE OF ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Name of Principal Investigator: Robert Black

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have reviewed, understand, and agree to adhere to the expectations for a transcriber described above. I agree to maintain confidentiality while performing my duties as a transcriber and recognize that failure to comply with these expectations may result in disciplinary action.

[redacted] 6/7/24

Signature of Transcriber Date

[redacted]

Print Name