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Perceptions of Novice Teachers' Early Departure Decisions in a Southern Rural High School

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Abstract

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Angela M. Fortenberry

MA, American Military University, 2011

BS, University of Maryland, 2009

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

One significant issue in U.S. public schools is the need to determine the root cause of the early departure of novice teachers. The problem that was the focus of this study was the departure of novice teachers from a southern rural high school prior to completing 5 years in the profession. The purpose of this project study was to explore novice teachers' perceptions about early departure from the local high school. Fishbein's expectancy-value theory was used in this exploratory case study to gain insight on seven novice teachers' perceptions related to their early departures. The research questions focused on perceived barriers for departure decisions and the main motivators to depart the local school before 5 years of teaching at the high school of study. Findings from the data collected with in-depth, semi structured interviews indicated that novice teachers believed that the professional development that they received was not relevant to their environment. They voiced concern about the lack of administrative support and desired strategies for classroom management, classroom procedures, stress management, and time management. The resulting project consisted of a revamped professional development program to provide novice teachers with sessions that encompassed the areas that were believed to be deficient. The workshop evaluation provided formative feedback from workshop participants. The project contributes to positive social change by providing a program that will give novice teachers the information and tools they need to decrease stress while increasing knowledge and resilience.

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Dedication

Some may feel that the journey of their doctoral study is done alone; I am not one of those people. The support and encouragement of my family and friends carried me through this process. I want to thank my husband for being the loving and caring person he is and for taking on extra duties around the house so I could focus on my work. This accomplishment goes out to everyone who cheered me on and pushed me to keep going. This study is for those educators who want more for the students and themselves. Let's leave it better than when we arrived.

Acknowledgments

Dr. Wattam and Dr. Penny, you both have helped me stay on track, and it has been a mission I sometimes thought was impossible. I think I went through every emotion known to man during this project study. I would not change any of it for the world because it has made me stronger and wiser. I hope I was able to share something of value with you both as you have done for me. Continue to support and encourage those going through their studies. I promise to pay it forward.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

One significant issue in U.S. public schools is novice teacher retention. Many teachers are leaving the profession to pursue alternate vocations. Meanwhile, education policymakers, school board members, and administrators explore ways to retain educators to ensure stability, reduce pressure on budgets, and have a positive impact on learner success (Oke et al., 2016; Papay et al., 2015). Furthermore, it may be problematic for leaders to make changes in school culture, policies, and programs when there is a continuous change of new educators.

The number of novice teachers who leave the profession varies by district and state. According to the Department of Education, a southern state reported that teacher departures increased from 18.7% in 2012 to 22% in 2016. However, an east coast state reported that one fifth of the teachers left in the 1st year, and one third left by the end of their 4th year. A different study conducted by Noordzij and van de Grift (2020) stated that 20% or more of new educators leave within the first year. In a 2016 report, the Department of Education stated that 20% of teachers in years 1-3 left their schools, with 13% moving to another district while 7% exited the profession. Additionally, among teachers who left in the 2012-2013 school year, 51% of revealed that their previous occupation had a better workload, and 53% thought that their previous working environment was better than teaching. There are various outcomes in regard to teachers who depart the field. I explored the issue of high early departure rates for novice teachers in a specific high school.

The Local Problem

According to an administrator at the high school, from 2014-2017, an average of 40% of novice teachers at a low-income rural area high school in the southern United States departed the institution before completing 5 years. In order to retain novice teachers, the administration revamped the mentoring, professional development, and new teacher orientation programs in 2014. The focus of these programs was to build confidence, foster teamwork, and enhance motivation levels. Even with these new programs put in place, a school administrator said the school continued to lose 40% of novice teachers each year. The problem that was the focus of this study was a lack of information that could help administrators with retaining novice teachers at the high school that was the local context for this study.

Rationale

The school that was the local context of study is located in a low-income rural area of the southern United States. Of the student population of approximately 380 students, 30% are Black, 70% are White, and 82% receive free or reduced-price lunch. An administrator shared, of the school's 40 educators, 2% are Black and 98% are White. During the 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 school years, an average of 40% of novice teachers left the school. A teacher form the high school shared that many of the teachers believed that the high departure rate for novice teachers had led to a loss of instructional knowledge, increased the time required to mentor new employees, and increased the amount of time needed for recurring new teacher training.

The departure of novice teachers has significant effects on student and teacher performance (Young, 2018). Zhang and Zeller (2016) stated that lack of adequate new-teacher preparation is a significant factor that affects teacher retention. According to an administrator, leadership at the high school worked on programs in hopes of a better retention outcome, but teachers continued to voice their concerns about losing beginning teachers and the negative impact that this loss had on the remaining teachers, students, and culture. Novice teachers have also departed when students were not performing to their expectations (Papay et al., 2015). Conversely, student performances can decline due to a lack of instructional continuity and a strong school culture of support (Kraft et al., 2016; Papay et al., 2015). Retaining teachers beyond the 5-year mark leads to benefits in the areas of stability, culture, student success, and workload (Harrison-Henderson, 2020).

Other low-income and high-minority schools in the state have similar issues, with an average turnover rate of 39% for novice teachers (Harrison-Henderson, 2020). Notably, there has not been an isolated reason that novice teachers leave the profession, but studies have shown that teachers who departed were mainly White females or those teaching math, science, or special education (Papay et al., 2015; Simon & Johnson, 2015). Young (2018) also reported that students from lower performing schools received lower marks in math and English when there was a high amount of teacher turnover. In addition, educators have noted a lack of administrative support and heavy workload as reasons for leaving (Hughes et al., 2015). Teachers who remained beyond 5 years have been said to have more tenacity than those who departed (Perry et al., 2015). Novice

teacher departure has various effects on schools, including the school of interest in this study.

Although there have been challenges at the high school, an administrator shared from 2014-2017, the school moved from an overall rating D to a rating of B. However, during 2017-2018, the school's grade returned to a D, and figures for students' growth in math and reading were reported to be 15% and 5.5% less than the state average, respectively. Although the school's grade had improved during previous years, according to the principal, the departure of novice teachers was a persistent problem. Therefore, the principal said district personnel had looked for other ways to motivate novice teachers to continue at the school.

According to the Department of Education, the efforts of the district to provide strategies to retain novice teachers, only 80% taught for more than 3 years, versus the 87% state average. The study site also had a higher percentage of new teachers (20%) compared to most high schools in the state, with a state median of 9%. Dealing with the workload, class size, policies, and environment were all possible triggers for early departure and valid reasons to explore novice teachers' perceptions about their early departure from the profession. The purpose of this project study was to explore novice teachers' perceptions about exiting the high school before completing 5 years of service.

Definition of Terms

Terms used in the study and their definitions are as follows:

Extrinsic value: The monetary value of something (Merriman, 2017).

Intrinsic value: The degree to which a person enjoys events involved in a job (Woolley & Fishbach, 2015).

Novice teachers: Those who have been teaching for 5 years or less (Khalid & Husnin, 2019).

Teacher retention: The portion of educators in any given year who remain in the same school for a particular amount of time (Papay et al., 2015).

Teacher turnover: The rate at which teachers exit schools (Merriman, 2017).

Significance of the Study

Environment, administrative support, stress, workload, benefits, and performance are some of the factors that may influence novice teachers to leave the profession within the first 5 years (Berg & Cornell, 2016; Gallo & Beckman, 2016). These issues frequently occur in low-performing, high-minority, high-poverty public schools located in rural and urban areas, according to Nguyen (2020) and Simon and Johnson (2015). In a study by Ingersoll et al. (2019), teacher turnover was found to have been an educational dilemma for over three decades. Time and money devoted to the retention of beginning teachers by states and school districts are essential for instructional continuity, student achievement, and community.

In addition to the time and money required to retain novice teachers, there is a need to ensure that students receive an adequate education. Young (2018) claimed that high rates of teacher turnover have potentially negative consequences for student achievement across the United States. Due to this issue, affected schools have educators who become burned out. The workload and stress that novice teachers experience make it

difficult for them to maintain a high level of motivation and production. Teachers who remain often experience heavier workloads, stress, and lack of continuity (Merriman, 2016). According to Zhang and Zeller (2016), teaching has been a career in which those with the least experience face the most obstacles and challenges.

In an attempt to minimize the effects of teacher attrition, leaders in education have been trying various strategies, recognizing that teachers are an integral part of the education system (Papay et al., 2015; Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Research has also shown that the number of individuals planning to become teachers has declined, with a 19% decrease in college students majoring in education since 2012 (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). First-time educators represent a population whose members bring new ideas and energy to the school system (Heeralal, 2017). School educators desire innovation, but frequent change brings difficulty in preserving continuity, building a strong culture, and supporting student achievement (Heeralal, 2017).

With novice teachers exiting early and teacher candidate numbers decreasing, it would be prudent for institutional leaders to understand why novice teachers leave. This research was guided by the need to listen to the accounts of teachers to establish the nature of their decision to exit the profession. Results of this study highlighted important aspects of what encouraged beginning teachers to depart and what changes can be made within the education system to reduce the novice teacher early departure rate.

Research Questions

The intent of this project study was to explore novice teachers' perceptions about exiting the high school before completing 5 years of service. The research provided

insight into the possible reasons for the high turnover rate at the study site and provided information to share with administrators on the outcome of the research. The information may be used by school and district leadership to develop plans to increase novice teacher retention. Use of the information to make changes that may increase the novice the general guiding research question for this qualitative case study was the following: What are the novice teachers' perceptions of departure reasons? The research questions that were answered in this study were as follows:

RQ1.   What are the perceived barriers that led teachers to depart the high school that is the focus of this study before 5 years on the job?

RQ2.   What are the main motivators to departing the high school that is the focus of this study, as perceived by the teachers who left before 5 years on the job?

Review of the Literature

The literature review section defines and identifies themes important to the early departure of novice teachers in schools. It was essential to give a description of a "novice teacher" along with discussing important factors that predicted novice teachers' early departure. The factors which effected early departures were the following: results of administrative actions, stress, mentoring, and induction programs. Previously published literature was used to define novice teachers (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Glennie et al., 2016; Pogodzinski, 2015). For purposes of this study, these articles corroborate a definition of novice teachers as those with 5 or fewer years of teaching experience.

Search Strategy

Terms used to search for information were *novice teacher early departure*, *teacher retention, teacher stress, beginning teacher stress, new teacher motivation*, and *novice teacher attrition*. I conducted searches for the majority of these terms in the Walden library using the following databases: ProQuest, Academic Search Complete, and EBSCO. There were also some attempts to locate articles on Google Scholar, with a small number of books checked out from my local library. Additional searches were conducted on the Department of Education website to locate information about the state where the school of study was located, as well as national data to compare and contrast information. I discontinued my search after I had collected over 40 references that met Walden requirements, at which point I started to gather redundant information.

Conceptual Framework

I used a combination of Fishbein and Ajzen's (1977) expectancy-value theory and Bandura's (1995) theory of self-efficacy as the conceptual framework for this project study to inquire about novice teacher motivations in regard to early departures. The conceptual framework of this study focused on the perceptions of novice teachers in regard to stress, motivation, administrative support, induction program, and the environment as they related to early departures from the school. Ajzen and Fishbein (2000) proposed that a person's behavior is directly correlated to how much a goal is valued and what the person is expected to accomplish. The expectancy-value theory for the school that was the local context of this study was considered based on novice teachers' beliefs and attitudes and how those opinions led them to depart the school. A

conviction an individual has is produced from self-observation and information gained from others (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977). Teachers form certain beliefs and attitudes about an institution from the school's culture and whether there is support for employees (Green et al., 2016; Kraft et al., 2016; Thibodeaux, 2015). Employees also consider whether certain attributes are present or not prior to making the determination to leave. The perceptions that novice teachers have about how various job demands, work environments, or school cultures affect them and may lead them to make departure decision.

External factors related to departure decisions also exist that affect decision making, such as family needs, emotional issues, or fulfillment of commitments (Clandinin et al., 2015; Gray & Taie, 2015; Hughes et al., 2015). The belief that benefits and pay may lead to teacher retention also exists for those who think that pay is what drives decisions (Gomba, 2015; Janik & Rothman, 2015). The aforementioned matters are all possible stressors, depending on how one perceives stress. Although there are many factors that drive the thought of departing the teaching field, stress may be a factor that increases the probability of early departures. How much people value what they are doing and how they perceive the outcome of working toward a particular goal will often determine their actions (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000).

A variety of articles exist connecting expectancy-value and motivation in regard to students, but there is a limited amount of related literature about teachers. Wigfield and Ecceles (2000) conducted a study based on an expectancy-value motivation model, finding that the more that novice teachers have their expectations met, the better chance

there is that they will remain in the profession. High expectations in the areas of workload, relationships with parents, administrative support, and the outlook for the future can make staying motivated to teach difficult (Perry et al., 2015; Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). Drossel et al. (2019) stated that novice teachers ranked abilities and basic values as the most important in regard to expectancy-value. New teachers typically enter the profession wanting to make a difference in children's lives or in society.

Sometimes, when one believes something is possible and the opposite occurs, it affects behaviors in a negative manner. Bandura (1995) defined *perceived self-efficacy* as belief in one's competence to meet challenges and recover from setbacks. Novice teachers are met with many challenges and have to decide whether they will take on those challenges or give up. Having long periods of conflict, high teaching demands, and unmotivated students can intensify stress and make overcoming those obstacles difficult. The core research question about novice teachers' perceptions about departing before completing 5 years of service stemmed from a desire to know whether the teachers had challenges that outweighed the desire to make a difference. I anticipated that whether those teachers had difficulty with the workload, classroom management, leadership, or a host of other things might surface during the interview process. When teachers view their self-efficacy in a negative manner, their morale and motivation decline (Wang et al., 2015).

Teachers who believe that they have the ability to perform at high levels and help students succeed have more resiliency and are more apt to remain in a teaching career (Wang et al., 2015). On the other hand, educators may give up or perform poorly when

they believe that they are unable to produce at the desired level. Hence, teachers'

assessments of self-efficacy influence their performance and decisions. Renbarger and

Davis (2019) contended that those with lower self-efficacy beliefs may impose heavier

workloads on themselves, causing stress and burnout. A teacher who has a low sense of

self-efficacy might perform at a lower level and thus affect the quality of education that

students receive. In turn, this may lead to disciplinary actions being imposed on the

teacher by the administration. Poor teacher performance may also lead to decreased

student satisfaction. A better grasp of how an inability to reach goals, stress, and other

beliefs play into the perceptions of novice teachers in rural schools in high-poverty areas

(such as the high school in this study) may assist in gaining an improved understanding

of such teachers' departure decisions.

Although teaching is widely seen as a demanding and low-status occupation

compared to many jobs, beliefs, intrinsic value, and ability were ranked as the most

popular reasons that individuals selected teaching as a career (Thomson & Turner, 2015).

Moreover, some teachers enter the profession as a secondary career. People have various

reasons that they decide to enter and depart the teaching field, but those who choose to

leave often depart because their performance did not match their expectations (Merriman,

2016).

Logical Connections

Experiences novice teachers had related to expectancy value and stress represent

plausible reasons for the novice teacher early-departure problem in the school in this

study. Thomson and Turner (2015) stated that individuals' intentions to stay in the

teaching profession are based on how much teaching is valued, suggesting that expectations and values tend to influence behavior. Imagine a new teacher who expects a certain level of support but realizes that the reality of being a teacher is less than desirable. The realization of a different working environment than was expected may drive the decision to depart the profession. Beliefs may be changed through persuasive communication from leadership, but the message has to be strong enough to get people to change (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977). This study focused on novice teachers' perceptions of early departures in order to provide insight into educational leadership to decrease novice teachers' early departures.

Review of the Broader Problem

Factors That Influence Novice Teacher Early Departures

Studies have shown that the early departure of novice teachers is a growing problem and stems from stress, poor administrative support, and local and school environments (Green & Munoz, 2016; Pedota, 2015; Thibodeaux et al., 2015). Additional findings indicate other reasons that novice teachers depart the profession, such as lack of parent and community support (Miller et al., 2020; Zhang & Zeller, 2016) and student discipline issues (Kraft et al., 2016; Thibodeaux et al., 2015). New teachers have also decided to exit the field when asked to teach outside of their subject area or when required to manage classes that are larger than the average size (Djonko-Moore, 2015).

Teachers new to the profession have also expressed concern about the local environment being uninviting and the local community being unsupportive, which render the profession undesirable (Khalid & Husnin, 2019; Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Teacher

salaries vary depending on the area, and that may be a major factor for beginning teachers to consider when thinking about remaining at a school (Green & Munoz, 2015; Miller et al., 2020). Given these factors, supportive leadership and faculty are often needed to help new teachers navigate the transition into the career. Louis et al. (2016) stated that administrators who promote an active and caring environment have novice teachers who decide to stay in schools longer.

In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education reported that there were 1% fewer teachers across the United States than in 2006. Those numbers included public and private school educators. The Department of Education also reported that 20% of novice teachers moved from their districts or the profession within 1 to 3 years of starting to teach. Fensterwald (2015) reported that 17% of novice teachers exited the profession between the 2007-2008 and 2011-2012 school years. The most recent data available, for the 2014-2015 school year, show that 20% of teachers in the area of this study were new hires, versus the 11% U.S. average (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Showing early departure rates on a national level gives insight into the seriousness of the issue.

Stress in the Workplace

The American Institute of Science (2012) has defined *stress* as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change." Stress is often connected to job satisfaction and can occur throughout the year for teachers (Mankin, 2016). Stress is also something that may motivate novice teachers to exit the profession. Some of the factors that may affect job satisfaction are policies, accountability, and workload (Mankin, 2016;

Rajkumer, 2016). Poor job satisfaction, heavy workloads, and high demands may lead to burnout and possible departure from the profession (Skaavik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Stress means different things to various people and can be considered positive or negative. For example, if a supervisor asks an employee to perform additional duties, that might be perceived as a negative situation for one person, whereas another person might view the additional duty as an opportunity to gain knowledge. It is important to understand how individuals perceive the stress being placed upon them and if the outcome of that stress affects them in a positive or negative manner. Negative stress that is not handled well can cause health problems and may also be the catalyst for job departure.

According to research findings, teaching is one of the most stressful occupations, and stress contributes to teacher exhaustion (Clandinin et al., 2015; Ingersoll et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Teaching has also been known to lead to nonattendance and attrition (Embse et al., 2016). Heavy workloads, learning new policies and procedures, and managing a classroom are possible contributors to beginning teachers' stress levels. Difficulty in managing all of the aspects of being a teacher has been associated with the stress levels that teachers have, as well as with their departure decisions (Pogodzinki, 2015). Other potential indicators of increased stressors are lack of support, being unprepared, difficulty dealing with student discipline, and academic issues (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Miller et al., 2020; Musu-Gillette, 2016). Stress is also known to lead to adverse behaviors, thoughts, and feelings, which can lead to giving up (Prilleltensky et al., 2016).

New teachers often have expectations that are the opposite of reality when they arrive at a new school (Djonko-Moore, 2015), and the stressors of undesirable working conditions contribute to dissatisfaction. Stress-related actions by novice teachers could adversely influence the educational experiences and success of students (Djonko-Moore, 2015). Gaining support from administrators through new teacher induction and mentorship programs may reduce both stress and the desire to leave.

Environmental Effects on Early Departure

Understanding the problem of novice teacher early departures is also important when considering the social and environmental situations that teachers often encounter (Louis et al., 2016). Zhang and Zeller (2016) described the environment as the cultural and social forces that shape the lives of individuals or groups. The environment also consists of the shared behavioral, emotional, and cognitive knowledge that faculty and staff of an organization have gained over time. As an organization develops, the behaviors of the members acquire a regular pattern based upon shared norms (Pogodzinski, 2015). Therefore, when novice teachers decide to depart the profession, the school environment often plays a substantial part. If a school's environment is toxic, that school cannot thrive.

The school environment is affected in numerous ways when novice teachers leave within the first 5 years of starting their teaching careers. Some examples of such environmental changes are decreased productivity, a decline in job satisfaction, and a loss of experience (Hanushek et al., 2016; Kraft et al., 2016). Khalid and Husnin (2019) also found that unfavorable working environments were connected to increased novice teacher

departure. While there have been studies indicating declines in particular attributes of the school environment, evidence also exists that there is little effect on classroom instruction or the school as a whole from novice teacher departures in higher performing schools (Drossel et al., 2019; Hanushek et al., 2016). The formation of a supportive environment in which new teachers are inspired and the ideas and experiences of all participants are valued is essential if school leaders want to retain novice teachers.

Administrative Support for Teachers

Some research findings have suggested that adequate administrative support for new teachers decreases the number of educators departing (Hughes et al., 2015; Pogodzinski, 2015; Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). An obstacle that many schools must overcome is difficulty in recruiting highly capable teachers. Administrators have the challenge of looking beyond pay and benefits to retain the best teachers for their schools (Green & Munoz, 2016). Not every person hired is influenced by salary, although pay and benefits may play a role in the decision process. New employees in any organization require support to succeed, and the new teachers in the school in this study were no exception. Novice teachers are more prone to remain in the education field when they feel that they have support from colleagues and administrators (Burke et al., 2015).

Support for new teachers comes in many forms and it means something different for each person. Support from peers is important because new teachers need to be introduced to the culture of the school, policies, and procedures and be provided with helpful and caring mentors. Mentors can help new teachers overcome pedagogical and career challenges (Sparks et al., 2017). When these needs fail to get addressed, teachers

might become frustrated and leave, developing an adverse impact on the school culture and student achievement (Papay et al., 2015). Researchers advocate induction programs including mentoring, professional development and support to reduce new teacher early departures.

Educators who believe that their administration is supportive are more likely to be satisfied with their school. For schools to retain novice teachers, strong, supportive, caring, and knowledgeable administrators are necessary. Although there are other things that attribute to teacher departures, lack of administrative support is a major reason (Kraft et al., 2016). If the administration in some schools do not address teachers' concerns about lack of support, there is a strong possibility that teachers will find other schools or careers. Khalid and Husnin (2019) specified that the most efficient method for teacher retention was to change the methods in which support is provided. Showing improvements or an increase in faculty support is also a good strategy to attract new teachers.

Lack of new teacher support is also seen in the area of student discipline. The decline in student success is often coupled with behavior problems from poor classroom management (Burke et al., 2015). Teachers expect to have help with classroom strategies as well as the ability to escalate problems without judgment. According to a study by Blake (2017), when the right support for classroom management is provided, new teachers are more likely to remain at a school. Many schools that have a difficulty retaining staff have a high number of students with behavior problems, which can be challenging for beginning teachers (Hughes et al., 2015).

Schools located in high-poverty rural areas are likely to have teachers who claim that discipline interferes with teaching (Khalid & Husnin, 2019). Students in high-poverty areas have problems such as hunger, lack of sleep, and instability that often result in poor behavior in class. Novice teachers need training and support from the administration when handling a multitude of student issues. The problems mentioned are not all-inclusive and do not include only high poverty locations but are prominent in those areas.

Studies have also shown that effective mentorship and induction programs provide teachers with the training needed to develop skills in classroom management and instructional practices (Embse et al., 2016). Discovering what teachers need, specifically new teachers, and providing the necessary support may help them feel empowered and able to handle the stress of entering the profession.

Mentoring to Keep Novice Teachers

An additional method available to help retain novice teachers is to provide adequate mentoring. Having a positive and effective mentor for new teachers can be the start of a productive and assured entry into the vocation. A mentor can help new teachers with expectations, procedures and building relationships with the faculty and staff. A report from The Department of Education showed that there were a larger number of new teachers who chose to remain in the profession than those that chose to leave when provided with a mentor during their first year. When novice teachers receive training from teachers who have received mentorship training, teach the same subject and grade level, novice teachers are more successful than other new teachers (Zhang & Zeller,

2016). According to Sparks et al. (2017) although resources are often scarce, well-supported beginning teachers created positive classroom environments, well planned, and executed lessons and developed suitable classroom management skills.

The level to which novice teachers are prepared to start their career in teaching can decrease the probability of their departure by about 30%, according to a study by Pogodzinski (2015). Research has also shown that schools in rural areas had an increase of a 10% average each year of novice teacher retention during a six-year study when provided mentoring (Adams & Woods, 2015). Retention is also more likely to occur when new teachers collaborate with colleagues teaching the same subjects (Pogodzinski, 2015; Zembytska, 2015).

Mentorship programs are typically part of the induction program involving the matching of experienced teachers and novice teachers. Mentors provide strategies for classroom management and instruction. Mentors are also there for guidance with school policies and procedures. Mentorship involves more than checking in with a new teacher to see if they can find the break room and bathrooms; it involves helping new teachers improve their pedagogical strategies (Hall et al., 2017; Kutsyuruba et al., 2015; Renbarger & Davis, 2019). In the long run, mentoring is there to provide support and learning for new teachers, but it also provides the benefit of greater self-confidence, positive self-efficacy and sense of belonging (Yirci, 2017; Zembytska, 2015).

Mentorship does not merely work because experienced educators are paired with novice educators; there also needs to be an understanding between the two about learning requirements needs and how often meetings should occur. Having a long-term system

where teachers communicate frequently is beneficial for a successful mentoring program (Sparks et al., 2017; Zembytska, 2015). It is also pertinent to align the right mentors and novice teachers to ensure the communication between the two parties happens. It is not always possible to match individuals with those they desire, especially in schools that have a limited number of teachers in each subject, or when there is a large number of beginning teachers. It is best to have mentors who teach the same subject so the mentee can receive the best strategies and advice (Pogodzinski, 2015).

The district or school decides what type of mentorship program will exist if any at all. If the teachers are lucky, the school will consider what the best method of communicating is for the actual mentoring. It is important for the administration to ensure that the mentorship programs contain comprehensive professional development training and that mentors are trained to provide the necessary information to mentees (Callahan, 2016). At the end of the day, district and school leadership design and run the mentorship programs but having the best interest of the participants will produce a program that is beneficial and not involve unmotivated teachers. Planning for a successful mentorship program not only prepares new teachers but it also helps with student achievement and reducing teacher departures (Hall et al., 2017). Mentoring in the first year is also critical for new teachers because that is the period, they encounter a new environment and may feel uncertain, overwhelmed and detached (Lee, 2018).

Teacher Induction

Although there is enough research showing that mentors are important for new teacher success, the principals are the major players for a successful induction program

(Hughes et al., 2015; Zembytska, 2015). Induction programs assist new teachers with understanding the culture of the school, the local area and help prepare them for employment requirements (Uribe-Zarain et al., 2019). Programs provide valuable information that helps new teachers reduce the stress that accompanies starting a new position (Kutsyuruba et al., 2015). Novice teachers may also feel motivated and prepared to tackle their new jobs once they arrive at their school, but there are significant skills that must be attained on the job (Curry et al., 2016). Having the induction programs in place gives them access to resources to develop those skills. An induction program is a wide-ranging professional development process established by the district to instruct, support, and prepare novice teachers (Curry et al., 2016) and effortlessly integrate them into the new environment with expectations of improved retention rates (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). The long-term plan is for novice teachers to transition to career teachers and later become mentors for other new teachers. Induction programs are common in schools today but the important component of providing what novice teachers desire may be missing in many programs (Curry et al., 2016; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Understanding the experiences and needs of new teachers is important in order to fulfill the goal of their personal and professional support. Something else principals may want to consider for a successful induction program is surveying teachers with more than two years of experience to find out what they would have liked to see during their first year.

Over 50% of the states in the U.S. currently have some form of an induction program to combat the early departure of teachers, based on a large number of early

departure novice teachers reported in past research (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). A majority of states have implemented induction programs in their schools, but that does not guarantee the programs meet the needs of the teachers attending. For example, if a first-year teacher gets a job in a school and is provided a two-day new-comers orientation, would that be sufficient? Induction programs may be great for motivating and educating new teachers, but the quality and length of the programs can influence those teachers' feelings about continuing in the education field. Having induction programs in schools does not guarantee that administrators will devote the time and effort to make those programs valuable.

Implementing induction and mentoring programs may motivate and help retain novice teachers; however, those programs are not the sole reasons teachers depart. Asking participants about whether they participated in an induction or mentoring program at the high school of this study will give insight to any possible departure decisions based on those programs. There is strong evidence from the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.) showing that there was 8% higher retention of novice teachers in their first year of teaching and a 14% higher rate in the second year for those participating in mentorship and induction programs (Curry et al., 2016).

School Budgets and Incentives to Retain Teachers

To attract new teachers to apply to work in schools that are difficult to staff, some districts offer signing bonuses and incentives to novice teachers (Feng & Sass, 2018). These incentives are also provided to offset low pay and to increase student achievement by retaining teachers for longer terms (Shifrer et al., 2017). Other incentives, such as loan

forgiveness programs, are utilized to motivate teachers to continue teaching courses that

are difficult to staff (Springer et al., 2016). Having multiple incentives to choose from is

also more appealing than having one in which everyone is working towards (Springer &

Taylor, 2016). The thought process is that once top performers are recognized others will

give up because they would feel their chances for securing the bonus is poor (Springer &

Taylor, 2016) More opportunities often lead to increased motivation to achieve the

award.

Teachers are paid based on the state, district, and school they work in, as well as

the degree level they have attained. However, the pay teachers receive does not include

incentives for performance or teaching in hard to fill schools or positions (Wellington et

al., 2016). Information uncovered during a study by Springer et al. (2016) suggested that

incentives for teachers do not help retention unless those individuals teach state-tested

subjects. Teachers who do not teach state-tested-subjects may feel left out of the

opportunity to earn an incentive. Dee and Wyckoff (2015) found that incentives work

well for high performing teachers but may trigger lower performers to exit the profession.

Not every educator can be the top performer, so that could cause a problem when

considering how to retain those with less experience who are trying to learn the ropes.

Budget Considerations

Mentoring, induction programs and teacher incentives have been reported to be

beneficial to new teachers, but these programs come at a cost. Zembytska (2015) asserted

that mentorship programs are a cost-effective program for schools, however, the cost

does not always equate to money. There is also the time and effort that must be

contributed by the mentor and mentee. However, there are still monetary costs the school must consider and if novice teachers depart, there is the cost of replacing those individuals. Papay et al. (2015) examined the cost of replacing novice teachers and estimated $10,000-$20,000 per teacher, depending on the school district. Costs to replace teachers may include background checks, new teacher training, application processing, enlisting, marketing, and other processing required but the district. The list is not all-inclusive and varies according to state and district requirements.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Title 1) was authorized in 1965, in part to provide funding to high poverty schools to help offset school budgets (Young, 2018). As stated in the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.) Title I funds are limited to certain expenditures, such as support materials for low achieving students or school-wide funding if over 40% of the student population comes from low-income families. The money allotted for funding does not include recruiting or administrative processing of new teachers, although money can be spent on new teacher salaries. An example would be paying the salary of an in-school tutor or a math or language arts remediation teacher. Title 1 funding is beneficial in retaining teachers because it can provide incentives for educators to teach in high-needs schools.

Comparable pay and benefits are also areas to consider when trying to attract and retain educators. According to Glander et al. (2018), nationwide median salaries of rural schools were lower than for city and suburban schools. The high school of this study is located in one of the five lowest paying states in regard to teacher salary (Rickman et al., 2019). The average teacher pay in the state has been the lowest for over twenty years

(Han et al., 2017; Rickman et al., 2017). It is a simple thing to say raise teacher pay and increase incentives but procuring the needed funds and establishing criteria for their distribution are always an issue (Starr, 2017). Sutcher et al. (2016) found that teachers tend to leave the profession when the majority of other states and districts offer a higher salary. However, the lower average salary cost of living may be the reason for the difference in pay amongst states.

Budget issues may be a factor that puts a strain on a school or district when hiring new teachers and offering incentives. Evidence has shown that retaining novice teachers helps decrease the number of funds spent on hiring new employees as well as helping maintain institutional information, such as lesson continuity and collaborative data (Hanushek et al., 2016; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Furthermore, budget constraints and how funds are allocated may limit the availability of new teacher programs and training (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017). When teachers leave the profession soon after being hired, it can cause additional costs.

Implications

As found in the above review of literature, novice teachers departed at a rate of 20% to 50% prior to completing 5 years of employment. The effects of novice teacher high turnover rates have a negative impact on student achievement and the education budget (Papay et al., 2015; Feng & Sass, 2018). Beginning teacher programs, administrative support, the local environment, and additional aspects that enhance a new teacher's desire to remain at a school must be the focus when investigating the early departure issue (Heeralal, 2017; Miller et al., 2020; Papay et al., 2015; Pogodzinski,

2015). Data collected from former novice teachers from the school of study may be beneficial to administrative leaders when planning teacher retention strategies. The researcher's objective was to obtain feedback from former novice teachers to evaluate the responses in regard to decisions made about departing.

By understanding teachers' perceptions about early departures, an appropriate framework was explored and planned for a future project study. It is essential for educational leaders to understand what novice teachers believe are the reasons for their large number of early departures. The results may also be beneficial to other schools in the district undergoing the same issues. The implication for project development and direction were based on the findings from interview questions.

Summary

Research about new teacher attrition and retention exist, but no known studies addressed the issue occurring at the location of the school of this study. The principal, school staff and reports from the department of education provided information about the high teacher turnover rate in the local area and its relation to the state and national averages. Additionally, some of the demographics and the reasons behind novice teacher turnover were noted. The problem in this study was the high departure rate of novice teachers in a rural southeastern high school and exploring novice teachers' perceptions about the departure problem is the rationale behind conducting the research. The exploration of the prior novice teachers' experiences addressed the following research questions: RQ1. What are the perceived barriers that determined teachers to depart the high school that is the focus of this study before five years on the job? RQ2. What are the

main motivators to departing the high school that is the focus of this study, as perceived by the teachers that left before five years on the job?

The review of the literature concentrated on novice teacher attrition, stress, the benefits of teacher retention, and the effects teacher attrition have on the educational environment. Expectancy-value theory and stressors were the basis of the conceptual framework for the study. The problem, rationale, significance, and review of literature built a foundation for deciding the on the appropriate research design and approach. Section 2 will explain the method used to gather data for this project study.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to explore novice teachers' perceptions about exiting the high school of study before completing 5 years of service. In this section, I describe the selection and justification of participants, as well as the collection and analysis of data. Section 2 also includes trustworthiness strategies and what limitations existed within the study.

Research Design and Approach

An exploratory case study was the best way to focus on the problem due to the need to search for how and why a situation was occurring (Dudovsky, 2019; Yin, 2016). Other methods were not as feasible as an exploratory case study because the results from the study did not have distinct conclusions (Yin, 2016). Characteristics of other methods did not fit as well as those of a case study; ethnography focuses on observing sizeable cultural group interactions, grounded theory is derived from a narrative, and the phenomenological method involves an extended period to conduct the study. As noted earlier, the case study method was the preferred approach for this study because the issue involved finding out what factors influenced a group of novice teachers to depart a rural high school. The views I was looking for would not have been captured using an alternate approach. After evaluating other methods, I deemed case study to be the best fit.

A qualitative research approach allows participants to share experiences, beliefs, and opinions without manipulation of the information by the investigator (Stake, 2010). Conducting this type of research requires investigators to find out what people are

thinking and doing to understand their experiences. According to Dawn (2017), qualitative inquiry is about conducting research on people's life experiences, emotions, behaviors, and beliefs. The plan for the study was to gather the participants' thoughts and experiences, not to guide their responses for a desired result. Quantitative research was not an option for my study because the purpose of quantitative analysis is to test hypotheses that make up a theory (Stephens et al., 2019). Quantitative studies are also deductive, whereas qualitative studies are inductive (Stephens et al., 2019).

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Participants

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Selection and Justification

There were 89 public school districts in the state, in which 63 were considered rural. The school district where the school of study was located had two high schools and one other private high school within a 5-mile radius. The next closest public high school was a 40-minute drive away. The population for this project study was limited to seven to 12 novice public school teachers who were employed from 2015-2017 at the high school that was the context for this study. The number of potential candidates was small due to the scope of the research focusing on questions relating to teachers at a particular high school. The school of study was similar to the other high school in the district, with a similar number of educators and an average of 30% novice teacher early departures.

Seven candidates were selected from approximately 12 possible participants. I used purposeful sampling for this study because, according to Merriam (2009), purposeful sampling is used when participants need to have specific attributes related to the study because they can best expand upon the research questions. I selected this

sampling strategy to condense the representation to those who had experienced an early departure from the same high school and met a few other requirements related to the study. The requirements included the following:

- being a teacher licensed in the state of the school of study and having worked at the high school between 2015 and 2017

- having exited the high school prior to completing 5 years of service

- not having left the high school due to disciplinary actions

Of the seven participants, two had taught for 3 years prior to departing. Two teachers left after teaching for 2 years, and three departed after 1 year.

Gaining Access

The high school for this study was chosen because I previously worked at the school and recognized that there was a problem regarding the early departure of novice teachers. My first step prior to starting the study was to solicit volunteers from the 12 known potential candidates requesting their participation in the study. I was aware of those potential candidates due to previously working at the school of study. These potential candidates might have been aware of others who also left before completing 5 years of service. After approval from Walden University, I contacted the known potential candidates using Facebook messenger. The message I sent included the scope and purpose of the study, participants' rights, study expectations, contact information, and the consent form. Participants responded with "I agree" prior to participating in the research study.

Establishing a Researcher-Participant Relationship

I remained professional regarding the research process. I worked at the same school as the participants, but that did not alter the way in which I handled the study. I communicated through Messenger about the study and kept all other personal communications separate. Confidentiality, anonymity, and ethics were also discussed prior to the start of the interview process, and participants received documents detailing procedures. Prior to starting the study, I discussed the study and how valuable the participants' perceptions would be for improving novice teachers' desire to remain at the school. I also reassured the participants that their information would remain confidential and that our personal relationship would remain separate from the study. Questions and concerns were addressed throughout the study, and participants had the option to exit the study at any time.

Protection of Participants

Protection of participants began with approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB; 03-11-20-0534687) to conduct research on novice teacher early departures. After receipt of approval, all participants received notification of benefits and risks of the study. The possibility of harm to participants from taking part in the study was minimal. Alphanumeric codes were used for all names and locations, and interview responses were stored on a password-protected computer. Deductive disclosure is a concern when conducting qualitative research due to the use of rich descriptions and detailed accounts of participants' experiences. When individuals shared details about their encounters, I was mindful about concealing their identity and any information that

would be revealing. Assigning security codes to electronic data, limiting access to identifiable information, and disposing of electronic and paper data after 5 years were used to protect participants' identity.

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Data Collection

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Data Collection Instrument

For the collection of data during this research study, I used a semi structured, interview to explore participants' perceptions of novice teacher early departure. Interviews allowed me to capture the experiences of the participants, document the differences between responses, and gain a better understanding of the problem. Interviewing was also the preferred method because participants are more open because they are not restricted to predetermined categories (Merriam, 2009, p. 89). Using interviews also allowed me to delve deeper into responses from interviewees. Credibility was also provided because participants knew that the information would come from answers they provided.

After reviewing other possible methods to collect data, I determined that conducting interviews was the best approach for my project study. I considered conducting focus groups, but I recognized that getting everyone together would be difficult because I was living outside the United States. Focus groups involve conducting interviews with groups of people who share knowledge about similar subjects (Merriam, 2009, p. 93). An additional option for collecting data was using observations. However, observations were not a feasible choice due to the teachers having already departed. Interviews were the best choice because I sought information about how the participants

perceived novice teacher early departures. The interview process was accomplished over audio chat and recorded using an app.

Interview questions were aligned with the research question. The questions were formulated to gather information about novice teachers' perceptions of barriers and motivators in regard to their first years of teaching and departure decisions (see Appendix C). I created questions for the interviews based on both personal knowledge acquired from working at the study site and being familiar with the processes and programs and the review of educational research on novice teacher departures. There were multiple resources about new teacher orientation, so I specifically asked about that. I did not guide the answers because I did not want responses based on my experiences. My intent was for participants to share their personal thoughts about their departure decisions. Appropriate and relevant follow-up questions were asked depending on initial candidate responses.

An interview protocol, presented in Appendix B, was used to guide the interview process. The protocol helped me in maintaining focus, collecting consent, and having questions ready to gather information for the study. The protocol also included an opening and closing script. An interview protocol provides a visual guide of the interview layout, alleviating the need to recall questions or the script and offering an outline to keep interviews on track.

Instrument Adequacy

Usability of the data source is crucial when conducting research, and the research instrument must be reasonable and useful in answering the question or questions being investigated. The instruments in this study were me (in my role as the researcher) and the

interviews. Using interviews for this study allowed me to ask questions as I sought to answer the research question. Advantages of the interview process included the ability to gain greater understanding through complete collection of details. Interviews are also more personal than questionnaires and can be revised when changes are necessary.

All interviews began with small talk to break the ice and make interviewees feel more comfortable. After breaking the ice, I reiterated the purpose of the interview. I also reminded the participants that everything they shared would remain confidential. Once the portion of the interview began that required me to ask questions related to the study, I used a one-page guide to help me stay focused. Using this guide helped me to focus on the answers instead of flipping through pages and causing distraction. Broad questions were used to initiate the interview, and sub questions were posed after the participants' initial answers to the broad questions. The interview protocol is included in Appendix B.

Interviewing Process

Guidelines for conducting the interviews were found in Merriam (2009). Once I received approval from the IRB, I contacted the potential candidates by Facebook Messenger to send the invitation and consent form and let them know the details of the study. One week was allotted for individuals to respond with their participation decision before scheduling interviews. I conducted the interviews using Audio Messenger and they ranged from 8-20 minutes in length.

Data Management

During the data collection process, after recording interviews, I used a program called Maestra Suite (maestrasuite.com) to transcribe the recordings. The program

allowed me to upload media files, transcribe them, and save them to a PDF or DOCX

file. I used a voice recording program called Voice Memo on my MacBook Pro

computer. This program came with the computer, and the computer was protected by

two-method authentication. Transcribed data were saved on the same computer.

Researcher Role

During the research study process, I understood that my role as the researcher was

to interview the participants, record their answers, and present their experiences in the

results section of this document. I knew that I must put aside any personal thoughts or

opinions to refrain from tainting the outcome of the study. I was familiar with the

candidates for the study because I had been employed at the site as a teacher for 2 years.

My working relationship with the candidates brought some important ethical

considerations to light, such as possible coercion or bias. There was a clear connection

between the research questions and my own experiences at the school because I had been

a novice teacher who left after teaching there for 2 years. My situation differed from that

of the participants because I was the only individual who had left because of military

orders. My experiences at the school did not affect the results because I did not discuss

my situation with participants or try to lead them in any particular direction.

Data Analysis

Immediately after the interview sessions, I listened to the recorded data before

transcribing them into Microsoft Word using a program called Maestra Suite. I listened to

each recording multiple times while reading the transcript to ensure that the transcription

was done correctly using an electronic transcription tool. I noticed that some of the

transcriptions did not separate Speaker 1 and Speaker 2 correctly, but I manually

corrected those discrepancies. I decided to look for themes using a manual coding

process. Searching for patterns and coding data allowed for the precise and effective

location of noteworthy data in the context of the interview information. The data were

revaluated until complete saturation was reached. Saturation occurs when a researcher is

no longer finding new information (Stake, 2010).

To identify patterns and themes in the data, I used a "bottom-up" approach

(Macias, 2017). This process involved developing a general feel for the information

collected and then coding and describing themes. Analysis began after completion of the

first interview and continued until saturation. I wrote notes in the margins of the

transcribed data as I read through them. These notes consisted of my initial thoughts, and

the second read through consisted of information that might answer the research

questions. As I found themes, I used the assigned interview codes to group the

information. I also summarized the themes and showed comparisons or differences in

relation to the literature review.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is often critiqued for the absence of scientific data due to the

reasoning of the methods used and lack of clarity in the analytical procedures; some

perceive qualitative findings merely as a gathering of personal opinions (Noble & Smith,

2015). To establish quality in this study, I used member checking as a credibility strategy

and bracketing as a confirmability strategy. Considering the credibility of study findings

requires researchers to come to conclusions about the accuracy of the research in relation

to the application, appropriateness of the methods, and integrity of the final deductions (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Member Checking

Member checking goes hand in hand with bracketing because it helps counter preconceived ideas that can impact a study. Simpson and Quigley (2016) defined member checking as "sharing interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and/or drafts of the final report with research participants to make sure you are representing them and their ideas accurately" (p. 377). Another example is seeking viewpoints of members on the correctness of data collected and accounts provided by participants (Birt et al., 2016). In my approach, I contacted participants through Facebook Messenger and asked for their email addresses so that they could review the transcripts and overall study findings for accuracy. None of the participants adjusted the materials that they received.

Bracketing

Using bracketing allows a researcher to avoid the possibility of bias that might taint the outcome of the study (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Avoiding bias requires one to set aside one's own beliefs and open up to what is happening and to other individuals' thoughts (Sorsa et al., 2015). With the bracketing process, I identified my assumptions, took note of them, and set them aside. I also revisited the data and my understanding of the data. This process took place throughout the study. Participants were also encouraged to ask questions during the interviews to open dialogue and have more of a conversation than a questioning session.

Discrepant Cases

I did not encounter discrepant cases that presented contradictory information. I reported the responses in the findings and they aligned with the research questions. Although responses varied, there were no findings that differed from the majority of research participants' perceptions. These accounts strengthened the study when the interviewees clarified the information. Discrepant cases are as relevant to the research study as corresponding information. Discrepant cases, as well as cases that supported the research question, were utilized to make sure data were pertinent to the study.

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Limitations

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There were a few limitations to consider for this study due to the number of participants and the location and familiarity I had concerning the study site and candidates. Some of the subjects were unwilling to participate in the study, and the number of possible candidates was already limited. Those who did participate may have not be completely forthcoming with answers. The candidates were strictly former teachers; current teachers were not included in the study. Some current novice teachers may have had insight into what transpired at the school that made new teachers exit early.

Distance from the site and familiarity with candidates were also possible issues because I was a former teacher at the school, but I moved to Europe. There is a 7 hour time difference between locations and contact with candidates was challenging. I was employed at the school for 2 school years and worked as a special education teacher. I also worked closely with several of the candidates and fit the parameters to be included as a participant in the study. Having a close relationship with the teachers who worked at

the school may have caused participants to give answers that they may have thought I would like to hear.

Data Analysis Results

I used an exploratory qualitative method to provide emerging themes that captured the teachers' responses to the three research questions used for this research study and presented it in Section 1. The purpose of this research study was to explore novice teachers' perceptions about exiting the high school of study before completing 5 years of service. The study consisted of semi structured interviews, which lasted between 8 and 20 minutes, and an interview protocol was used to guide the process. From the 12 candidates contacted, seven agreed to participate in the study. Interviews were conducted during a period of 2 weeks over audio chat. Once I completed the data collection process, I organized the interview responses into sections that aligned with the research question. Teachers' replies to the interview questions were used to develop thematic categories and codes. The method used to identify patterns and themes in data results is thematic analysis (Miller, 2020). Five themes emerged from the data which developed from a review of the interview questions.

Coding

I numbered the transcribed interview responses in order to refer back to them easily and to know who the responses came from without using names. Coding was initiated by reading over the responses and annotating notes in the margins. Codes were determined from interview questions and reviewing the transcripts. The following 19 codes were created from the research questions and transcriptions; workload, classroom

management, teaching strategies, relationships, mentors, stress, discipline, environment, culture, self-efficacy, pay and benefits, support, planning, preparation, time management, health, recognition, distractions, and professional development. Once I established the codes, I read through the transcripts multiple times to locate themes. I wrote the themes in the margins and on a separate sheet of paper to match them with codes. I also listed the codes and themes and how they relate (see Table 1). The themes that emerged from the interview responses were as follows: unrelatable training, lack of support for student discipline issues, unappreciated by administration, heavy workload, and high stress level.

Table 1

Alignment of Codes and Thematic Categories

Codes	Theme	Research question(s)
Professional development Teaching strategies Preparation Planning Environment	1. Unrelatable training (RQ1)	RQ1. What are the perceived barriers that determined teachers to depart the high school that is the focus of this study before 5 years on the job?
Classroom management Mentors Distractions Discipline	2. Lack of support for student discipline issues (RQ1)	
Recognition Pay and benefits	3. Feeling unappreciated by administration (RQ1)	
Workload Time Support	4. Heavy workload (RQ2)	RQ2. What are the main motivators to departing the high school that is the focus of this study, as perceived by the teachers that left before 5 years on the job?
Health Relationships Culture Self-efficacy Stress	5. High stress level (RQ2)	

Theme 1: Unrelatable Training

Theme 1 synthesizes participants' experience of unreliable training. Over half the participants believed that help with teaching strategies would have been beneficial. As Participant 4 stated, "Training and advice that helped deal with the type of students we had would have been helpful." Participant 3 spoke about what is needed by mentioning:

I wish somebody would have taught me…before kids walk in the room, this is everything you need to have done…like where are they sitting, where does stuff go, what goes on the board first… I had to figure that out. What do kids do when done early? How long do you want them to do, like every single step?

Other comments were also made about information that would have been beneficial to receive prior to teaching. "It would have been really helpful to learn more about reaching students in poverty and things like that and that's not really what I received," was a comment shared by Participant 2. The interviewees' comments showed that their perception of the training provided is not fulfilling all their needs.

Theme 2: Lack of Support for Student Discipline

Six of the seven individuals said they needed more support from administration. Participant 7 stated, "The principal and assistant principal seemed like they did not care about the needs of the staff or the behavior problems with the students." The same issue was disclosed by Participant 6 who articulated, "The underlying problem was, I simply had no support from the admin and the students knew this." Additional problems were voiced by Participant 4 who said, "I didn't feel like the principal and I got along…seemed fair but I would have liked more support with classroom management."

Interview results revealed that over half of the participants perceived a lack of support

with discipline issues as a problem.

Theme 3: Feeling Unappreciated by Administration

Feeling unappreciated or valued by the administration was another theme that

developed from the interview answers. Comments made by Participant 4 revealed they,

"… felt overworked and unappreciated by the administration." Similar sentiments were

shared by Participant 3, who said, "The culture is to work until you die and continue to

work after that and not get appreciated or rewarded for the work that you do and that can

be very exhausting." Sometimes people believe their talents are not being used properly

and Participant 2 mirrored those thoughts by stating, "I did not feel like I was being used

to my potential. I felt like you know, I was babysitting students all day." Another

reflection was shared by Participant 2 who revealed, "I think an administrator who

checked in with me regularly to make sure I was ok would have been nice." On another

note, Participant 7 expressed, "I was doing a lot more than I felt was required for no

useful reason and not thanked." More than half of the participants also had the perception

that the administration did not appreciate their work.

Theme 4: Heavy Workload

The amount of work required from novice teachers was perceived to be a concern

for many of the participants. A description of the workload shared by Participant 1

showed their concern by sharing the following:

> I think just lack of time, like of planning time, common planning time with team
>
> members, things like that. I think that was a big factor that maybe taking a lot of

stuff home with me and getting burned out…spending so much time at home

working and that is family time. It would have helped to have time at school.

An additional opinion relayed by Participant 4 was their sentiments about the workload;

"Admin was dismissive to our needs but always wanted us to do more." Participant 5 also

had comments about the amount of work by as they indicated: "I feel disrespectful

students interfered with the lessons and the amount of paperwork I had to do." Issues

about the workload where also voiced by Participant 7. That individual articulated, "I was

doing a lot more than I felt was required for no useful reason. I loved the interaction with

students but it was tainted by the stress level and workload."

Theme 5: High Stress Level

When interviewees responded to their overall reason for departing, stress was

something mentioned by six of the seven participants. According to Participant 7, "I was

doing a lot…it took away from the students' learning and made my stress level high." A

similar comment was made by Participant 6 who stated, "My stress level came from the

principal and constant harassment, threats, and the fact that no matter what I did or how

hard I worked... it was never good enough." Stress levels expressed by Participant 4

where, "I felt overworked and unappreciated by the administration. It was hard to leave

the students, but my health and stress was negatively affected because of the stress level."

Participant 5 also mirrored the comments and mentioned that, "It was more stressful than

I thought it would be and more time consuming as well." The one participant who did not

mention stress as a deciding factor did say stress was something they handled well and

left due to feeling used to handle discipline issues instead of teaching.

Interpretation of Findings

To explore the higher turnover rate at a rural southern high school, I asked participants their perceptions of departure reasons. Participants shared their experiences and perceptions from their time of employment at the school. There were some positive experiences, such as good working relationships, helpful mentors, and a positive impact on many students. However, most participants shared their disappointment in professional development sessions that did not relate to their environment, a lack of support from administration, and feeling stressed and overworked. When specifically asked about the main reason for leaving, there were various responses. The main response was departure due to stress.

Data collected from the prior novice teachers suggested a need to revamp the professional development sessions, due to the perception of inadequate training. There is also a need to review how much work novice teachers receive or training on managing the workload. Many of the participants also believed they needed assistance with student discipline. That issue could also be addressed in professional development. Assessing novice teacher needs and areas they where they feel they have insufficient skills may help in planning professional development sessions that will assist new teachers.

Discrepant Cases

During this process of interviewing and analyzing data, there was not a need to eliminate any participants account of their experiences. The goal of this project study was to explore all participants' perceptions of departure decisions. There were different variations of experiences, but all the responses aligned with the research question.

Different experiences from participants is not a reason to label any of the results as a

discrepant case. When receiving multiple responses from exploring individuals'

experiences one will not encounter responses that challenge the research question

because the purpose is to obtain all the data regardless of the outcome. Everyone has their

perception of what happened to them and revealing that information was the purpose of

the study. This project study encompassed all the responses of participants' perceptions

of departure reasons from the study school.

Project Deliverable

As a result of the data analysis, I began looking at stress management strategies as

well as ways to effectively plan professional development sessions. Participants

mentioned excessive workload, issues with classroom management, and a lack of support

from leadership. I believe that efficient professional development can tackle many of

these issues through proper training. For a future project study, I recommend the school

administration assess the needs of novice teachers and formulate a plan to develop

professional development sessions that will meet the needs of the participants as well as

mirroring the school environment. The plan should be flexible due to the change in

leadership and needs of the incoming teachers. Assessing the needs of the novice teachers

prior to developing professional development sessions will give the administration insight

into the actual needs of the incoming teachers and not just a blanket plan that is

insufficient.

Summary

The section encompasses the data analysis of the information compiled from the exploratory case study interview questions. My focus was on the prior novice teachers' perceptions and experiences related to departing the study school prior to completing five years. I attempted to display the interview results by sharing responses and providing numbers and percentages of the participants. The results provided a consensus that showed stress and workload were major factors in departure decisions. There was also a mention of the lack of relevant training and support from administration. The information provided is a brief summary of the data analysis, interpretation of the results and plan for the future.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

Data obtained from seven prior novice teachers about their perceptions of departure decisions showed that the participants had similar experiences. There were also comparable responses in regard to what novice teachers need to be successful during their first few years of teaching. The results revealed that novice teachers require professional development training that provides information about the local environment, classroom management, stress management, classroom strategies, and time management. An analysis of the responses from the participants uncovered discouraging views about information shared during professional development sessions. These responses exhibit a need for a revamped professional development program. Sessions that are planned well will fulfill novice teachers' perceived need for support and beneficial strategies.

Project Goals

The goal of the novice teacher professional development program is to increase novice teachers' self-efficacy and to provide the resources and support necessary for them to be successful. I will suggest an outline of what the professional development sessions should encompass over 4 days of training. The plan will include sessions that provide novice teachers an understanding of the environment, as well as strategies for classroom management, time management, stress management, and classroom procedures. Participants in the study voiced their desire to learn about the students they taught and the environment they lived in. The participants also referred to the current professional development as irrelevant and a waste of time. They indicated that they

would have liked to spend their time gaining useful information that would have helped them during their first years of teaching.

Rationale

After reviewing the interview responses and categorizing the information, I found that the main issues were stress, heavy workloads, and a lack of relevant professional development and training sessions. Participants voiced their concern about the professional development sessions they received being inadequate. They believed that the professional development did not relate to the environment they taught in and did not assist in dealing with the type of students they had in the school. Participants believed that there was an overwhelming amount of information given to them during professional development that did not assist with new teacher tasks. The beliefs held by the participants led them to have negative experiences and ultimately make departure decisions.

Analysis of the data derived from the research study was the foundation of the novice teacher professional development project proposed in this section. I believe it is beneficial to design a program that revamps the professional development in the school and assists in decreasing the stress levels and workloads of novice teachers. A common perception among study participants was that they were overworked, unappreciated, and unprepared. Participants also mentioned the need for professional development that focuses on learning about the local area and applicable classroom procedures and strategies. Many novice teachers spent additional time researching ways to cope with the numerous obstacles they faced instead of using that time to teach.

Support from the administration was another concern brought up by participants. Leadership changes will occur just as staff changes do, and the flexibility of the program would also benefit those changes. Assessing the needs of new teachers each year will help the administration provide better support to the staff. I believe that a new teacher survey can be incorporated into professional development. In the end, I believe that professional development is the biggest issue and that leaders can tackle it by gearing professional development toward the needs of novice teachers while considering school and district policies.

Review of the Literature

The objective of the novice teacher professional development program is to provide the administration with information pertaining to novice teachers' needs. There are specific things that the administration must provide to new teachers, but they should also provide what new teachers want and need to be successful. A small southeastern high school can benefit from teachers who understand the environment and what it takes to be productive. Upon completion of my data analysis, I determined that the study site high school could benefit from a novice teacher professional development program that focuses on stress management, time management, understanding the environment, classroom management, and classroom procedure strategies. Studies by Rodriguez et al. (2020) and Zhukova (2018) found that an effective professional development program for novice teachers is a critical part of an effort to increase the quality of teaching and learning education. I researched professional development programs for novice teachers as well as stress management, classroom management, time management, and classroom

procedures. The following literature review provides a summation of literature associated with effective novice teacher professional development and related elements. Participating in professional development programs assists with overcoming obstacles in the school environment (Rodriguez et al., 2020). Although professional development does occur at the study school, according to the study participants, there is a need to revamp the program.

Overview of Search

The search for applicable literature for the novice teacher professional development project focused on specific topics gathered from participants' interview responses. Scholarly sources were used to explore several possibilities for novice teacher professional development topics. Key search terms included the following: *beginning teacher professional development, teacher stress management*, *time management*, *classroom management*, *new teacher issues*, *professional development*, *new teacher obstacles*, *ineffective professional development*, and *classroom procedures*. I used ERIC, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and Academic Search Complete to find relevant articles. The search criteria limited the results to books and peer-reviewed articles published between the years 2015 and 2020.

Major Findings From the Review of Literature

Novice Teacher Professional Development

Beginning teachers have numerous things to think about and learn when they enter the teaching profession. Many new teachers are not prepared for the reality of teaching when they enter the classroom. Preparation and continued support are key to the

success of novice teachers, and professional development is a way to provide the tools

that new teachers need to succeed. Novice teachers tend to focus on classroom

management, performance, image, fitting in, content knowledge, and providing

instruction (Zhukova, 2018). Martin et al. (2015) stated that new teachers require guided

instruction and that less than 1% receive that level of instruction in their beginning years.

According to Bowles and Arnup (2016) as well as Perryman and Calvert (2020),

professional development that motivates and educates is the foundation novice teachers,

veteran teachers, and the administration.

Novice teachers and veteran teachers have different professional development

needs (Baker et al., 2018; Uribe-Zarain, 2019). According to Brody and Hadar (2015),

novice teachers tend to be more open to learning than experienced teachers.

Administrators who practice and model professional development will motivate staff to

take professional development sessions seriously (Dinsdale, 2017). It is also important

for novice teachers to garner support from veteran teachers because experienced teachers

can provide feedback and encouragement (Coenders & Verhoef, 2018; Jin et al., 2019;

Mohan, 2016). It can be a struggle for a novice teacher if useful professional

development sessions and support are not part of the school environment (Dinsdale,

2017; Sasson et al., 2020).

Professional Development and Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy beliefs stem from various feedback sources, and those beliefs may

bring about feelings of increased levels of ability. A study conducted by Petridou et al.

(2016) showed that novice teachers experienced gains in self-efficacy after receiving

professional development focused on classroom management and procedures. Other studies have also shown that professional development can have a positive impact on self-efficacy. After novice teachers received adequate professional development, their skills improved and their self-efficacy beliefs about teaching increased (Gamborg et al., 2018). When professional development is inadequate, a negative outcome on self-efficacy occurs. However, individuals may experience positive self-efficacy and job satisfaction when training and support exist (Renbarger & Davis, 2019).

Self-efficacy beliefs guide how novice teachers teach and how students learn. According to Zonoubi et al. (2017), teachers with high self-efficacy expect a lot from themselves and from their students. Efficient professional development increases a person's perception of self-efficacy (Martin et al., 2015; Zonoubi et al., 2017). For new teachers, increased confidence may lead to improvements in classroom management skills as well as longevity in the teaching profession (Lentifer & Franks, 2015). According to D'Emidio-Caston (2019) and Harmsen et al. (2018), desire to remain in the profession increases with emotional growth and resilience training sessions.

Classroom Management in Professional Development

Classroom management is one of the key areas of importance to new teachers. Kraft et al. (2018) reported that 99% of public-school teachers stated that they had participated in some form of professional development, but the teachers believe there is still a need for classroom management assistance Kraft et al. also stated that classroom stressors are handled better when novice teachers receive adequate professional development. Leaders in education allocate a large amount of money to provide training

so that teachers can gain experience and confidence (Baker et al., 2018). It is logical to

offer training that new teachers need to be successful; however, many new teachers do

not receive the training that they need (Hajrulla & Harizaj, 2018; Kraft et al., 2018).

Novice teachers lack experience and need guidance and strategies for success in this area.

Entering the classroom without proper preparation and education can be

detrimental for novice teachers' self-efficacy and stress level. In order to address the

increased departure of novice teachers, the implementation of revamped professional

development sessions is encouraged. There is a strong correlation between effective

instruction for classroom management and increased retention of novice teachers

(Freeman et al., 2018; Kraft et al., 2018). Putting adequate training in place for novice

teachers focusing on classroom management increases time for instructional practices

(Walker et al., 2019). Studies have shown that targeted professional development for

classroom management improved novice teachers' knowledge and classroom

productivity (Walker et al., 2019). Of course, training needs to be based on the school

environment and culture.

Workload and Stress Management

Teachers often convey concerns regarding the amount of work that they have to

produce compared to members of other professions (Harmsen et al., 2018). Add the

anxiety, lack of experience, and other concerns that novice teachers have, and stress

levels may quickly increase. A study by Bettini et al. (2018) displayed the relationship

between novice teacher attrition and heavy workloads. Bettini et al. stated how their

study showed a need for professional development and other supports to assist with

managing workloads and retaining teachers. Teachers also need to be able to identify when students are stressed or have problems, and being under high levels of stress themselves may deter teachers from meeting this responsibility (D'Emidio-Caston, 2019). New teachers require support and development not just in the first few weeks, but also throughout their first few years, to be successful and for the benefit of students (Confait, 2015; D'Emidio-Caston, 2019). Health is also affected by workload and stress (Richards et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017) and having resources to help with stress minimized well-being issues as well as early departures.

Stress consists of causes and responses (Harmsen et al., 2018) and how one responds to stress. The use of resilience to handle stress can help novice teachers adapt to change when included in initial service learning (Bowles & Arnup, 2016; Zhukova, 2018). Health issues that arise from stress range from colds to more serious issues; stress may also result in declines in attendance and income (Bowles & Arnup, 2016). Stress affects self-efficacy, and professional development focused on particular programs can help improve novice teacher self-efficacy (Petridou et al., 2016). Collaboration with peers, support from administration, and access to stress intervention resources are critical to novice teachers' success (Coenders & Verhoef, 2018; Dinsdale, 2017; Jin et al., 2019). Unhealthy teachers who are unable to focus on student learning due to stress and health issues are not assets to the school.

Effective Novice Teacher Professional Development Sessions

When new teachers start in their profession, they expect to receive guidance and tools to be successful. Dinsdale (2017) reported that leaders in the education arena played

a crucial role in professional development initiatives. Leaders are obligated to craft

professional development endeavors that support novice teachers in developing strategies

related to learning, strengthening, and supplementing teaching procedures. However, the

availability of professional development is not the problem; the problem is the lack of

professional development relevant to the school environment (Flores, 2015). Participants

in the project study voiced their concerns about the lack of relevant professional

development provided during their time at the high school. They were concerned about

the missing connection between the information and their own environment, as well as a

failure to provide desired information. Novice teachers also perceived a lack of continuity

regarding professional development sessions. Teachers met for collaboration, but it was

often unproductive or lacked information that would assist beginning teachers in

overcoming obstacles. Dias-Lacy and Guirguis (2017) proposed that novice teacher

professional development must be appropriately funded and should focus on resources

for support, teaching strategies, resilience, time management, and classroom

management.

A productive professional development program requires more than money and

resources. A structured plan is also critical for a successful program (Dias-Lacy &

Guirguis, 2017). An effort to develop a professional development program without

thought to the needs of the school environment and novice teachers will be a waste of

time and resources. Dias-Lacy and Guirguis (2017) also suggested that administrators

provide support throughout the learning phase and beyond. According to Richards et al.

(2018), teachers become invested in a collaborative effort when leaders show a vested

interest in their success. Individuals will demonstrate a reluctance to contribute time and effort when put in an unsupportive or uncomfortable environment. Participants in this study stated that they did not feel motivated to learn and did not have the desire to remain in the school when they believed that they were unappreciated by the administration.

Professional development sessions should include strategies to enhance motivation, increase resilience, foster professionalism, improve time management, and teach classroom management as well as stress management. It may also be beneficial to assess the needs of new teachers to find out what things they want to learn and what resources they need. This was evident from the responses of the study participants and how they voiced concerns about the lack of focused training. It would be nice if a survey were put out prior to professional development to give administrators time to plan sessions early.

To conclude, the review of literature on novice teacher professional development showed various resources supporting the need for novice teacher professional development but did not pinpoint one specific program that works for every environment. It is difficult to find a program that fits every environment and situation. The point is to assess novice teachers so that administrators have the tools and ability to build a successful program tailored to their school environment. Conducting baseline training on time management, stress management, and the school culture is a good foundation. For future sessions, novice teachers should be able to identify specific training needs.

Project Description

Based on the themes resulted from the research study, I designed a program for novice teacher professional development which covers the basic needs of new teachers based on participant responses. The program was designed to be flexible because needs of teachers change each year and the point is to provide programs that address the needs of novice teachers each year. The proposed plan includes 4 days of professional development that can be implemented anytime throughout the school year. For the desired outcome, the preferred delivery time is prior to the start of school however, the information can be revisited at any time. The sessions will assist novice teacher with overcoming anxiety they have prior to teaching by providing them with tools and resources to overcome obstacles. According to the study participants' perceptions of professional development, a revamped program would better prepare them for working in the classroom and handling the unforeseen demands that they will encounter.

Professional development sessions will be constructed using evidence-based solutions from literature and requests made by novice teachers. The last day of the proposed professional development program will consist mainly of an open discussion with veteran teachers, administration, and novice teachers. The discussion will create a chance for new teachers to get answers to questions that may not have been addressed during the sessions. This last day of training will also include time to assess the presentations to plan for future meetings.

Professional Development Materials

Each professional development session will present opportunities for collaboration, reflection, relationship building, and planning. The facilitators may include administrators, veteran teachers, curriculum coordinator, motivational speakers, or community representatives. The subjects selected for each session will determine who will facilitate and that could change each year. Funding and availability of personnel are also a consideration when planning sessions. The benefit of using research-based sources to plan is to provide tested and reliable information. It is best to have someone who is experienced in the subject being presented, so they can speak and answer questions from first-hand knowledge.

The school is located in a low-income area and resources may be limited. However, providing a suitable program does not require a lot of money. Time is the main resource needed to accomplish the goal. The following is a list of recommended materials for professional development sessions. Most, if not all these items are already available at the school.

- smart board
- laptop or computer to connect to the smart board
- note pads
- index cards
- pens and pencils
- easel
- markers

- large easel paper (or a large dry erase board to place on the easel)

The other resources necessary for professional development are human resources. As noted previously, the administrators, teachers, curriculum coordinators, and community advocates may be considered as speakers. Teachers and administrators will lead the professional development sessions unless a special guest is invited. The teachers at the study school have varying backgrounds and experiences to share and many attended the same high school. They are a great resource for teaching others about the environment and how to establish a rapport with the students, staff, and community members.

Project Implementation

The novice teacher professional development program is an activity designed to assist new educators with their transition into the teaching profession. The plan development was based on responses from participants of the project study. Table 2 lists the schedule of events prior to the start of the first day of school.

Table 2

Novice Teacher Professional Development Planning

Prior to the start of school	Task	Point of contact
3 months	Discuss the proposed plan, needs, budget and name facilitators. List those outside of the school that may assist. Get agreement from school leaders on future plans.	Lead teachers, administrators, curriculum coordinator.
2 months	Meet to solidify what will be presented (review slides and videos), check on status of materials.	School leadership, teachers, curriculum coordinator and any community advocates who are participating.
1 month	Make sure there are adequate amounts of tables and chairs, the room is clean and materials are ready.	Teachers, janitor staff and volunteers.
2 weeks	Facilitators meet to run through program and make any changes. Ask for volunteers to bring snacks and drinks or use school budget.	Facilitators (teachers, administrators and curriculum coordinator).
1 week	Check audio and visual equipment. Professional development begins.	Facilitators (teachers, administrators, and curriculum coordinator).

This schedule is just an example and can be adjusted based on the needs of the

school and availability of facilitators and participants. When planning for the actual

professional development sessions, the schedule will follow a typical school day schedule

(08:00-15:00). Individuals will sign in upon arrival and again after lunch for

accountability. Seating will not be assigned because everyone is new and most of the

participants will not know each other. There will be a small chance that people will

migrate towards friends. There will also be times during the sessions where people will

act out scenarios and participants will be chosen randomly. Role playing will be another

opportunity to interact with other people in the room.

Day 1 will consist of coffee and pastries in the morning, followed by a greeting from the principal and introductions of the facilitators. Everyone will receive a note pad, pens, pencils, and a school handbook. An introduction slide show will be presented about the novice teacher professional development program and why it is believed to be important. After the slide presentation the participants will have an opportunity to work in groups to brainstorm about the program. They will discuss other possible benefits and what they believe would be pros and cons.

Day 2, the first hour will include a description of the school routine along with a tour, to include emergency procedures. Photos for identification cards will also be taken in the morning. After photos, the group will go over classroom procedures, such as attendance, grading, reports, and parent contact requirements. Participants will also meet their mentors and review the evaluation process. After lunch there will be a lesson on time management as well as stress management. Different strategies and resource will be shared with the group. Day 1 will close out with a question and answer session so people can clarify information they received throughout the day.

Day 3 will also start with coffee and snacks followed by a discussion about the local environment. The school is in a low-income area and knowing how the students live will help novice teachers relate to them. The group will take a bus tour around the community so they can get a first-hand view of the area. After the tour there will be open discussion about the environment until lunch. After lunch, the teachers will learn strategies for classroom management and participate in group activities. The day will conclude with a question and answer session.

Day 4 will begin the same as the other days. After everyone is settled the facilitators will pass out index cards and ask everyone to write down something they still want to know. They can also write down something they want more information about. Once the cards are collected the facilitators will go over the questions and provide more detail or resources. If there is something that requires more research, the facilitator will get back with the person who had the question later. Questions and answers will continue until lunch and after returning participants will complete benefits paperwork. Dismissal occurs after paperwork is complete, but people can stay for discussion if they desire.

<div align="center">**Project Evaluation Plan**</div>

To gauge success of the program participants will complete a survey at the conclusion of novice teacher professional development (see Appendix D). The formative feedback provided by the participants will be used to adjust future implementations of the professional development program. The objective of the novice teacher professional development program is to provide new teachers with the information, tools, and resources they need to be successful in the classroom. Assessing the effectiveness of this goal is short-term and mid-term. The short-term process of finding out if the participants were satisfied with program will consist of a survey after the sessions. The long-term evaluation will consist of a survey to assess novice teachers' use of the acquired skills and knowledge. This survey will be administered online using surveymonkey.com. After reviewing the results of the surveys, the information will be shared with the school administration.

Project Implications

The purpose of this exploratory study was to explore the perceptions prior novice teachers have about early departures from a southern rural high school. The responses provided by the participants may be beneficial for revamping the novice teacher professional development program at the school. By inquiring about their reasons for departing the school a framework was reached which focused on providing relevant professional development sessions for novice teachers. Proper training and understanding the needs of employees is critical for retaining novice teachers.

Any future plans should be flexible throughout the year to account for the varying needs of new employees. The experiences of novice teachers and their perceptions should shape the sessions and any future changes. Administrators can use the novice teachers' input from this study coupled with school and district policies to align information for proper delivery. With revised professional development sessions which focus on participant needs, there is a potential to reduce early departures, create a more positive school environment, and more increase the focus on student learning. Parents, students, and veteran teachers will also benefit from new teachers who have improved self-efficacy and believe they have a great future in the teaching profession.

Project Importance in a Larger Context

There are numerous schools around the nation with novice teacher early departure problems. Many of these schools are in rural areas and teaching in a secluded location may bring about additional concerns and anxiety to novice teachers. This project study may serve as an example of what schools with similar issues can do to help retain their

novice teachers. Just like at the local school, other administrators can identify the needs of their novice teachers and build programs that combine those needs with district policies. Taking an interest in new employee' needs is not limited to one school or area. It is always good practice to review programs and see if they are still valid. Events like early departure of employees is a clue that something needs to change, and a good start is asking individuals what is wrong. Schools that are aware of the way their novice teachers feel regarding professional development can use the project deliverable to implement their novice teacher professional development change.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

This novice teacher professional development project was created to address the needs of new teachers starting at a high school located in a rural state in the United States. The project's aim was to assist novice teachers with stress management, time management, classroom management, classroom procedures, and learning about the local environment. Other areas of interest can also be addressed, depending on the needs of the novice teachers and what is currently missing in current programs. Although the goal is to provide novice teachers with the tools they need for success, administrators will also benefit from having more prepared teachers. Having fewer teachers depart due to stress, workload, lack of support, and lack of training will also benefit the rest of the school staff because there will be more continuity.

A limitation of the novice teacher professional development program is the possibility that the school administration will not review or accept the plan. The members of the administration may believe that they have a better plan or need to implement a new or revised program. The program also depends on participation from novice teachers, and there is no guarantee that they will participate or feel a need to contribute information. Everyone involved must be committed to the program and what it entails and believe that there is a need for changes to the current program.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Based on the findings of the study, an alternative project might be a new training program to revamp the mentorship program at the local school. A few participants

revealed that their mentors were helpful with classroom strategies; however, others felt

that the information shared was not beneficial. Providing novice teachers with a mentor

with a plan tailored to new teachers' individual needs is valuable (Warsame & Valles,

2018). This approach provides novice teachers with support from an individual who is

familiar with the culture, processes, and procedures of the school. The school

administration would be responsible for providing mentors with a list of topics to cover

with new teachers. The plan would also allow for structuring the plan to meet personal

needs. Some individuals may need information in areas that others do not need. The

participants spoke about the need for better professional development and support.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Developing this project study brought about multiple thoughts regarding the

results. Of course, I did not know what direction I would take until gathering the data

from the project participants. However, it was easy for me to select a project based on the

results. I am sure that there are multiple solutions to the problem, but I selected the one

that I thought was most appropriate. I chose the project because I wanted to give the

novice teachers a voice regarding their training. I also believe that administrators will

benefit from understanding the needs of new teachers and being able to provide them

with what they need to be successful. Spending time and money on programs in which

individuals feel that their needs have not been met seems useless and a waste of

resources.

Using resources from the Walden University project study template and data

collected on professional development programs, I formulated a plan to revamp the

novice teacher professional development program at the study high school. If it is implemented, the novice teachers and other staff members may have a less stressful working environment, and novice teacher retention may increase. I also believe that students will benefit from having teachers who have more time invested in instruction and spend less time on discipline issues and absences.

The overall goal was to provide a program that allows novice teachers to voice their concerns and for the administration to put a plan in action to address those concerns. Employees and leaders benefit when everyone participates and is committed to a common goal (Hawkins, 2017). Through evaluation and feedback, the program will be monitored, and changes can be made accordingly. Monitoring the program will be an ongoing process, and the administration must continue to communicate regularly with participants about progress and set goals. Shoaib and Kahli (2017) found that goal setting has a positive impact on staff relationships and performance. With feedback and regular communication, it will be easier to overcome obstacles in the program.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

The importance of this project study resided in the effort to inquire about the frequent nature and high number of early departures of novice teachers from a high school located in a southern rural community. Education is important regardless of the location of the students. Administrators cannot assume that they know why novice teachers are departing and then continue to allocate money to programs to retain them without knowing the root cause of the problem. There have been studies conducted regarding novice teacher departure in other locations in the United States, but I needed

information about this particular school. Situations that occur in specific locations do not necessarily relate to other places, but the data may be used to guide other research.

I selected a qualitative approach because I wanted to know what novice teachers thought about their experiences at the school. The results indicate that they believed that they were overworked and unappreciated, as well as that the professional development provided was not adequate. Participants also mentioned that they would like strategies for classroom management as well as for classroom procedures. To address these issues, I suggested a revamped novice teacher professional development program. Sessions would be built by the curriculum director, administration, and veteran teachers. Content would consist of evidence-based data and needs from novice teacher surveys. Positive results from the surveys may information to other schools and districts on teacher retention. The novice teacher professional development program has the potential to influence change in professional development programs in the district and eventually other locations.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

As previously mentioned, the results of this project study have the potential to alter the current methods used for novice teacher professional development. If the administration adopts the program, a positive social change may emerge in the school environment. With a decrease in novice teacher departures, there may be an increase in staff morale, better continuity, and less time spent on training new teachers. The program is also flexible, so making changes based on what each new group of novice teachers needs is possible. It can also be developed to address various needs of other schools.

Direction for Future Research

There is a large arena to further this study because I had a small pool of participants, with only seven individuals. Further research about this issue could include a larger number of participants as well as additional schools from the same district. After conducting research in other schools from the same district, researchers could expand their inquiry to the state and possibly other states. Future research on the novice teacher professional development program will depend on results of evaluations and how the program is progressing. The retention rate and an assessment of other schools' climate may form the basis of whether additional research is necessary. Future researchers may also want to incorporate other methods of research, such as focus groups, observations, or a quantitative study that measures various retention rates or other data.

<div align="center">

Conclusion

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Retaining novice teachers is a process that must be looked at continuously to make sure that strategies are being used to decrease early departures and that there are not underlying issues that need to be resolved. It was apparent from the study participants' responses that issues existed causing novice teachers to depart the school. Taking time to understand the needs of staff members and being able to address those needs would represent a start toward solving the problem. Every issue may not have the desired solution, but it would be beneficial to listen to the issues and make a concerted effort to create changes. Every year, a new group of teachers comes in with varying strengths, weaknesses, concerns, and questions. The flexibility of the planned novice teacher professional development program is designed to address those differences. I understand

that there are several ways that the results of the project might have been interpreted, and I hope that my choice was a viable one.

The study has taught me a lot about remaining neutral when gathering data as well as taking all of the information gathered into account prior to deciding on the way forward. I learned as a doctoral student the depth of what is involved in conducting research and how the outcome can change lives for the better. I do believe that I still have a lot to learn, and that is the beauty of education. One is never finished with obtaining knowledge and using what is learned to make positive changes.

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Appendix A: The Project

Purpose: Novice Teacher Professional Development is intended to be a revamped professional development program for individuals new to the teaching profession. The program provides novice teachers with the opportunity to contribute to the sessions by providing lesson topics they desire to learn. The program will also include information the administration is required to provide.

Agenda: A slide presentation will be provided on the first day to introduce to program to participants. Days two through four will include sessions with embedded activities and outings.

Day 1 Slides

NOVICE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BY: ANGELA FORTENBERRY

- What does new teacher professional development entail?

- What role do novice teachers play in the professional development plan?

- What are the perceived changes needed for successful new teacher professional development, according to prior novice teachers?

Day 1: Understanding Novice Teacher Professional Development and how it will be implemented.

1. PURPOSE
   - What is the novice teacher professional development?
   - Will revamping professional matter?
   - What are the components of novice teacher professional development?
2. SHARING INFORMATION
   - How can we use the experiences of others to help the program?
   - How can the program benefit from novice teachers sharing their concerns?
3. OUTCOME
   - What we the novice teachers gain?
   - What will the administration gain?
   - How will the staff benefit?

What is the purpose of Novice Teacher Professional Development and what are the components?

- The purpose of novice teacher professional development is to provide new teachers the training and resources they need to be successful.

- Applicable to a local problem requiring a resolution.

- Novice teachers' inquiries will drive the sessions.

- It is critical for new teachers to feel supported and prepared.

What will the novice teachers, administration and students gain from the training?

- Novice teachers will gain tools they need and desire to start their teacher profession with positive self-efficacy and support.
- The administration will have less novice teachers departing because they believe they are not supported or prepared.
- The staff will spend less time providing mentorship and assistance to new teachers because of frequent departures.

GROUP ACTIVITY:
- Tables (groups of 4) please brainstorm ways you believe novice teacher professional development can be beneficial.
- A group spokesperson will share each groups' contribution.

How can veteran teachers and novice teachers share information that benefits the program?

- Veteran teachers can share stories, strategies, experiences, and resources that will help novice teacher succeed and feel more comfortable.

- Novice teachers can share concerns, ask questions and seek clarification about information provided to them.

Day 2: Procedures, Time and Stress Management

1. PURPOSE
- What procedures do I need to know for this position?
- Why do we need stress management?
- What can time management do to help me?
2. SHARING INFORMATION
- What helpful experiences and strategies can others share to help?

School Procedures and Training for Time and Stress Management

- Coverage of procedures for grading, attendance and parent contacts
- Time management strategies.
- What is stress and what activities can help minimize stress?

Day 3: Who Do I Teach and How Do I Manage My Classroom

1. PURPOSE
- What type of environment do the students live in?
- How can learning about the environment help classroom management?
- What can time management do to help me?
2. SHARING INFORMATION
- What helpful experiences and strategies can others share to help?

What Type of Environment are the Students Living in and How Will Knowing This Help?

- After visiting the local area what things were noticed?
- How does this information help in the classroom?
- What strategies can be shared for classroom management?

Day 4: Let's Build a Better Team

1. PURPOSE
   - What other information do you what to know?
   - What needs more clarification?
   - How can this course be improved?

How Can Our Team Grow Together and Get Better?

- What additional information can the facilitators provide?
- What additional information do the novice teachers need?
- How can we get better as a team?

ITS SHARING TIME…DON'T BE SHY, ITS YOUR TIME!

Novice Teacher Professional Development Sessions Days 1-4

Day 1: Introduction and Team Building Activity

8:00-8:30- Coffee and pastries- mingle

8:30-8:45-Opening remarks from the principal

8:45-9:00-break

9:00-9:30 Whole group activity: Ice Breaker-Write down 3 truths and 1 lie (everyone will guess the lie of each participant)

9:30-10:30- Overview of Novice Teacher Professional Development Sessions

10:30-11:30-Tour the school and school grounds

11:30 -13:00-Lunch

13:00-14:00- Table activity (Groups will brainstorm thoughts about how professional development should be implemented).

14:00- 14:10- break

14:10-14:40- Groups share ideas

14:40-15:00- Recap of what will come during the week/closing comments/questions

Day 2: Procedures, Time and Stress Management

8:00-8:30- Coffee and pastries

8:30-9:30- Photos for school badges

9:30-9:45- Break

9:45-11:45- How do we grade (percentage of tests, classwork and homework), take attendance and when do we contact parents

11:45-13:00- Lunch

13:00-13:15-New teachers will meet their mentors

13:15-14:00- What strategies can be used to manage time and alleviate stress?

14:00-14:10-Break

14:10-14:45- Table groups brain storm other strategies for time and stress management

14:45-150-Recap/closing remarks/dismissal

Day 3: Who Do I Teach and How Do I Manage My Classroom

8:00-8:30- Coffee and pastries/open discussion about Days 1 and 2

8:30-9:00-Where do our students live and what is the environment like?

9:00-9:10- Break

9:10-10:30-Bus tour of the local neighborhoods and business districts

10:30-11:30- Table groups-What did you see? What does that tell you?

11:30-11:45- Group spokesperson shares group comments

11:45-13:00- Lunch

13:00-13:30- I need help with managing this classroom

13:30-14:20- Group will act out disruptive classroom scenarios.

14:20-1430-Break

14:30-14:45 – What strategies worked the best?/question and answer session

14:45-15:00- Recap of the day/dismissal

Day 4: Let's Build a Better Team

8:00-8:30- Coffee and pastries/open discussion about Days 3

8:30-8:45-Whole group activity: Write down what you want to know or need more information about.

8:45-11:30- (bathroom breaks as needed) – Facilitators will field questions, share resources or collect names of those who require more information.

11:30-12:30- Lunch

12:30-12:45- Recap of sessions and introduction of benefits paper work

12:45- dismissal- completion of paperwork and opportunity to speak with mentors,

facilitators and administration.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Good morning (afternoon). My name is ___. Thank you for your time today. The purpose of this interview is to get your perceptions of your experiences from the school of study and why you departed. There are no right or wrong or wanted or unwanted answers. I would like you to feel comfortable with saying what you really think and how you really feel.

Tape Recorder Instructions

With your consent, I will be tape-recording our conversation. The purpose of this is so that I can get all the specifics but at the same time be able to focus on my conversation with you. I assure you that all your comments will remain confidential. I will be composing a list, which will contain all students' comments referencing individuals by number only.

Post Interview Statement

Thank you so much for sharing your experiences. As you know, the recording of our conversation will be transcribed and a copy sent to you, so that you may make any changes or modifications that might better explain your perceptions. Is there anything else you would like to add for now?

Debriefing

Thank you very much for participating. Your time is valuable, and I appreciate you taking a moment to share your experiences.

The purpose of this interview was to better understand novice teachers' perceptions of their experiences at the school o study and reasons for departing. I am

interested in your opinions and responses. In no way was this interview intended to evaluate or judge anyone. The results of this research will provide useful information to leaders in education, in helping them to structure educational programs that teachers consider to be most beneficial and valuable in helping with their retention decisions.

You will remain anonymous throughout this study, including any future articles, published or unpublished.

Post Interview Reflection

Once the interview is complete, take a couple of minutes to annotate reactions and to the interview responses.

Participant #:
Date of Interview:
Please describe the participant's attitude during the interview:
Please note if there were any interruptions during the interview:
Please describe anything else that may affect the study's objective:
Additional comments:

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Please share with me your initial reasons for entering the teaching profession?

(RQ1)

P1.1. What parts (experiences, classes interactions) were important in

helping prepare you for teaching?

P1.2. Did you experience anything in your preparation for being a teacher

that was not helpful or even harmful?

P1.3. Can you describe experiences that might have helped you be more

prepared? Or What, if anything would have helped you be better prepared

for being a teacher?

2. Did you have a mentor (RQ1)?

P2.1 If yes, was this mentor assigned by the district

P2.2 If no, do you feel like you needed a mentor?

3. Did you receive training, such as in-service or professional development when

you began teaching (RQ1)?

P3.1   If yes, do you feel it was useful? How?

P3.2 If no, do you think it would have been beneficial to you? How?

4. What do you think could have been done differently by the district to help you

transition into your position, if anything? (RQ1 and possibly RQ2)

5. How would you describe the relationships with teachers and others in the

school?

P5.1 Please feel free to discuss both the positive and negative ones and why (RQ1 & RQ2).

6. Who and/or what do you feel interfered with your work and development as a teacher? (RQ1)

7. How has your teaching experience compared to what you anticipated? (RQ1 & Q2)

8. Can you share with me the ultimate reason you decided to depart the high school? (RQ1 & RQ2)

Appendix D: Novice Teacher Professional Development Survey

Novice Teacher Professional Development Follow-up Survey Please rate between 0 and 10: 0 disagree to 10 Strongly Agree	
I am satisfied with the sessions this week	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
The facilitators were knowledgeable.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I believe the information will be useful to me.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
The sessions were well planned and engaging.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
The location was comfortable and inviting.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I would recommend these sessions for all novice teachers.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Please add any comments about what you liked or what you would change. 	