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The Experiences of Novice Elementary School Teachers in California

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Abstract

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MA, Walden University, 2006

BA, California State University Stanislaus, 1998

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

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Abstract

During the past 10 years, obtaining and retaining qualified teachers have become increasingly difficult. Previous research has focused on the experiences of veteran teachers but has neglected to study the experiences of novice teachers. Using semistructured interviews, this qualitative study explored the experiences of eight novice teachers with a maximum of two completed years of teaching service. Through the use of flyers and participant referrals, the snowballing sampling strategy was used to recruit participants. The Colaizzi method was used to collect, interpret, and analyze the data. Five thematic results were found that were related to teacher experiences with required trainings, professional development activities, and preparation programs. These results indicated that novice teachers found the required assessments stressful. There were either no required professional development activities/trainings or the activities and trainings were insufficient. Participants highlighted the value of teaching programs that provided hands-on experiences and guided practice. Most participants were motivated to become teachers through prior experience. Overall experiences with other teachers were mostly positive. The findings from this study can contribute to positive social change by highlighting the need to continuously monitor and adjust variables that continue to impact teachers. This research is designed to encourage education stakeholders in the state of California to review the data associated with high teacher attrition rates, and to inform them of the experiences of new teachers, as a means of providing a starting point for the creation of new programs that would be beneficial in enhancing the overall field of education. This will lead to the transformation of the culture of individual school environments and other educational institutions.

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Dedication

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this study to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; without him, nothing is possible. This has been a labor of love and a topic that is close to my heart. I am eternally grateful to have been able to pursue this particular topic and assist with shining a light on some of the information regarding the teaching profession.

Secondly, I would like to dedicate this study to all educators, past, present, and future. Thank you for your tireless dedication to your profession. Your efforts and consistency are greatly appreciated. I would like to especially thank all of the educators who participated and were willing to participate in this study. Your voices will be the catalyst that encourages positive changes for future teachers.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my wonderful husband, Mazi; my parents, Frank and Evella; and my siblings, Karen and Mary, who have supported and encouraged me through this entire process.

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I would like to acknowledge my amazing chair, Dr. Scotch. Thank you for your support and encouragement. Your positive spirit has kept me going throughout this entire process. Your advice to celebrate even the smallest of achievements and your ability to rephrase all things positively are very inspirational.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Hertenstein. Thank you for your guidance, feedback, and being up on the latest studies and information, which have helped with the completion of this study.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

During the last 10 years, multiple states inclusive of California have reported increasing issues in attracting and maintaining highly qualified teaching professionals (Sutcher et al., 2019). Podolsky and Sutcher (2016 as cited by Goldhaber et al., 2018). took a survey of 200 California school districts and found that 75% reported issues with teacher recruitment and retention. Eggers and Calegari (2011 as cited by Reitman & Karge, 2019) stated that 46% of teachers nationwide, both intern and fully credentialed, quit before their 5th year and suggested that this attrition phenomenon is directly related to the lack of appropriate preparation (i.e., college-level teacher preparation programs and corresponding training activities).

In this chapter, I will identify a gap in the current research concerning novice teachers' experiences. I will also review the background of related literature and provide information about the purpose of the study. Research questions will be presented, and the conceptual framework and nature of the study will be identified and discussed. Finally, definitions of terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study will be discussed.

Problem Statement

Teacher attrition negatively impacts the education system, by costing approximately 2.2 billion dollars per year, impacting student success rates and by keeping the entire system in a state of constant chaos (The Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Issues such as having more difficult and complex workloads than their experienced counterparts, teaching challenging subject combinations, being assigned

higher levels of problematic students, and being afraid to ask for assistance for fear of being viewed as incompetent have been cited as potential reasons for the increased attrition rate of novice teachers (Beck, 2005; Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Kosnik & McIntyre, 2003 as cited by Goldhaber et al., 2018). A poll of 206 California School District, human resources personnel, reported a marked increase in the number of emergency permits, teaching waivers, and limited assignment permits issued by the state each year (Goldhaber et al., 2018). This poll highlighted the fact that school districts have continued to struggle to fill the void of the increasing number of teachers who leave the profession (Goldhaber et al., 2018). Issues such as the declining rates of individuals enrolled in teacher preparation programs, severe and deep cuts to educational budgets, and the history of recessionary layoffs have often been studied to explain teacher attrition rates (Goldhaber et al., 2018). By focusing on declining rates of teachers in preparation programs, budget cuts, and attrition rates, researchers have neglected to seek information on teacher experiences in preparation programs and with district provided training during the first 2 years of teaching (Goldhaber et al., 2018). They have also neglected to seek additional information on whether those experiences have impacted the decision to continue in the field (Goldhaber et. al., 2018).

The term *intern teacher* refers to students of approved teacher education institutions who teach under the supervision of an instructional staff member of the employing school district (Oregon Laws, 2017). The requirements for intern teachers in the state of California include completion of a baccalaureate program, a passing score on the California Subject Examination for Teachers (CSET), completion of a U.S. Constitution course, provision of a supervision appointee, the creation of a professional

development plan (120 hours in child development and method of teaching in assigned grade level, additional instruction in child development during the first semester of employment, courses and/or training as determined by district, and successful annual performance evaluation), and a live scan (State of California Commission on Teaching Credentialing, 2017). Information highlighted by Eggers and Calegari (2011, as cited by Reitman & Karge, 2019) regarding the lack of appropriate preparation for teachers indicated a need for further exploration of the experiences of teachers in teacher preparation programs and training experiences encountered during the first 2 years in the teaching profession. This study will focus on intern teachers' training experiences as they relate to the completion of a state-approved preparation program, the passing of the CSET multiple subject examination, the availability of appropriate professional development activities, planning and execution, additional instruction in child development processes, and other training as determined by the district of employment and annual performance evaluations.

According to the literature reviewed, teacher attrition rates have increased and will continue to increase (Sutcher et al., 2019). The increase in teacher attrition is detrimental to both the government and students (Fooi et al., 2014). Researchers have historically focused on the experiences of veteran teachers, linking those experiences to common concerns such as overwhelming and unreasonable workloads, increasing student behaviors without the appropriate administrative support, and the lack of opportunities related to inclusion concerning the creation and implementation of school and district policies, stress, individual beliefs, professionalism, emotions, and relationships (Newberry & Allsop, 2017).

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative research with a descriptive design is to analyze the preparation and training experiences of intern teachers in the state of California.

Significance

This study will expand the understanding of the overall experiences of intern teachers as they relate to becoming educated and receiving further training while completing their first 2 years of teaching service. The understanding of these experiences will provide additional information for the Department of Education and other educational stakeholders to address one of the main concerns that is currently plaguing the American school system, the increasing attrition rate among new teachers (Newberry & Allsop, 2017). Ingersoll (2003, as cited by The Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005) found that new teachers were more likely to leave the teaching profession than more experienced teachers. Although teachers endure significant assessment and education requirements, approximately 30-45% of teachers quit within their first 5 years of teaching (Newberry & Allsop, 2017). Understanding the experiences of new teachers could create positive social change within the educational system.

This research on analyzing intern teacher's experiences related to preparation programs and district provided training and activities contributes to social change by embodying its very definition. *Social change* is defined as "gradual changes over time that significantly impact human interactions and relationships that transform cultural and social institutions" (Dunfey, 2019). This research is designed to encourage education stakeholders in the state of California to review the data associated with high teacher attrition rates, and to inform them of the experiences of new teachers, as a means of

providing a starting point for the creation of new programs that would be beneficial in enhancing the overall field of education. This will lead to the transformation of the culture of individual school environments and other educational institutions.

Background

A wealth of research exists that centers on improving teacher quality through the use of professional development training and preservice activities that include technology in the classroom, enhancing values-based education, and creating professional learning communities, as a means of improving the quality of classroom instruction and assisting students in obtaining higher scores on individual classroom assessments and yearly state exams (Foulger et al., 2012; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004; Harding et al., 2011; Mergler & Spooner-Lane, 2002; Moeini, 2008; Rivkin et al., 2005 as cited by Berg, 2010). Other researchers have focused on declining rates of teachers in preparation programs, budget cuts, and attrition rates but have neglected to seek information on intern teacher experiences in preparation programs and training activities (Goldhaber et al., 2018). Information obtained from this study will be instrumental in helping administrators and other education stakeholders understand the experiences of novice teachers and create new, more effective programs that will help in reducing attrition rates.

Theoretical Framework

This study is supported by Bandura's (1977 as cited by Goddard et al., 2002) collective efficacy theory, which indicates that the collective beliefs of a group regarding its ability to organize and execute required tasks are instrumental to its success. When using this theory on novice teachers and their experiences both in college and during their first 2 years of teaching, this theory posits that (a) all groups should have a shared belief

and (b) there should be standardized organization and execution methods regarding training and follow-up to ensure that teachers are receiving the proper support to continue to teach and educate students (Bandura, 1977 as cited by Goddard et al., 2002). More specifically, collective efficacy is directly related to self-efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy influences thoughts, motivations, and behavior and can raise mastery expectations through successes and reduce them through failures (Bandura, 1977 as cited by Goddard et al., 2002). Students will experience higher self-efficacy and educational achievements when teachers have high self-efficacy and demonstrate a collective belief in their abilities (Bandura, 1993). Additionally, teachers are more likely to leave the teaching profession when they perceive the collaborative relationships between all members of the educational institution as weak, thereby providing support for maintaining collective efficacy in the educational environment (Pogodzinski et al., 2012).

Research Questions

This qualitative research study is aimed at understanding the experiences of intern school teachers in the state of California. I sought to identify and examine the common themes involved in deciding to leave the profession and utilized those themes to answer the following questions:

RQ1. What are the training experiences of intern teachers in elementary school settings in the state of California?

RQ2. What are the experiences of intern teachers in teacher preparation programs in the state of California?

Nature of the Study

The study is qualitative, with a descriptive research design that uses semistructured interviews to explore the training experiences of intern teachers within the state of California. These experiences include information about the CSET multiple subject examination, professional development planning, and execution, instruction in child development, required district training activities, and annual performance evaluations. The decision to use a qualitative study is based upon information obtained from Creswell (2008), which states that the qualitative research method is best utilized when the variables of the research problem are unknown and need to be explored. The variables related to teacher experiences are unknown and will be explored in this study.

Operational Definitions

California Subject Matter Examination for Teachers (CSET): The CSET is an assessment that was developed by the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (CTC) to aid prospective teachers in meeting specific requirements related to demonstrating subject matter competence in the following areas—Reading, Language, and Literature; History and Social Science; Science and Mathematics; Physical Education; Human Development; and Visual and Performing Arts; and basic writing skills (California Education Credentialing Assessments, 2020a).

Intern teacher: The term *intern teacher* refers to students of approved teacher education institutions, who teach under the supervision of an instructional staff member of an employing school district (Oregon Laws, 201).

Novice teachers: According to Pogdzinski (2012), novice teachers are teachers who have taught a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 5 years; however, for this study, novice teachers are defined as those who had taught for at least 2 years.

Professional development: Fullan (1995) defined professional development as "the sum total of formal and informal learning pursued and experienced by the teacher in a compelling learning environment under conditions of complexity and dynamic change" (Sariyildiz, 2017, p. 249).

Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA): The RICA is an assessment developed by the California CTC to assess the knowledge and skills of prospective teachers to provide effective reading instruction to students (California CTC, 2020b).

Teacher preparation programs: According to the Department of Education (2016, as cited by Jang & Horn, p. 6), the term *teacher preparation program* refers to a "state-approved course of study, the completion of which signifies that an enrollee has met all the state's educational or training requirements for initial certification or licensure to teach in the state's elementary or secondary schools"

Types and Sources of Data

I used semistructured interviews with eight teachers who were in their first 2 years of teaching in an elementary school setting. Although there are many guidelines regarding data saturation when conducting qualitative research, Morse (1994 as cited by Guest et al., 2006) recommended the use of at least six participants.

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

Assumptions

According to Vogt et al., (2016), assumptions are statements that are assumed to be true for a specific purpose. This study assumed that the participants answered the interview questions honestly, and that teachers took the necessary time to reflect on their experiences to provide the most accurate data. It was also assumed that the proper research methodology and design were used and that the sample used was representative of the population.

Limitations

Limitations are areas of research that are out of the researcher's control. Given the qualitative nature of this study, the results are limited to the experiences of a select group of 1st- and 2nd-year teachers in the state of California (Hyatt & Roberts, 2019). Potential challenges of the study include access to targeted participants, researcher's biases, biased questions, discrepant data, and moderator's bias (Hoets, 2018). Participants were recruited by using the snowballing method, where one participant who has met the preset requirements recommended other participants who meet those same requirements (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The term *bias* refers to inequality between two alternatives that favor one position over the other (Navarro, 2019). Biased questions are those that are designed to elicit certain predetermined responses (Navarro, 2019). When recording semistructured interviews, I reduced bias by using standardized questions (Navarro, 2019).

The term *discrepant data* refers to the addition of selected results without including relevant information (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Discrepant data were reduced by

having a nonbiased professional check the data outcome as well as the study's results and discussion sections to ensure that the information obtained from the study was included.

Moderator bias refers to biases against the moderator's facial expressions, body language, tone, manner, and/or dress (Hoets, 2018). Moderator bias was eliminated by using the member-checking method of recording the data and having participants review the information for accuracy (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010).

Scope

According to Simon and Goes (2013), the scope of a study identifies parameters under which the study will operate. Because all novice teachers in California could not be sampled, the scope of this study was limited to teachers in Northern California. It was anticipated that the teachers in this study would be reflective of the population. The data collected from novice teachers in Northern California may underrepresent the diverse and unique experiences of novice teachers throughout the state. The under representative nature of these experiences could potentially influence the results. Eight novice teachers were interviewed. Due to the homogeneous nature of the participants, i.e. all participants were novice teachers in Northern California with similar backgrounds, data saturation was achieved after six interviews.

Delimitations

Delimitations are "characteristics that arise from the limitations of the study (defining the boundaries) and by the conscious exclusionary and inclusionary decisions made during the development of the study plan" (Simon & Goes, 2013, para. 8). For example, I chose the framework, methodology, and design, as well as the specific level of teachers and specific state/region.

Summary

During the last 10 years, multiple states inclusive of California have reported increasing issues in attracting and maintaining highly qualified teaching professionals (Sutcher et al., 2019). Teacher attrition negatively impacts the education system, costing approximately 2.2 billion dollars per year (The Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). The purpose of this qualitative research with a descriptive design is to analyze the preparation and training experiences of intern teachers who resided in the state of California. This study will expand the understanding of the overall experiences of intern teachers as they relate to becoming educated and receiving further training while completing their first 2 years of teaching service. The understanding of these experiences will provide additional information for the Department of Education and other educational stakeholders to address one of the main concerns that is currently plaguing the American school system, the increasing attrition rate among new teachers (Newberry & Allsop, 2017).

A wealth of research exists that centers on improving teacher quality through the use of professional development trainings and preservice activities that include technology in the classroom, enhancing values-based education, and creating professional learning communities, all as a means of improving the quality of classroom instruction and assisting students in obtaining higher scores on individual classroom and yearly state exams (Foulger et al. 2012; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004; Mergler & Spooner-Lane, 2002; Harding et al. 2011; Moeini, 2008; and Rivkin, et al., 2005 as cited by Berg, 2010).

Information regarding the conceptual framework was reviewed and highlighted Bandura's (1977 as cited by Goddard et al., 2002) collective efficacy theory, which

indicates that the collective beliefs of a group regarding its ability to organize and execute required tasks are instrumental to its success (Bandura, 1997). Related operational definitions were reviewed. Data sources included information from eight novice teachers, obtained through the use of semistructured interviews were presented. Lastly, information on assumptions, limitations, scope, and delimitations was provided. The study involved the assumption that participants answered the questions honestly. The limitations of the study included the use of a select group of participants, researcher's bias, biased questions, discrepant data, and moderator's bias. The scope of the study was the limitation of participants to novice teachers in Northern California. Delimitations included the framework, methodology, and design, as well as the experience level of teachers and the location of the study (state/region), which I as the researcher chose.

In Chapter 2, I will discuss the literature that was used to explore novice elementary school teachers' experiences in the state of California, including a historical overview of the evolution of the teaching profession, teacher preparation programs, state-required assessments, and professional development programs. The chapter will also address the conceptual framework of the study and potential themes and perceptions. Additionally, I will discuss literature related to the methodology, literature related to different methodologies, and the relationship of the current research to previous studies.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Introduction

In this section, I will review literature on topics related to novice elementary school teachers' experiences in the state of California. The topics include teacher preparation programs, which incorporates information on traditional preparation programs and alternative preparation programs; professional development activities required for teachers during their first 2 years; and assessments, including the CSET and the RICA. Finally, I will present a discussion of the conceptual framework, including Bandura's self-efficacy theory, potential themes, and perspectives, literature related to perspectives, literature related to different methodologies, and the relationship of the current study to previous studies. The presented literature was retrieved from the following sources: Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Academic Search Complete, Teacher Reference Center, ProQuest Information and Learning Company, EBSCO, and the Walden University Library. Relevant research was identified through conducting a search using the following keywords and phrases: *traditional teaching program*, *alternate teaching programs*, *1st-year teacher experience*, *professional development*, *the CSET assessment*, *the RICA assessment*, *Albert Bandura*, and *self-efficacy theory*.

The literature highlights 1st- and 2nd-year teachers' experiences with traditional and alternate teaching programs, professional development activities, and experiences related to passing the CSET and RICA. New teachers must undergo rigorous training to prepare themselves to enter the classroom and provide effective instruction to students

(Mandic et al., 2019). The information in the literature review is designed to analyze the preparation, assessment, and professional development experiences of new teachers.

The review starts with a discussion of traditional and alternate teacher preparation programs and then progresses to a discussion on professional development activities that are required for 1st- and 2nd-year teachers. The literature review further addresses the CSET and RICA assessments as well as information related to Bandura's self-efficacy theory. Finally, research on potential themes and perceptions, research related to the study methodology, and the relationship of the study to previous research are explored.

Teacher Preparation Programs

Throughout time and logistical areas, the route to teaching has varied greatly (Labaree, 2008). During the early 19th century, schooling was held in a variety of settings, including but not limited to home and church (Labaree, 2008). In the 1830s, the concept of the common school emerged, which led to the traditional system of education that is present today (Labaree, 2008). This initiative provided support for the creation of the major teacher education initiative (Labaree, 2008). To teach/train teachers, "normal schools" were developed within major cities, with the most prominent having been formed in Lexington, Massachusetts in 1839 (Labaree, 2008). The school began at the level of high school and was a single-purpose professional school used to educate future teachers, which included a curriculum that focused on a mix of liberal arts courses aimed at grounding teachers in the appropriate subject matter as well as in the art of teaching while simultaneously exposing them to professional courses (Labaree, 2008). According to Wright (1930 as cited by Saeger, 2019), by 1950, there were seven "normal schools" in the United States. During that time, "normal schools" were the only teacher preparation

programs available to educate aspiring teachers. In the past 90 years, teacher preparation programs have gone through rigorous changes both in expectations and definition (Saeger, 2019).

According to the Department of Education (2016, as cited by Jang and Horn, 2016, p. 16), the term *teacher preparation program* refers to a "state-approved course of study, the completion of which signifies that an enrollee has met all the state's educational or training requirements for initial certification or licensure to teach in the state's elementary or secondary schools."

The teaching profession began as a modest field that required teachers to ascertain and educate students in the basics of Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic (Harding & Parson, 2011). Through time, the profession evolved, adding more specific qualifications such as being able to create, conduct, and evaluate examinations; completing adequate lesson plans that used the curriculum information while meeting specific student learning needs; and completing a specified number of continuing education units and professional development activities each year (Harding & Parson, 2011). Additionally, the profession encouraged the creation of a to-do list, which persuaded teachers to initiate positive, collaborative relationships with other teachers and students; engage in self-directed and school-directed professional learning activities; get involved in school-wide initiatives; ask for help when needed; and see challenges and problems as opportunities to grow and to conduct classroom action research with students (Harding & Parson, 2011).

According to Goldhaber and Anthony (2004) and Rivkin et al., (2005 as cited by Berg, 2010, p. 193), "teaching quality is the most significant factor in student learning". The significance of teacher quality lies in the ability to use adequate educational practices

to proficiently disseminate instructional information in such a manner that students are able to understand and retain that information. Inadequate educational practices lead to poor instruction, which leads to future poverty, unemployment, and deviant behavior of students (Moeini, 2008). Given strong evidence regarding quality teachers and student learning, students must have accomplished teachers who have gained the appropriate knowledge and skills that are necessary to boost student learning (Berg, 2010).

Although the initial increase in teaching requirements provided an excellent foundation for the development of quality teaching programs, the progression of society (i.e., the implementation of the internet as well as the increase in and expansion of commercial businesses) has highlighted the fact that current teaching programs and requirements have become outdated and ineffective, resulting in students who are not learning adequately and are not able to be valuable members of corporate America (Berg, 2010). The inability of students to assist with the evolution of businesses and provide for the stability of the American economy has pinpointed the issue of outdated teaching qualifications, which have severely impacted the ability of teachers to effectively teach students (Berg, 2010)

Traditional Route

Roth & Swail (2000 as cited by Jang and Horn 2017) postulated that traditional teacher preparation refers to a 4- or 5-year undergraduate program hosted at a postsecondary institution that requires teachers to possess a bachelor's degree; complete all approved, accredited educational programs; major in and/or minor in the field of education or elementary education; minor in the desired subject area; have a strong Liberal Arts foundation; and complete all required teacher licensure exams. In traditional

programs, participants are exposed to courses on pedagogy, specific subject matter content, and courses on teaching diverse populations, including but not limited to English language learners and students in special education (Jang & Horn, 2017).

Typical traditional teacher preparation programs require students to complete 30 semester hours of learning. Such programs provide individual scheduling for students; must be completed in a minimum of four semesters; require a minimum of 255 hours of fieldwork; require students to complete traditional student teaching after the completion of content/methods course work, which is provided through evening classes that are usually offered Monday through Thursday in 16-week term formats with minimal WebCT support; and provide financial support through scholarships and graduate assistance programs (Alhamisi, 2011).

Avalos & Barrett, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Zientek, 2007 (as cited by Jang and Horn, 2017) also noted that individuals who completed the traditional route to teacher certification often reported higher levels of job satisfaction and self-efficacy. They were also able to use evidence-based instructional practices and had higher teacher retention levels (Maclver & Vughn, 2000; Papay et al., 2012 as cited by Jang and Horn, 2017).

Alternative Preparation Program

Zeichner & Schulte, (2001 as cited by Jang and Horn, 2017) also provided information on alternate preparation programs and stated that alternative programs are expedited teacher preparation programs most often found in high-need areas such as special education, mathematics, and science. Alternative preparation programs have few requirements regarding grade-level content matter vary by time, format, and location; are

supervised by state agencies; and are subjected to federal reporting requirements. Due to the ever-increasing need for teachers, the states that allow teaching candidates to obtain certification through alternative programs increased from eight in 1980 to all 50 (Harrell et al., 2009 as cited by Jang & Horn, 2017). Alternative preparation programs differ from traditional programs in the following areas: nature of the provider, response to labor market need, coursework and recruitment, and selection (Alhamisi, 2011). Typical alternative preparation programs possess the following components: have 24 semester hours of instruction, are presented in cohort groups, can be completed in 3 semesters, require a minimum of 240 hours of fieldwork, provide on-the-job mentoring and supervision over one academic year, provide Saturday/Sunday classes once a month using one or a multitude of presentation methods (WebCT, synchronous and asynchronous communication, evening workshops once a month, and 2-week summer institutes), and have students receive tuition support through state-provided grants (Alhamisi, 2011). Alternate preparation programs, like traditional programs, require teachers to obtain a specified number of continuing education units through either attending professional development courses or participating in professional development activities (Jang & Horn, 2017).

Professional Development

Sariyildiz (2017, p. 278) stated that professional development is "a vital component of teachers' professional lives." Zhukova (2018, p. 102) stated that this is important because "teachers play a vital role in shaping changes in students' values/attitudes, mindset, ways of thinking/seeing things, skills, behaviors, and lifestyles that are consistent with sustainable development" Brookfield (1986, as cited by Kumi-

Yeboah & James, 2012 p. 175), stated that "the professional development needs of teachers are active learning experiences." Lawler and King (2000 as cited by Kumi-Yeboah & James 2012 p. 175) added that these experiences build "on prior experiences and cultivate a climate of respect and safety." Additionally Gall and Renchler (1985, as cited by Sariyildiz, p. 249), provided multiple definitions of professional development; and stated that the term *professional development* refers to an "effort to improve teachers' capacity to function as effective professionals by having them learn new knowledge attitudes and skills". Fullan (1995, as cited by Sariyildiz p. 249), defined professional development as "the sum total of formal and informal learning pursued and experienced by the teacher in a compelling learning environment under conditions of complexity and dynamic change".

Training and Preservice

It is well known that quality education depends on the qualification of the teacher, which, in turn, depends upon the quality of professional development programs (Moeini, 2008). Teachers who possess excellent qualifications can master appropriate teaching methods, and those who possess the knowledge, skills, and experiences to contribute to a multitude of educational topics are considered master teachers. These teachers have three important characteristics (Hite & Milbourne, 2018). They can communicate and build relationships with their students, they know how to teach both children and the curriculum, and they love learning and sharing that love of learning through their teaching (Harding & Parson, 2011).

Professional development programs are essentials tools that aid policymakers in conveying broad visions for the present and future of the teaching profession, assisting

with the continuous dissemination of critical information and providing ongoing guidance for teachers (Moeini, 2008). These training programs and yearly preservice activities have been the central focus of enhancing teacher education as a means of increasing student understanding and thereby increasing overall test scores (Moeini, 2008). Existing professional development programs use a variety of activities, which include teachers' orientation conferences, workshops, and seminars; symposiums; courses; print publications; videotaping services; teacher consultations; teaching excellence centers; school teaching awards; and research and training seminars (Moeini, 2008).

Ongoing teacher education is the most challenging aspect of staying current in the teaching field and usually involves identifying a benchmark. The benchmark process takes place in three stages (Foulger et al., 2012). The first stage is determining the best practice through the analysis of the product or individuals' performance (Foulger et al., 2012). This is accomplished by evaluating the needs and current level of the student. Once the teacher is aware of where the child is on the developmental/educational continuum, the teacher can progress to the second stage. The second stage involves identifying enablers such as identifying factors that can hinder or facilitate product success (Foulger et al., 2012). This is accomplished by taking a look at the student's entire life and breaking each area into sections that can be evaluated. For example, does the child have a learning disability? Is the child in a safe place as far as the child's home life is concerned? Is the child getting enough to eat or getting adequate sleep? Once these issues are determined and problems are extinguished, the teacher can progress to the third stage. The third stage, identified by Watson (2009 as cited by Folger et al., 2012)), involves putting knowledge into practice. At this stage, teachers will use their knowledge

of learning preferences to create a comprehensive plan to teach all of the students. Folger et al. further identified the developmental stages of teachers as they navigated the process; these stages included recognizing and understand the technological content, accepting the information by having a positive attitude about the content, exploring available technology, adapting to the use of the technology, and revising the technological information to best fit their individual needs.

While Foulger et al. (2012) focused on benchmarks, Shulman (1987 as cited by Moeini, 2008) identified seven categories and four sources of professional knowledge, which included content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational context, and knowledge of educational ends and purposes. Content knowledge refers to "the body of information that teachers teach, and students are expected to learn in a given content or subject area" (Education Reform, 2013). General Pedagogical knowledge refers to aspects of pedagogy in general regardless of the content knowledge that teachers specialized in (Shulman, 1987 as cited by Moeini 2008). General knowledge refers to knowledge that is available to everyone; such knowledge is of a nonspecific nature (The Free Dictionary, 2014). Curriculum knowledge, also referred to as core knowledge, refers to the knowledge of the content that is to be learned by each grade level (Core Knowledge, 2014). Pedagogical content knowledge refers to knowledge that is needed to teach each subject clearly and effectively (Mazarin, 2014). Knowledge of learners and their characteristics refers to knowledge about each student and individual learning methods (Mazarin). This knowledge is shown through the use of learning styles/preferences (Mazarin). Knowledge

of educational content refers to knowledge related to being aware of the content regarding specific educational practices (Mazarin). Knowledge of educational ends and purposes refers to the knowledge of the overall purpose of providing an education to students as well as what that education is to accomplish (Mazarin).

Shulman (1987) further noted that all knowledge can be attributed to four sources: scholarship in disciplines, educational materials and structure, formal education scholarship, and wisdom of practice. Scholarship in discipline refers to the learned information obtained from a specific discipline. Educational materials and structures, refer to knowledge regarding educational materials (Christensen, 1996; Gore, 2001; Reynolds, 1989; Shulman, 1987 as cited by Moeini, 2008)) and their appropriate uses, as well as the knowledge of how to best structure the lesson to meet the needs of the students. Additionally, formal educational scholarship, refers to the amount of formal education obtained by the teacher (Christensen, 1996; Gore, 2001; Reynolds, 1989; Shulman, 1987 as cited by Moeini, 2008), which can include the accumulation of college degrees, specialized training activities, and professional development activities. Wisdom of practice, refers to the knowledge that instructors/teachers have gained regarding their specific practice (Christensen, 1996; Gore, 2001; Reynolds, 1989; Shulman, 1987 as cited by Moeini, 2008) and can include the knowledge of how to present a lesson, the knowledge of how to properly manage a class, as well as the knowledge of how to effectively keep abreast of technological changes.

To provide the best fit regarding teaching development activities, it is imperative to conduct a needs analysis (Moeini, 2008). Burton and Merril (1991) identified six categories to use when planning and conducting a needs analysis, which included

normative needs, comparative needs, felt needs, expressed needs, anticipated or future needs, and critical incident needs. Normative needs refer to needs based on a set standard; an example of a normative need would be teachers or students scoring below a set educational standard (i.e., a student consistently scoring below the set score that is considered to be proficient in a certain subject (Burton & Merril). Comparative needs refer to a discrepancy between two fields or areas that are considered to be equal (Burton & Merril). An example of such a need would be the difference between the amounts of equipment that have been provided for two schools within the same school district; where schools in the advantaged parts of town may be equipped with advanced technology, schools within the disadvantaged areas of town may have little to no technology available for use. Felt needs refer to needs that are personally desired as a means to improve an individual's performance (Burton & Merril). An expressed need refers to putting a desire or demand into action (Burton & Merril). This type of need is evidenced when there are too many students in one classroom. The number of students inhibits the learning process, which shows a need for the school to provide additional classes so that students will have adequate space and can receive the instruction to support their continued education. Anticipated or future needs refer to the projection of possible needs for the future (Burton & Merril). For example, due to the increase in technological advancement and student comfort and familiarity with such technology as a means of increasing student involvement and improving student achievement rates, a school may determine that it requires an increase in the amount of technology present in the classroom within the next 2–3 years. And lastly, critical incidental needs refer to needs that are borne from the analysis of potential problems (Burton & Merril). An example of such a need is the

increase in crime among students within schools. This increase has sparked the need for some schools to install metal detectors to protect students (Burton & Merril).

Although professional development activities are provided by most school districts it is important to remember that learning does not end after the workshop but is, in fact, a starting point for more in-depth learning which makes continuous support for teachers essential for furthering and supporting educational development (Burton & Merril, 1991).

Professional Learning Communities

Harding et al. (2011) focused on improving existing teacher education programs. To accomplish this task, he focused on outlining the experiences of young teachers to evaluate how future teachers might navigate and excel in a difficult environment, sharing new research in continuing teacher education programs as a way of providing additional support and using the research to suggest and recommend improvements to teacher education programs (Harding et al., 2011)

To determine the best way of improving teacher education programs, it is necessary to identify the individual experiences of each teacher. Harding et al. (2011) identified individuals with the most experience as “master teachers”. These teachers share three characteristics, they have great knowledge related to communicating with and building secure relationships with children, they can teach children while effectively using the required curriculum and they enjoy learning and sharing their love of learning through their teaching (Harding et al., 2011).

Lumpkin (2010) offers support for Harding et al. (2011) suggestions regarding teachers’ collaboration by highlighting the need for educators to establish professional

learning communities to support one another, which would assist new teachers with obtaining the experience and confidence necessary to effectively teach students. In the learning community proposed by Lumpkin (2010) educators would be encouraged to develop and maintain an ongoing school culture. This culture would first and foremost value collaboration among staff members, share the task of lesson planning, instructional strategies, and tips on completing or administering assessments (Lumpkin, 2010). It would also provide compensated time regularly to facilitate interaction among the teaching staff as well as to provide professional growth training activities, recognize and celebrate combined efforts among the staff as it relates to enhancing student learning (Lumpkin, 2010). This compensation would also be utilized to support individuals in mentoring and coaching both teachers and principals to assist with the development of competence in individual as well as instructional content (Lumpkin, 2010). . They will also provide information on strategies and assessments, encourage increased participation in professional education to obtain additional education related to specific content areas, and continuously improve the quality of educational interactions including professional development available at both the school and district levels (Lumpkin, 2010).

To assist incoming teachers through their first two years, Lumpkin (2010) proposed that each teacher be provided a mentor or support teacher to assist new teachers as they become acclimated to the school environment. Also, Lumpkin proposed that the mentor program should allow mentors additional time during the school day to assist new teachers to enable them to make a smooth transition from their academic studies to the reality of real-world teaching, that the district should assist mentors in the provision of guidance, instructional, educational or behavioral and to provide opportunities for faculty

to interact socially to create a strong support network that will encourage the assistance of one another with issues related to teaching. By investing the time and resources to create a supportive network among teachers, and other educational professionals, the district is creating a strong learning community dedicated to collaboration, as well as providing and utilizing the best resources to teach their students, thereby increasing teacher confidence, raising student scores and retaining teachers from one school year to the next.

Assessments

California Subject Examination for Teachers

The CSET (California Subject matter Examination for Teachers) was developed by the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (CTC) to aid prospective teachers in the meeting of specific requirements related to demonstrating subject matter competence in the following areas: Reading, Language and Literature, History and Social Science, Science and Mathematics, Physical Education, Human Development and Visual and Performing arts as well as demonstrate basic writing skills (California Education Credentialing Assessments, 2020a).

The review of the literature related to the experience of teachers with the CSET is minimal (Stankous, 2011). The information that was located focused on educators' experiences with the mathematics subtest and will thus be presented (Stankous, 2011).

Stankous (2011) conducted a study aimed at identifying issues related to prospective teachers, mathematical preparation and performance, and experiences with the CSET single subject mathematics assessment. More specifically, she wanted to find out why the CSET exam is so difficult for the vast majority of prospective teachers; identify the most critical issues of the test; improve student performance, increase the number of students

with successful scores, and aid participants in overcoming math anxiety. Stankous postulated that pinpointed subject-matter knowledge is a major characteristic of an effective teacher. The study highlighted information from a report issued by the California Council on Science and Technology (2007 as cited by Stankous p. 146), which stated that approximately one-third of novice teachers, those that are in their first or second year of teaching in the field of Mathematics and Science is not completely prepared for the task. Through observations of 200 students who attended National University from 2004-2008, Stankous found that many of the participants did not understand the presented questions on the CSET exam, did not like the constructed response questions, did not know how to present proof of their understanding of the answer with reasoning, did not believe that they needed to know all of the information that was presented on the test, and had memorized too much-unrelated information.

To remedy these issues Stankous (2011) proposed that students take the time to examine the entire problem or picture instead of seeing the problem as a set of unrelated fragments, develop skills related to the concept, and reasoning and understand that these are keys to not only being successful with passing the CSET but also with teaching, familiarize themselves with required definitions, be able to identify definitions and properties, identify important information such as basic postulates and proofs of main theorems instead of attempting to remember and identify everything.

Burglund (2013) like Stankous also focused on Mathematics as one of the most challenging sections of the CSET. He conducted a study aimed at identifying the background characters of individuals who successfully passed the single subject CSET Mathematics assessment (Burglund, 2013). Burglund compiled information from187

individuals across 13 California State University campuses, who had completed traditional teaching preparation programs, to identify course work that would support the mastery of appropriate mathematics concepts to show competency at the foundation level of the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing. Categorized into four groups, (1) general education mathematics, non-math-intensive (2) calculus series, first college-level mathematics (3) a semester of calculus and, (4) courses for prospective elementary teachers Burglund found that 62 students passed at the foundation level (passed two), 36 at the full level (passed all three) and 79 completed a waiver which allowed them to take college courses instead of taking the CSET assessment. Of the 62 who passed at the foundation level, "3 (8%) had no mathematics course beyond first-semester calculus; 7 (19%) had no mathematics courses beyond 2 semesters of calculus; • 9 (25%) had no mathematics courses beyond four semesters of calculus; of these 36, 14 (39%) had a major in mathematics. For the 62 who passed only the first two CSETs: 13 (21%) had no calculus courses on their transcript; 26 (42%) had not taken a course beyond the first semester of calculus; 37 (60%) had, at most, a series of calculus courses" (Burglund, 2013, p. 136).

Reading Instruction Competence Assessment

The RICA (Reading Instruction Competence Assessment) was developed by the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing, to assess the knowledge and skills of prospective teachers' abilities to provide effective reading instruction to students (California Commission on Teaching Credentialing, 2020). Organized to assess teachers in the areas of planning, organizing, and managing Reading Instruction related to ongoing assessments, word analysis, fluency, vocabulary, academic language, background

knowledge and comprehension, the overall goal of the RICA is to ensure that intern teachers are equipped to deliver effective reading instruction (California Commission on Teaching Credentialing, 2020b). The Reading instruction should meet the following criteria: it should be based on information obtained from ongoing assessments, demonstrate detailed knowledge of state and local reading standards for specific grade levels; represent a balanced and comprehensive reading curriculum, and is sensitive to the needs of all students (California Commission on Teaching Credentialing, 2020b).

O'Sullivan and Jiang (2002) conducted a study aimed at reviewing standardized testing practices and examining the efficacy of the RICA examination. During the study, O'Sullivan and Jiang (2002) noted the issue with the lack of information related to the RICA. Although the article was written in 2002, the issue of a lack of information related to the RICA remains the same today. The concerns highlighted by O'Sullivan and Jiang (2002) included: the fact that the RICA narrows the curriculum and does not allow prospective teachers to obtain detailed knowledge and experiences, it also has extremely high stakes and must be passed for an individual to obtain a California Teaching Credential, and there is also concern regarding equality, and whether some individuals are being kept from teaching due to the inability to obtain the appropriate training/study materials to successfully pass the RICA (O'Sullivan & Jaing, 2002). Although a study was conducted, the researchers were unable to provide in-depth information because the RICA only offered a pass/fail notation and continuous data was not available (O'Sullivan & Jaing, 2002).

Even though a multitude of information was lacking, O'Sullivan and Jaing (2002, p.72) posed the following questions for future studies and determined that the proposed

questions should have been undertaken before requiring aspiring teachers to pass the assessment as a means of clearing their teaching credential.

1. Does the RICA have any effect on college courses being offered to preservice teachers? In other words, how different are the required reading methods, i.e. have current courses compared to previous courses been more positive or negative about defining good teaching?
2. Does the RICA have any effect on the experience of teachers in elementary school reading classrooms? In other words, are teachers doing a better job since the advent of the RICA? Do the students of RICA teachers' instruction read better?
3. Can we discern which teachers are RICA tested and which are teaching without taking or preparing to teach? Additionally, do they differ in comparison to teachers who have taken the RICA?
4. What measures do students take if they do not pass the RICA the first time which leads them to pass on subsequent attempts? Do these measures lead to improved reading instruction in the classroom? (O'Sullivan & Jiang, 2002, p. 72)

The information presented by O'Sullivan and Jiang, (2002) highlights multiple issues related to successfully taking and passing the RICA. These concerns include but are not limited to the narrowing of the curriculum which does not allow the prospective teachers to obtain detailed knowledge and experiences, extremely high stakes requiring candidates to receive a passing school before being issued a credential, and equality in

the form of obtaining appropriate study materials and attending appropriate training activities.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that informed this qualitative study is supported by Bandura's (1977, as cited by Goddard et al., 2002) collective efficacy theory, which stated that the collective beliefs of a group, regarding its ability to organize and execute required tasks, are instrumental to its success. Due to additional research and the notation that collective teacher efficacy contributed to greater success in a team's overall performance (Bandura, 1977, as cited by Goddard et al., 2002), by the turn of the century the concept of collective teacher efficacy was operationalized and measured. It was determined through a multitude of studies that collective efficacy provides a foundation for increased success of both teachers and students. For example, Goddard et al. (2004, found that as teachers experience success and are provided with support, confidence in their team is strengthened and student success is greatly improved. Additionally, the increase in successes and improved confidence support teachers in trying out new, risky, and difficult to implement ideas, (Czerniak& Schriver-Waldon, 1991; Dutton, 1990; Hani, Czerniak, & Lumpe, 1996; Riggs &Enochs,1990; Ross, 1992 as cited Ross et al., 2003) achieving the benefits of innovation and overcoming potential obstacles(Anderson, Green, & Lowen, 1988; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Authors,1992; 1993; Cancro, 1992; Moore &Esselman, 1994; Watson, 1991 as cited by Ross et al., 2003).

Potential Themes and Perceptions

The research indicates that certain themes and perceptions should be explored during this qualitative study. The appropriateness of teacher preparation programs is

important and greatly contributes to the success of teaching. Larson and Montgomery County Public Schools (2000) identified a correlation between student's performances on Algebra exams and teachers' education levels; years of experience; certification for specific courses, and the completion of pertinent in-service training courses. Additionally, Kuriloff et al. (2019) highlighted the concern over the appropriateness of preparation programs as they pertain to preparing teachers to teach diverse populations. The lack of preparedness and appropriate support through the completion of specific and targeted professional development activities determines whether a teacher will continue in the field or leave (Kuriloff et al., 2019). "Co-operation between schools and teacher education during and after teacher preparation brings together the expertise needed to enhance the development of teaching skills and prevents stagnation of development." (Helms-Lorenz et al., 2018, para. 1). According to Boyd et al. (2009) Darling-Hammond & Youngs (2002); Helms-Lorenz et al. (2015 as cited by Helms-Lorenz et.al., 2018), there is a distinction between teachers who were educated in formal education programs and those who did not receive formal training, citing that formally educated teachers were more effective than those who were not formally educated. Additionally, Helms-Lorenz et al. (2015 as cited by Helms-Lorenz et al., 2008) stated that the certification level and teaching skills of novice teachers were instrumental in determining teacher retention.

The literature has demonstrated that school districts must provide appropriate and well-designed professional development training and activities as a means of creating successful learning communities. According to Helms-Lorenz et al. (2018), some major purposes for professional development schools is to develop school practice through the collaboration of novice and experienced teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2005 as cited by

Helms-Lorenz et al., 2018) and to bridge the gap between the idea of teaching and actual teaching experience (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2001 as cited by Helms-Lorenz et al., 2018). Flores, (2001 as cited by Helms-Lorenz, et. al., 2018), stated that inconsistencies between the idea of teaching and the reality of teaching may cause friction thereby lowering motivation which in turn increases teacher attrition rates. Kuriloff et al., (2019 p.55) stated that "coherence" and "integration" are key to teaching success and highlighted the need for preservice and professional development activities that provide coherence and integration among and between courses and required fieldwork.

The Board of Education must take a closer look at the contents, expectations and, scoring requirements of teacher assessments such as the CSET and the RICA. Although required for teaching candidates to become fully credentialed, the CSET and RICA offer a difficult path and are shrouded in mystery regarding information related to scoring requirements. As previously stated, the CSET and RICA are concerned with specific subject matter knowledge (Stankous 2011, p. 146). Listed as criterion-referenced tests designed to measure an examinee's knowledge and skills concerning an established standard concerning the performance of other examinees, both tests have a passing score of 220 (Pearson Education Inc., 2020). According to the Pearson Education Inc. (2020) website, the raw scores of the CSET and RICA are converted to a scale of 100 to 300 with a scaled score of 220 representing the minimum passing score", if a student passes he/she will receive a notation of pass, however, if a student does not pass he/she will receive a score. Additional information is provided in the form of percentage breakdowns; however, the conversion scale is not available for candidates to review.

With concerning the CSET, it was determined that many of the participants did not understand the presented questions on the exam, did not like the constructed response questions, did not know how to present proof of their understanding of the answer with reasoning, did not believe that they needed to know all of the information that was presented on the test, and had memorized too much unrelated information (Stankous, 2011). This does not indicate that the candidates did not know the information, it indicates that the participants were ill-prepared due to a lack of understanding of the terminology and/or had focusing on unimportant or irrelevant information.

Major concerns regarding the RICA include the fact that it narrows the curriculum and does not allow the prospective teachers to obtain detailed knowledge and experiences, has extremely high stakes, must be passed for an individual to obtain a California Teaching Credential, and has concerns related to equality i.e. whether some individuals are being kept from teaching due to the inability to obtain the appropriate training/study materials that are needed to successfully pass the RICA (O'Sullivan & Jaing, 2002). The presented information provides support for an in-depth review of both the CSET and the RICA, the creation of updated and specific preparation materials, and transparency in scoring methods which includes a raw score conversion chart.

Literature Related to the Method

The literature related to various research designs and methods was reviewed and a descriptive design was chosen for this study. The descriptive design allowed the researcher to explore and understand the daily experiences of the subject (Shosha & Shosha, 2012). The descriptive design method was utilized to reveal and interpret individual perspectives and perceptions related to specific occurrences (Yıldırım &

Şimşek, 2005). Marshall and Rossman (2010, as cited by Giorgi, 2009) highlighted the fact that the descriptive research design is predominately utilized for studies related to education. It is intended to assist the researcher in understanding the description of the meaning, based upon what is presented in the data In this research, the teacher's responses to the presented interview questions were reviewed to examine their perspectives and perceptions of their experiences during their first two years of teaching. According to Schwandt (2015 as cited by Ravitch & Carl, 2016), qualitative researchers must continuously be aware of their ongoing influence and address biases, theoretical preferences, research settings, participant selection, personal experiences, relationship with participants, data generated and, analytical interpretations. When recording semistructured interviews, the interviewer reduces biases by utilizing standardized questions (Navarro, 2019). The member-checking method of recording the data and having participants review the information for accuracy (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010) was utilized to reduce moderators' bias.

Literature Related to Differing Methodologies

The qualitative tradition of descriptive design met the needs of the researcher in recording the lived experiences of new teachers regarding preparation programs, professional development activities/training, and state-required assessments. Gall 2007 as cited by Nassaji, 2015) stated that descriptive research describes a phenomenon and its characteristics, is conducted in a natural setting and, utilizes observations and surveys as a tool to gather data. The characteristics of descriptive research make it an excellent method for analyzing the preparation programs, professional development, and assessment experiences of novice teachers. Other qualitative traditions that were

considered include: (a) case study, which is research that involves studying a case (or multiple cases) of contemporary and real-life events (Ravotch & Carl, 2016) typically understood as bounded by time and place (Creswell, 2013) (b) ethnographic research, which “places an emphasis on in-person field study and includes immersion, through participant observation, in a setting to decipher cultural meanings and generate rich, descriptive data (Ravotch & Carl, 2016, p. 21) and (c) grounded theory, which is an approach that attempts to develop a theory that is derived from data or the research field (Ravotch & Carl, 2016).

A descriptive design was used in this research. Qualitative research “focuses on people's experiences and the meanings they place on the events, processes and structures of their normal social setting, and may involve prolonged or intense contact with people and groups in their everyday situations” (Skinner et al., p. 165). Miles and Huberman (1994, as cited by Skinner et al., 2000 p. 165) further stated that qualitative research “provides a holistic view, through the participants' own words and perceptions, of how they understand, account for and act within these situations”. This design was chosen to conduct detailed research on the preparation, professional development, and state assessment experiences of novice teachers in the state of California.

Relationship of Study to Previous Research

The previous research on this topic indicated that a large number of novice teachers are entering the field without being properly prepared. They are also entering without receiving proper ongoing professional development activities/training, to support and stabilize their continued work in the teaching field. Additionally, previous research

has shown that there is not enough information on the required California state assessments to determine if they are appropriate for inclusion as requirements to obtain a teaching credential.

Kenreich, Hartzler-Miller, Neopolitan, and Wiltz (2004, as cited by Latham and Vogt 2007, p. 154) conducted studies which "looked at approximately 100 Professional Development Schools- versus traditionally prepared teachers from one university over 3 years and found that significantly more PDS-prepared teachers remained after Years 1 and 2." Further, Berry (2010 as cited by Latham & Vogt, 2007, p. 2) stated that "the quality of teacher preparation programs is fundamental as teacher quality is inseparably linked to all aspects of student learning." Another study conducted by Reynolds et al. (2002 as cited by Latham & Vogt, 2007) which included students from George Mason University found no difference in retention rates of teaching candidates regardless of which program was attended. Although Latham and Vogt (2007) have provided conflicting information, the study conducted by Hartzler-Miller, Neopolitan, and Wiltz, provides some support for reviewing the components of professional development training/activities both traditional and alternative to ensure that teachers are provided with instruction in areas that will help them and their students to succeed thereby reducing attrition rates.

Adler (2000 as cited by Peterson-Ahmad, et al., 2018) stated that professional development is a process that increases the participation of practicing teachers in an attempt to make them more knowledgeable about teaching. Professional development activities are directly linked to teacher preparation programs. Peterson-Ahmad et al. (2018) stated that professional development opportunities for teachers that focus on

specific areas of needs for specific community/schools and/or specific individualized classroom supports are instrumental to the improvement of teacher preparation programs. The Blue-Ribbon Panel, (2010, as cited by Peterson-Ahmed et.al., 2018) highlighted information from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) which stated that teacher education programs need to be grounded in clinical practice. As the current research shows, there is a definite and distinct connection between teacher preparation programs, professional development training and activities, and the collective efficacy of teachers. Unfortunately, there are not enough studies conducted on the CSET and RICA and their importance to successful teacher candidacy, and longevity in the field.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

In Chapter 2, preparation programs (traditional and alternative), professional development activities required for teachers during their first 2 years, and assessments (including the CSET and the RICA) were discussed. The literature review was conducted and aligned with Bandura's theory of collective efficacy. Numerous studies were reviewed to identify gaps in the literature related to novice teachers' experiences during their first 2 years of teaching. The literature of interest included information on teacher preparation programs, professional development training activities, communities, and teachers' assessments (i.e., CSET and RICA).

The purpose of this research was to address the gap in the literature in the area of the experiences of novice teachers who work in northern California. In the previous chapters, information related to the gap in research, purpose, background, research questions, definitions, and related literature was reviewed. This chapter outlines the design, rationale, role of the researcher, research methodology, and trustworthiness of the researcher and research. In conclusion, a summary of the methodology is provided.

Research Design and Rationale

This study had two research questions: What are the training experiences of intern teachers in elementary school settings in the state of California? What are the experiences of intern teachers in teacher preparation programs in the state of California? The study used the snowballing method, which involves current participants, who have met preset requirement recommending other participants who meet those same requirements (Ravitch & Carl 2016). A sample of eight teachers were interviewed before data

saturation was reached, the point where no new or relevant information emerges (Ravitch & Carl 2016). Due to the homogeneous nature of the participants, novice teachers in Northern California with similar backgrounds, data saturation was reached at the sixth interview. In this study, novice teachers described their experiences with preparation programs, professional development activities, and required assessments.

A descriptive design was chosen and was appropriate to explore and describe the experiences of novice teachers regarding preparation programs, professional development activities, and required assessments. The descriptive design allowed me to explore and understand the daily experiences of the subjects (Shosha & Shosha, 2012) and was used to reveal and interpret individual perspectives and perceptions related to specific occurrences (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). The descriptive research design is predominantly used for studies related to education (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). During the descriptive semistructured interviews, data were collected through the use of a series of open-ended questions, via Google Meet.

Role of the Researcher

I was the primary instrument of data collection, interpretation, and analysis (Ravitch & Carl 2016). Data were collected through semistructured interviews. When recording semistructred interviews, I reduced bias by using standardized questions (Navarro, 2019). I worked diligently toward appropriately interpreting the data and reporting the findings without bias, protecting participants' confidentiality and privacy through keeping the information in a locked cabinet in a secure location and will erase all information after 5 years. The identities and demographic information, as well as the responses to questions, were not shared with anyone else.

Research Methodology

The qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study, as the qualitative tradition of descriptive design met my needs in recording the lived experiences of new teachers regarding preparation programs, professional development activities and training, and state-required assessments. I did not collect any numerical data except the participants' demographic information, allowing me to reject the use of mixed methods designs. Erickson (2011, as cited by Ravitch and Carl, 2016), stated that quality research seeks to understand various ways that people see, view, approach, and experience the world as well as how they make meaning of their experiences and specific phenomena within those experiences.

Participant Selection Logic

A descriptive study using the qualitative approach enable researchers to examine a phenomenon and its characteristics in a natural setting and use observations and surveys to obtain desired information (Gall et al., 2007 as cited by Nassaji, 2015). Semistructured interviews with novice teachers who taught at the time of data collection or who had previously taught for no more than 2 completed years were conducted. Data were collected from eight teachers to the point of data saturation (Lowe et al., 2018). Before the start of each interview, I reviewed the criteria for the study. Participants who met the preset criteria were included in the study. The criteria for the current study included the following:

- Participants must have taught for no less than 1 year and no more than 2.
- Participants must not be a part of a vulnerable population.

- Participants must work in Northern California at the time of data collection.
- Participants must hold a teaching credential or be in the process of obtaining a credential.
- Participants must have taken the CSET and RICA at least once.

Participants were excluded if any of the following applied:

- They had 3 or more years of teaching experience.
- They were in their 1st year of teaching.
- They had worked outside of Northern California during their 2 years of teaching.
- They had previously obtained a teaching credential.
- They had not taken the CSET and RICA.

Instrumentation

I was the primary instrument for this study. The main data collection process for this qualitative descriptive study included the use of interview questions with novice teachers from Northern California. The interview questions were used to collect data aimed at answering the research questions. The dissertation chair and I worked together to develop appropriate interview questions based on the research questions.

I used the responsive interviewing method because it allowed me to interview teachers, listen to responses, and ask follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Traditionally, the interview method involves one-on-one interaction with participants and requires the researcher to elicit desired information from participants through the use of open-ended questions; however, a semistructured interview using preselected questions

was conducted (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). During the semistrucured interviews, standardized questions were presented in the same order (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

When interviewing novice teachers, I practiced reflexivity, which, as stated by Glense (2016, as cited by Ravitch and Carl, (2016), is self-reflection through the use of questions for oneself as well as paying attention to the interviewing process while noting and acting upon provided responses. As an aspiring Special Education Teacher, I have a background that was similar to the background of the participants in the study. However, I did not allow my experiences and/or perceptions to influence and/or lead participants through the use of a technique called *bracketing*, which includes the creation of visual ways to bracket one's reactions in real time (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Additionally, I did not use any participants of personal acquaintance.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The following procedures were used for participant selection and data collection. I used social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Teacher Connect to identify potential participants. After receiving approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), I proceeded with participant recruitment and selection exercises. I provided an overview of the study as well as the parameters of the study. Participants were provided with two sample questions as a means of determining understanding and appropriateness for the study. Once potential participants began to indicate interest in the study, I contacted the participants by email and phone calls.

Before contacting potential participants, I completed all requirements of Walden University's IRB. After potential participants were recruited, I reached out to them via email and telephone to discuss the purpose and criteria of the study. Additionally,

information regarding how the semisructured interviews would be conducted and a letter describing the purpose of the study was provided.

At the beginning of the interviewing process, participants were provided with an informed consent form, which included detailed information on the study as well as sought permission for the recording of each session. After the participants signed the consent form, I explained that all of the information collected in the interview would remain confidential. The participants were asked to refrain from mentioning their names and the names of other individuals while recording. If and when names were mentioned, the interview process was stopped and the recorded information was taped over. Each participant was asked to choose a four-digit identifier that was used on the questionnaire and the interview recording. If a participant wished to withdraw from the study, they were required to send an email stating that they would like to withdraw. Once this was provided, all information related to that identifier was deleted. Participants did not suffer any repercussions for withdrawing from the study. The risks of the study were limited to the daily experiences of participants during a typical workday. Once an appointment had been scheduled, I began the interview phase of the study. Due to the restrictions of the COVID pandemic, semistructured interviews were conducted in one-on-one sessions in a secure link in Google Meet.

During the interview phase, informed consent was reviewed, and each participant was asked to send an email stating “I consent.” The purpose of the study was summarized. I ensured that the interview process was not interrupted by conducting semistructured interviews in a private, quiet location, by displaying a “do not disturb”

sign, and by turning off the telephone. Participants were asked for permission to record the interview and informed that if the recording request was denied, I would take notes.

After completion of the semistructured interviews, the information was transcribed using the NVivo Pro transcription self-service, and other related information was hand coded. All information was stored in a personal safe. Moderator bias was eliminated by using the member-checking method of recording the data and having participants review the information for accuracy (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010). After validation of the information, I began the analysis phase of the research.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis includes all necessary processes that allow qualitative researchers to make sense of their data (Ravitich & Carl, 2016, p. 216). Additionally, data analysis includes a variety of structured processes across the data set to identify and construct analytic themes and to turn those themes into findings that aid in answering the presented research questions (Ravitich & Carl, 2016). During the data analysis phase, I looked for common trends and themes in the transcribed information from the semistructured interviews. I used a Colaizzi-style method to collect, interpret, and analyze the data (Vagle, 2018).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Eight participants were interviewed. Data saturation occurs when no new or relevant information emerges from the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Based on the selected number of participants, data saturation should have been reached. Member checking assisted with trustworthiness (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010). Member checking was accomplished through checking in with the research participant regarding the

validation of information through checking the accuracy of their statements and a review of the transcript. I ensured that the analysis of the study obtained from the data collection from participants reflected and justified the descriptive research. Transferability, as cited by Ravich and Carl (2016), is bound contextually. To ensure transferability, I provided a detailed description of the data (Guba, 1981) and context to allow others to make comparisons to other contexts (Ravich & Carl, 2016). Dependability refers to the consistency and stability of the data (Ravich & Carl, 2016). Dependability was established through the use of triangulation. Triangulation involves using a variety of resources to enhance the validity of a study (Ravich & Carl, 2015). Confirmability refers to the acknowledgment and exploration of how the researcher's personal biases and prejudices may influence the data (Ravich & Carl, 2016). Confirmability was achieved through the researcher reflexivity process. Reflexivity refers to an assessment of the researcher's identity, positionality, and subjectivities as they relate to the study (Ravich & Carl, 2016). It required me to be continuously aware of and address potential issues to ensure that the research and interpretation of data were free from bias.

Ethical Procedures

Because the study involved human participants, it was essential to have Walden University's IRB assess and approve the study before participants were contacted and the study was implemented. Before I began the research process, the IRB approved all conditions. After the receipt of approval, I began the recruitment process, ensuring that the identity of all of the participants remained confidential.

At the beginning of the interview process, I explained the purpose of the study as well as my role as the researcher. It was explained that I was a doctoral candidate at

Walden University and was in the process of completing my dissertation on the experiences of novice teachers in Northern California. Information on informed consent and confidentiality was reviewed. All signed documentation was collected and has remained secured with me; it was only shared with authorized individuals as a means of validating data and results.

All ethical practices were honored. Participants were given the option to leave and/or withdraw from the interview and study at any point. If a participant chose to withdraw, the request was granted, and all information obtained from the participant was destroyed. Respect was honored through obtaining permission from each participant before the data collection process.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided information about the methodology, research design, data collection, analysis, and instrumentation of the study. The purpose of this descriptive study was to address the gap in the literature concerning the experiences of novice teachers in Northern California. Study participants included 1st- and 2nd-year teachers in the Northern California area. Participants were protected by providing informed consent, receiving a statement of confidentiality, and being anonymous throughout the entire process. The results of the study could provide valuable insight into the experiences of novice teachers as a means of improving teacher retention efforts. The results of this study are intended to advance aspects of literature focused on novice teachers' experiences.

In Chapter 3, the research design and rationale were discussed. The role of the researcher and a proposal aimed at alleviating the researcher's bias were also discussed.

Additionally, research methodology regarding participant selection, instrumentation, and the process for data collection was discussed. Chapter 4 focuses on data transcription results and an analysis of the data.

Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of Data

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of novice teachers in Northern California. The method used to answer the research questions about the experiences of novice teachers was semistructured interviews with eight preschool to fifth grade teachers. Data analysis was started after the eighth participant was interviewed; themes began to emerge at the fourth interview, and data saturation was reached at the sixth interview. Although there are many guidelines regarding data saturation, which occurs "when no new relevant information emerges with additional interviews" (Fofana et al., 2020, p. 1). Morse (1994, as cited by Guest et al., 2006) recommended the use of at least six participants. This section presents information on the themes that emerged from the interviews and the findings.

Also detailed in this section is information on how the data were generated, processed, and recorded. The procedure for data tracking, analysis, and emerging themes is explained. The presented findings are based on participants' responses to interview questions aimed at exploring the experience of novice teachers with a maximum of 2 completed years of teaching experience.

The research questions that guided this study were as follows: What are the training experiences of intern teachers in elementary school settings in the state of California? What are the experiences of intern teachers in teacher preparation programs in the state of California? These questions were used to explore teachers' feelings and experience about required state assessments and/or activities, professional development trainings and/or activities, and teacher preparation programs. Although the data generated

from these questions confirmed findings from previous research related to veteran teachers' experiences, several themes emerged that allowed for further discussion related to the unique experiences of novice teachers.

Data Collection

The data obtained from this study came from semistructured interviews with eight participants. Each participant was selected based on preset criteria and their acceptance to participate in the study. Before the start of the study, all participants were provided with a flyer (Appendix B) detailing the parameters of the study, as an invitation to participate. After confirming their interest, participants were provided with informed consent forms, which further explained the purpose of the study, the role of participants, and potential risks and benefits. All participants accepted the invitation.

Semistructured Interviews

To explore the experiences of novice teachers in the state of California, semistructured interviews were conducted with each of the eight participants. Before the beginning of the interview, each participant was asked to provide a four-digit identifier and permission to record the interview. They also received a copy of the informed consent form. The informed consent form explained to participants the purpose of the study, their role, the fact that the study was voluntary, the fact that participants could withdraw at any time, the risks and benefits, and the procedures that would take place throughout the study, as well as that their responses would be transcribed. It was also discussed that the participants would receive a copy of the transcribed responses as a form of member checking for accuracy. The forms were signed before the beginning of the interview through the participants emailing the statement "I consent."

The interview involved 22 questions (Appendix C), all about experiences with state-required assessments and/or activities, preparation programs, and required professional development training and/or activities. “Interviews begin with a few minutes of casual chat that can be about almost anything” (Ruben & Ruben, 2012, p. 107). The interview process began with thanking the participants for their interest in the study and for taking the time to complete the interview. Then participants were provided with a summary of what would take place during the interview and were asked for a four-digit numerical identifier and for their permission to record the interview. Participants were informed that they would be asked for permission again as soon as the recording started as a means of documenting their consent. During the interviewing process, in many instances, the participants provided the requested information. Other times, participants provided less information than was requested, which required the use of probes in the form of nodding and/or the use of follow-up questions to clarify the response. “Probes are questions, comments, or gestures used by the interviewer to help manage the conversation” (Ruben & Ruben, 2012, p. 118). The interview took place over secure Google Meet links. I was located in a locked office in my home while the locations of participants varied. Each participant chose the date and time of their interview, which lasted between 10 and 30 minutes. Upon completion, participants were asked if they had additional information to share and thanked for their participation.

Individual secure Google Meet links were used for each participant. After the interview had been concluded, the links were deleted. The recordings were labeled using each participant’s four-digit identifier, downloaded, and stored on a password-protected computer. Interviews were transcribed using the NVivo Pro transcription service.

Transcripts were downloaded, printed, and stored in a locked file cabinet when not in use. To ensure accuracy, participants received an electronic copy of their transcribed interview, which was delivered to their email. Participants were asked to provide corrections and clarifications in red and to return them to the interviewer. One participant provided corrections.

Data Tracking

Before conducting the semistructured interviews, I created a research data log (Appendix A) to help stay organized. The log contained the four-digit identifier for each participant; information on grade level; whether the interview had been scheduled, completed, transcription/sent; and whether there were corrections indicated. Participants were sent email reminders of their scheduled interview times. All Google Meet recordings and consents were stored on a password-protected computer. All transcripts, when not in use, were stored in a locked cabinet as well as on a password-protected computer.

Demographic Participant Profile

All participants were teachers of academic record employed by Northern California unified school districts who had a maximum of 2 completed years of teaching service and had completed CSET and RICA assessments/requirements. There were seven females and one male, two special education teachers, and six general education teachers.

Data Analysis and Findings

This research was conducted to address the problem of teacher attrition, which negatively impacts the education system, costing approximately 2.2 billion dollars per year (The Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Teacher attrition negatively impacts

student success rates and keeps the educational system in a state of constant chaos (The Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Issues such as having more difficult and complex workloads than their experienced counterparts, teaching challenging subject combinations, being assigned higher levels of problematic students, and being afraid to ask for assistance for fear of being viewed as incompetent are potential reasons for the increased attrition rate of novice teachers (Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Kosnik & Beck, 2005; McIntyre, 2003).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Chapter 3 addressed issues of trustworthiness, which included data saturation and member checking, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Data saturation occurs when no new or relevant information emerges from the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Semistructured interviews were conducted. Themes began to emerge at the fourth interview, and data saturation was reached at the sixth interview. Member checking assisted with trustworthiness (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010). Member checking was accomplished through checking in with the research participants regarding the validation of information through checking the accuracy of their statements and review of the transcript. I ensured that the analysis of the study obtained from the data collection from participants reflected and justified the descriptive research. To ensure transferability, I provided a detailed description of the data and context to allow comparisons to other contexts (Guba, 1981 as cited by Ravich & Carl, 2016). Dependability, consistency, and stability of the data were established through the use of triangulation, which involved using a variety of resources to enhance the validity of the study (Ravich & Carl, 2015). Confirmability, the acknowledgment and exploration of how my personal biases and

prejudices might influence the data, was achieved through the researcher reflexivity process (Ravich & Carl, 2016). It required me to be continuously aware of and address potential issues to ensure that the research and interpretation of data were free from bias. To accomplish this, I engaged in self-reflection activities before and after each interview.

Thematic Results

The findings were based on a careful analysis of the data described in Chapter 3, which included reading transcripts and treating each experience individually.

Research Question 1

RQ1. What are the training experiences of intern teachers in elementary school settings in the state of California***?***

Research Question 1—Theme 1: Assessment Experiences

Participants' responses regarding their experiences with the CSET and the RICA ranged from "it was fine" to "it was completely stressful." Four participants reported that they used the information from the CSET assessment in their classrooms, while the other four stated that they did not use that information. Three participants reported some difficulty/stress with taking the RICA, while five participants reported neutral or positive experiences. These stressful feelings about the CSET and RICA were evidenced by Participant 1's statement "It's just way too much to study for if you have to take all three." Participant 2 stated simply, "They're very stressful."

Seven participants took the RICA once before passing, while one participant took the assessment four times before receiving a passing score. Participants stated that the most difficult part of the assessment was the rigor associated with "memorizing such large amounts of information." The feelings of difficulty were evidenced by Participant

4's statement "That was tough. It was one of the toughest tests that I've ever had to take." Participant 1 stated,

> I used, like every single minute available and thought I did better than I did. I passed, but I came out of there thinking that I did well when I looked at the scores and was like oh, I just made it. So, it was harder than I expected.

Five participants reported using the information in their classrooms, two participants stated that they did not use the information, and one participant stated that the information was used sometimes.

Research Question 1—Theme 2: Professional Development Activities

The theme that developed around professional development activities showed that either there was no required training or training involved information on the structure of the organization, behavior, general curriculum training, or any other training that the participant decided to take. Four participants felt that the professional development training/activities were not sufficient in making them feel comfortable in their roles as educators, three participants felt that the training was sufficient, and one participant provided a neutral response. The feelings regarding professional development training/activities were evidenced by Participant 6's statement: "Well my first year was up, I was an intern, so I wasn't given any guidance on what to do now what training to take so I took everything that the district offered." Participants 2 and 5 stated that there were no required professional development training/activities.

The information obtained from the participants was supported by Aminudin (2012, as cited by Sariyldiz, 2017), who stated that traditionally, professional development trainings were seen as a series of short-term training/activities that failed to

focus on the application of what had been taught. Sariyildiz (2017) stated that professional development training/activities aid teachers with initial teaching preparation; however, that training is not sufficient to prepare teachers for the diversity of classroom needs. Themes that developed from types of training/activities included instruction, relationships, and expectations.

Research Question 1—Theme 3: First Month of Teaching

The theme that emerged for the first month of teaching was stressful. The secondary theme was a neutral experience. Six participants reported positive experiences working with other teachers, while one participant reported having a difficult time working with other teachers and one participant reported that the experience depended on the other teacher(s). This was evidenced by Participant 5's and 6's statements of "It was a little rough" and "Stressful. Stressful." The primary theme that evolved from what teachers need to either be or continue to be effective teachers predominantly centered on training and collaboration. This was evidenced by Participant 5's statement of "I think just more specific professional development that relates to my field and just continuing to like learn and to like just be taught also like more evidence-based practices that really apply to me." Additionally, Participant 6 said, "More training always, how to manage how to engage your kids, how to be equitable for the classroom," and Participant 7 mentioned "more personalized developments and collaboration and really a structure for how to collaborate as a team, as a school, as a district."

Research Question 2

RQ2. What are the experiences of intern teachers in teacher preparation programs in the state of California?

Research Question 2—Theme 1: Teaching Program

The second research question required teachers to share information on their teaching programs. Six of the participants stated that they attended a traditional program, while one participant stated that they attended an alternative program.

Research Question 2—Theme 2: Effectiveness of Teaching Programs

The theme that evolved from what was liked about the program centered on the provision of hands-on experiences and guided practice. The themes that evolved from what participants would change about the programs centered on the need for additional training and/or resources. This was evidenced by Participant 1's and 2's statements of "being taught how to lesson plan and also they provided a lot of links and resources for lesson plan creating" and "student teaching and the hands-on experience." Jang and Horn (2017) compiled data from a multitude of studies to determine the effectiveness of traditional and alternative teaching programs and found that "traditional teacher preparation yields better instructional knowledge (e.g., Darling-Hammond et al., 2002), self-efficacy (e.g., Zientek, 2007), and teacher retention (e.g., MacIver & Vaughn, 2007; Papay et al., 2012, in grades 4-8), relative to alternative preparation programs" (p. 2).

Additional Themes: Retention, Deterrents to Teaching, Motivation to Become a Teacher

Additional questions that were asked addressed the motivation for becoming a teacher, whether individuals were planning on staying in the teaching field, deterrents to teaching, experiences with other teachers, experiences with students, and experiences during their 1st month of teaching. The themes that emerged from the question on the motivation for becoming a teacher included prior experiences in the form of being a

substitute, working in tutoring programs, or having a parent who was an educator. This was evidenced by Participant 5's and 6's statements of "I grew up with kids, my mom ran a home daycare" and "I just always knew I grew with my mom, a teacher." All participants reported planning to stay in the teaching field because they generally enjoyed teaching and/or the students. Regarding deterrents to teaching, responses ranged from none to time constraints, pay, and issues associated with the state-required assessments. This was evidenced by Participant 2's and 4's statements: "the work hours, and I sometimes feel like the stress on not being able to get my students successfully to where they are" and "people feel like it's a thankless job and some people think that it doesn't pay enough and that is partially true."

Overall experiences with other teachers were mostly positive, with participants highlighting the importance of having a collaborative team. The experiences with other teachers were evidenced by the responses of Participants 1 and 5: "It's good, I like interacting and collaborating with them" and "I feel like everyone is collaborative." Experiences with students were positive overall but dependent on grade level. This was evidenced by Participant 2's, 3's, and 4's statements: "I love working with students, they brighten my day"; "Great. Great"; and "So, fourth-grade students, it was a little bit tougher." Experiences during the first month of teaching ranged from good for those who had prior experience through being a substitute to stressful and absolute chaos for other participants. This was evidenced by Participant 1's, 2's, and 5's statements: "Absolute and utter chaos," "It was very hard," and "It was a little rough."

Study Results

Six of the eight participants attended traditional teaching programs. Regardless of the type of training attended, participants stated that the most valuable part of their teaching program was the ability to engage in hands-on/guided training in the form of live lectures, access to individuals who are currently in the field, and having step by step assistance with resources for lesson planning. Participants also agreed that they could benefit from more training and access to more resources. The focus was on additional hours of teaching practice, being able to observe a variety of teachers, being engaged in smaller learning cohorts, resources on working with diverse populations, and more transparency about classes required to complete certification. The factors that influenced the participants to become teachers included prior experiences such as having parents who were teachers, working as tutors and/or substitute teachers, and/or volunteering at their child's school.

Two participants took the CSET in its entirety and six took the CSET as individual sub-tests/activities. The overall consensus of the CSET was uncertainty and stress with one participant reporting feeling lucky. Four participants use the information from the CSET in their classrooms and four participants do not use the information in their classrooms. Concerning the RICA three participants reported having difficulty and experiencing stress while five participants reported neutral or positive experiences. Seven participants took the RICA once and passed while one participant tool the assessment four times before receiving a passing score. The most difficult part of the assessment involved the rigor of having to memorize large amounts of information. Five participants

use the information in their classroom while two participants do not and one participant uses the information sometimes.

The overall consensus surrounding professional development training/activities was that there were minimal requirements. The trainings that were required often focused on information related to the structure of the organization, behavior, and general curriculum training. Four participants felt as if the trainings were sufficient, three felt that they were not sufficient, and one provided a neutral response. Participants felt that the following types of trainings should have been included: behavior management, how to conduct IEP's, small group training, abolitionist teachings and equality in education, ELD practices for instruction, how to build a relationship with students and parents, working with paraprofessionals, day-to-day teaching expectations, and understanding the curriculum for Math and ELA.

The first month of teaching was either neutral or stressful. Teachers with prior experiences through substitute teaching and tutoring reported neutral experiences. Six participants reported having positive experiences working with other teachers, one participant reported having a difficult time and one participant reported mixed experiences dependent on the teacher. Seven participants reported overall positive experiences working with students and one participant had a difficult time due to working with varying grade levels. All eight participants anticipate continuing their teaching careers due to their desire to have an impact on student's futures, the enjoyment of the school climate, and for personal growth reasons. Participants stated that they needed continued training and collaboration to either be or continue to be effective educators.

Highlighted areas of need about training included areas related to using the curriculum, evidence-based practices, and teaching strategies that were necessary to assist with continuing as effective teachers. Two participants felt that continued collaboration between and among teaching teams and other professionals was necessary for continuing to be effective teachers. Additionally, one participant expressed concerns about the wasted time associated with staff meetings.

Summary

Chapter 4 focused on the presentation and analysis of the data. Information on how the data was generated, process, and recorded was discussed. Procedure for data, tracking, analysis, and the emergence of themes was also explained. Data analysis was started after the eighth participant was interviewed, themes began to emerge at the fourth interview and data saturation was reached at the sixth interview. Although there are many guidelines regarding data saturation when conducting qualitative research, Morse (1994), recommended the use of a least six participants (Guest et al., 2006). Data saturation occurs “when no new relevant information emerges with additional interviews” (Fofana, et. al., 2020p. 1). The present findings were based on eight participants’ responses to interview questions that sought to explore the experience of novice teachers with a maximum of 2 completed years of teaching service.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

This study used a qualitative design to explore the issue of teacher attrition among novice teachers. The purpose of this study was to analyze the preparation and training experiences of intern teachers in the state of California. The qualitative design was chosen because it allows the researcher to "explore and provide deeper insights into real-world problems" and gather information on "participants' experiences, perceptions, and behavior regarding their experiences during their first two years of teaching" (Tenney et al., 2021, p. 1). It was important in answering the research questions to be able to explore and obtain additional, more specific information about real-world issues associated with increased attrition rates among novice teachers. This study originated through reviewing my educational experiences and through reviewing a multitude of peer-reviewed journals regarding the increasing teaching shortage. There is a concern in the teaching profession related to issues of increased teacher attrition as well as attracting and maintaining highly qualified teaching professionals, which warrants additional study and attention (Sutcher et al., 2019). The research questions that were addressed to answer these issues were the following:

1. What are the training experiences of intern teachers in elementary school settings in the state of California?
2. What are the experiences of intern teachers in teacher preparation programs in the state of California?

Interpretations of the presented research questions are addressed in this section along with implications for social change and recommendations for stakeholders and future researchers.

Interpretation of the Findings

This study was supported by Bandura's (1977 as cited by Goddard et al., 2002) collective efficacy theory, which indicates that the collective beliefs of a group regarding its ability to organize and execute required tasks are instrumental to its success (Bandura, 1997). In relation to novice teachers and their experiences both in college and during their first 2 years of teaching, this theory posits that (a) all groups should have a shared belief and (b) there should be standardized organization and execution methods regarding training and follow-up to ensure that teachers are receiving the proper support to continue to teach and educate students (Bandura, 1977 as cited by Goddard et al., 2002). More specifically, collective efficacy is directly related to self-efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy influences thoughts, motivations, and behavior and can raise mastery expectations through successes and reduce them through failures (Bandura, 1977 as cited by Goddard et al., 2002). Students will experience higher self-efficacy and educational achievements when teachers have high self-efficacy and demonstrate a collective belief in their abilities (Bandura, 1993). Additionally, teachers are more likely to leave the teaching profession when they perceive the collaborative relationships between all members of the educational institution as weak, thereby providing support for maintaining collective efficacy in the educational environment (Pogodzinski et al., 2012).

In addressing the first question on training experiences of intern teachers in elementary school settings in the state of California, the one-on-one interview method was used. Through the use of this method, participants' facial expressions, body language, verbal emotions, thoughts, and feelings were captured. The interview was semistructured and allowed me to "explore in-depth experiences of participants, and the

meanings they attribute to these experiences." (Adams, 2010, p. 18). Participants' responses regarding their experiences with the CSET and the RICA ranged from indicating that it was fine to indicating that it was completely stressful. Four participants reported that they used the information from the CSET assessment in their classrooms, while the other four stated that they did not use that information. Three participants reported some difficulty/stress with taking the RICA, while five participants reported neutral or positive experiences.

Seven participants took the RICA once before passing, and one participant took the assessment four times before receiving a passing score. Participants stated that the most difficult part of the assessment was "the rigor associated with memorizing such large amounts of information." Five participants reported using the information in their classrooms, two participants stated that they did not use the information, and one participant stated that the information was used sometimes.

The theme that developed around professional development activities showed that either there was no required training or training involved information on the structure of the organization, behavior, general curriculum training, or any other training that the participant decided to take. Four participants felt that the professional development training/activities were not sufficient in making them feel comfortable in their roles as educators, three participants felt that the training was sufficient, and one participant provided a neutral response. The information obtained from the participants was supported by Aminudin (2012, as cited in Sariyildz, 2017), who stated that traditionally, professional development trainings were seen as a series of short-term trainings/activities that failed to focus on the application of what had been taught. Sariyildiz (2017) stated

that professional development training/activities aid teachers with initial teaching preparation; however, that training is not sufficient to prepare teachers for the diversity of classroom needs. Themes that developed from types of training/activities included instruction, relationships, and expectations.

The theme that emerged for the 1st month of teaching was stressful. The secondary theme was a neutral experience. Six participants reported positive experiences working with other teachers, while one participant reported having a difficult time working with other teachers and one participant reported that the experience depended on the other teacher(s). The primary theme that evolved from what teachers need to either be or continue to be effective teachers predominantly centered on training and collaboration.

The second research question required teachers to share information on their teaching programs. Six of the eight participants stated that they attended a traditional program, while two participants stated that they attended an alternative program. The theme that evolved from what was liked about the program centered on the provision of hands-on experiences and guided practice. The themes that evolved from what participants would change about the programs centered on the need for additional training and/or resources. Jang and Horn (2017) compiled data from a multitude of studies to determine the effectiveness of traditional and alternative teaching programs and found that “traditional teacher preparation yields better instructional knowledge (e.g., Darling-Hammond et al., 2002), self-efficacy (e.g., Zientek, 2007), and teacher retention (e.g., MacIver & Vaughn, 2007; Papay et al., 2012, in grades 4-8), relative to alternative preparation programs” (p. 2).

Additional questions that were asked addressed the motivation for becoming a teacher, whether individuals were planning on staying in the teaching field, deterrents to teaching, experiences with other teachers, experiences with students, and experiences during the 1st month of teaching. The themes that emerged from the question on the motivation for becoming a teacher included prior experiences in the form of being a substitute, working in tutoring programs, or having a parent who was an educator. All participants reported planning to stay in the teaching field because they generally enjoyed teaching and/or the students. Regarding deterrents to teaching, responses ranged from none to time constraints, pay, and issues associated with the state-required assessments. Overall experiences with other teachers were mostly positive, with participants highlighting the importance of having a collaborative team. Experiences with students were positive overall but dependent on grade level. Experiences during the 1st month of teaching ranged from good for those who had prior experience through being a substitute to stressful and absolute chaos for other participants.

Implications for Social Change

This research on analyzing the preparation program experiences and training experiences of intern teachers in the state of California will contribute to social change by embodying its very definition. Social change is defined as "gradual changes over time that significantly impacts human interactions and relationships that transform cultural and social institutions" (Dunfey, 2019). This research was designed to encourage education stakeholders in the state of California to review the data associated with high teacher attrition rates, and to inform them of the experiences of new teachers, as a means of providing a starting point for the creation of new programs that would be beneficial to

enhancing the overall field of education. This will lead to the transformation of the culture of individual school environments and other educational institutions.

Participants highlighted the need for additional training and resources from both their teaching programs and professional development training/activities. In addition, the participants touched on the fact that there was either no required training or the training that was provided was not sufficient to support them as novice teachers. They also highlighted the considerable effort and subsequent anxiety and stress that come from being required to complete state-required assessments and/or activities, as well as the fact that the information is not always useful or appropriate in the classroom. Participants shared that although they enjoyed teaching, some deterrents included time constraints, low pay, and lack of support and/or appropriate training. To either become an effective teacher or continue to be effective teachers, participants stressed the importance of collaboration and reiterated the need for additional training. A careful review of this information will enable stakeholders to provide more appropriate training programs and professional development training/activities and may assist the state with reviewing and revising required assessments.

Recommendations for Action

The nature of this qualitative study allowed for individual meetings with each participant via Google Meet to aid in understanding teachers' experiences with preparation programs and training activities. The data were collected through the use of semistructured interviews. Participants shared a variety of information related to their experiences with their preparation programs, required assessments, students, other teachers, and professional development activities/training. Based on the responses

obtained from the analysis of the data, I recommend the following steps regarding issues explored in this study.

1. Review all teacher preparation programs for fitness for aspiring teachers. Each program should be explored in a way that highlights the pros and cons as well as student input to restructure the programs to fit the needs of teachers, and stakeholders. Participants expressed a need for additional hands-on and/or guided training instead of sitting in classrooms being exposed to teaching in theory instead of application.
2. The state should review their required assessments, highlighting strengths, weaknesses, and potential usage in the classroom. The assessments should be revised to include information that will be used in the classroom. Additionally, assessments should be specifically designed to meet the needs of each group. For example, educators teaching early elementary grades should have different requirements than those who teach at the middle and high school levels.
3. Districts should review their required professional development training/activities to determine what is needed by novice teachers. Teachers have stressed the importance of collaboration and additional support in the area of working with paraprofessionals and with behaviors.
4. Training should be ongoing and should take the lead from the teacher who is being supported. One size does not fit all, and each teacher may have needs that differ from the training that is being provided.

5. The state should review potential deterrents to teaching and work toward eliminating those deterrents. Stakeholders should provide additional financial support for individuals desiring to become teachers. They should ensure that preparation programs are appropriate and provide appropriate professional development activities/training and additional daily support for novice teachers. Last but not least, stakeholders should review the pay and the required expectations of teachers to ensure that there is a balance and that teachers are receiving a fair and appropriate wage.
6. The state should seek information on and provide opportunities for teachers to request accommodations related to identified disabilities.

The recommendations provided above are based on the data provided by the participants in sharing their experiences with training and preparation programs.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study used semistructured interviews with eight participants who shared their training and preparation program experiences. The concerns of novice teachers were captured; however, additional research is needed to further explore these experiences. The following are recommendations for future study on the training and preparation experiences of novice teachers.

1. Further studies should include the use of larger populations of novice teachers who desire to share information on their experiences.
2. Further study is needed to compare traditional preparation programs with alternative preparation programs.

3. Further research is needed to identify appropriate training that supports novice teachers.
4. Further training is needed to compare and contrast required assessments across states.
5. Further research is needed to determine if the new RICA subtest requirements will be more beneficial to teachers concerning passing the assessment and transferring learned skills into the classroom.
6. Further research is needed comparing student outcomes of teachers who use the information from the required statewide assessments to outcomes of teachers who do not use the information in their classrooms.

Reflections on the Researcher's Experience

During this process, I have learned the overall value of preparing and understanding qualitative research. I have also learned the value of identifying and using additional information to support my knowledge and ability to understand issues from various viewpoints. This study, could benefit from being conducted on a larger scale and in a variety of locations. I refrained from sharing my personal experiences by focusing on the participants and looking for areas that needed clarification and/or additional probing. Although I share a similar background with the participants, I was able to refrain from sharing my individual information because I was sincerely interested in their experiences. These teachers aided me in realizing that experiences are all about each person's perspective.

Another area that stood out to me was the stark differences in the training programs. It seemed that traditional programs offered more detailed hands-on instruction

than alternative programs; however, more research is needed to confirm that assumption. When asked about deterrents to teaching, I found that I had already had an idea of what participants might share; however, I was surprised to hear one teacher state that there were no deterrents to teaching while others expressed some commonly stated issues of pay and support.

My data collection method was very successful. I feel that I could have gone deeper into some areas; however, that would have changed the direction of the study and/or the experiences that I was looking to highlight. I felt that the participants were honest, open, and happy to share their experiences. I was able to obtain some detailed, experience-rich information.

From this study, I learned that experiences are guided by perception and that although participants may share some perceptions, there is always some new and interesting information to uncover. There were many common themes and patterns present in the data; however, there were some individual and diverse experiences as well. My overall experience was positive. I learned a great deal about qualitative research, especially in the areas of preparation, organization, and follow-through.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of novice teachers as they related to preparation programs and training experiences. This study found that teachers felt that they needed additional hands-on experiences and training during their preparation program, and that the required assessments were stressful and were not necessarily used in the classroom. Teachers also reported good experiences with other teachers and highlighted the benefits of collaborating with other educators. Additionally,

many reported having a difficult time during their 1st month of teaching, due to the lack of support and/or training. Highlighted areas of needed included additional focused professional development training and activities. Many teachers stated that they would remain in the field because they felt that they could make a difference, or they truly enjoyed it.

Although teachers in this study provided detailed information on their experiences with their preparation program and training requirements, this area still warrants further study with a larger population in diverse locations to fully understand the experiences of novice teachers.

When concluding each interview, I asked the participants whether they had anything else to share. Seven of the eight said that they did not; however, one participant shared frustrations with the time wasted during staff meetings.

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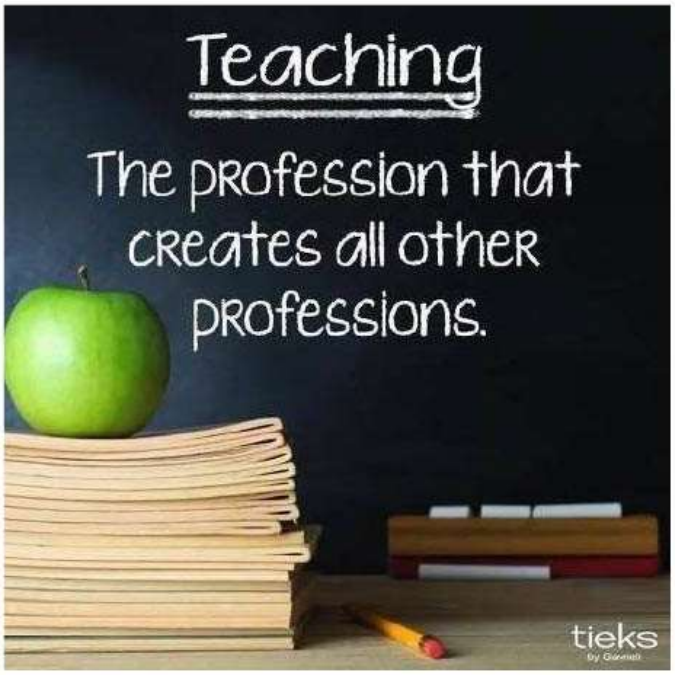
Appendix A: Research Data Log

#	Identifier	Grade	Consent	Interviewed	Transcribed	Fact checked	Completed	Comments
	1234	4/5 SPED	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	7910	4/5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	8888	4/5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Provided transcript corrections
	6362	PRE/Kinder Special Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	0227	1ST	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	1024	2nd	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	0819	Kindergarten	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	1345	5th	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	

Appendix B: Research Flyer



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

You may qualify if you:

- Participants must hold an intern or preliminary teaching credential be in the process of obtaining a credential or have a cleared credential.
- Have a minimum of 1 year of teaching experience
- Have a maximum of two completed years of teaching experience.
- Have taken the CSAT and RICA

PARTICIPATION INVOLVES:

PROVIDING INFORMATIONON YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH YOUR TEACHING PROGRAM, STATE REQUIRED ASSESSMENTS (RICA, CBEST), AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES.

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

PROVISION OF INFORMATION REGARDING TEACHER EXPERIENCES IN THEIR FIRST TWO YEARS OF TEACHING THAT WILL ALLOW POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS TO IDENTIFY ISSUES WITH: TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS REQUIRED ASSESSMENT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

IF INTERESTED PLEASE CONTACT:

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Teacher Questionnaire

4 Digit identifier: **Teaching year:**
Academic Degree: **Major:**

1. Did you attend a traditional teaching program or an alternative teaching program?

2. What do you see as the most valuable part of your teaching program?

3. What would you change about your teaching program?

4. Which factors influenced your decision to become a teacher?

5. Did you take the CSET in its entirety or as individual subtest?

6. What were your experiences with the CSET?

7. Do you use the information from the CSET in your classroom?

8. How many times did you take the CSET?

9. What was your experience taking the RICA?

10. How many times did you take the RICA?

11. In your opinion, what was the most difficult part of the assessment?

12. Do you use the information from the RICA in your classroom?

13. Which factors and/or experiences were deterrents to teaching?

14. Please share information on the required professional development trainings/activities that you were required to complete during your first year of teaching?

15. Were these trainings/activities sufficient to assist you with feeling comfortable in your role as an educator?

16. What types of trainings/activities do you think should have been included?

17. How was your first month of teaching? Please elaborate on all areas and factors.

18. What is your experience working with other teachers?

19. What is your experience working with the students?

20. Do you foresee yourself making a career out of teaching? If so which factors have been most influential? If not which factors have been most influential?

21. What do you need to either be or continue to be an effective teacher?

22. Is there anything else that you would like to add about your experiences teaching?