2022

Investigating Why Alternatively Prepared Special Educators Frequently Depart the Classroom

Lorraine Renee Philyaw
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Lorraine Renee Philyaw

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Felicia Blacher-Wilson, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. John Billings, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Nicolae Nistor, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2022

Abstract

Investigating Why Alternatively Prepared Special Educators Frequently Depart the

Classroom

By

Lorraine Renee Philyaw

MS, Capella University, 2015

MA, University of the District of Columbia, 2001

BA, Fisk University, 1987

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education Policy, Leadership, and Management

Walden University

April 2022

Abstract

A quarter of special education teachers who have been trained through an alternative teacher preparation program have left assigned classrooms throughout the United States after 1 year, and almost half have left within 5 years. However, little is known regarding why special educators, alternatively prepared for the classroom, leave the classroom after 2-5 years of classroom experience. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to understand why special education teachers enter school districts through alternative teacher certification programs but exit the classroom. The conceptual framework for this study was in the societal theory attributed to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The research questions inquired how former alternatively trained special educators described the reasons for leaving the classroom, and how school administrators describe the reasons special education teachers trained through alternative certification programs leave the classroom. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 special educators and 10 school administrators. Five themes regarding special educators' rationale for leaving were lack of support, overwhelming caseloads, an abundance of paperwork, not being properly trained, and student behavior. Policymakers and district leaders may be able to use the results of this study to guide and develop policies that address the increasing special education teacher shortage. These findings bear the potential to generate positive social change by assisting decision-makers on what resources and supports school districts would need to recruit and retain a diverse workforce of special educators.

Investigating Why Alternatively Prepared Special Educators Frequently Depart the

Classroom

by

Lorraine Renee Philyaw

MS, Capella University, 2015

MA, University of the District of Columbia, 2001

BA, Fisk University, 1987

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education Policy, Leadership, and Management

Walden University

April 2022

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my grandparents, Henry and LaPearle Philyaw, and Leon and Marjorie Batey. All I do for my family and children rests on your shoulders. Thank you for always believing in me!

Acknowledgments

There are many people I need to thank who have been extremely supportive on this journey… and what a journey it has been!

First, I am giving honor to Jesus Christ, my Lord, and Savior, without Him, this would not have been possible.

Second, I would like to thank my chairperson, Dr. Felicia Blacher-Wilson. Thank you for your patience, wisdom, knowledge, and encouragement throughout this entire journey. I am forever grateful to have had you as a captain for Team Lorraine!

Third, I would like to thank my methodologist, Dr. John Billings. Thank you for helping me through the muddy methodology waters. I would not have made it without YOU!

Fourth, I would like to thank my DIVA SQUAD: Tanisha Mason, Marimba Johnson, Nichelle Williams, Nicole Littlejohn…for all of your words of encouragement, prayers, meals, vacations, nudges, shoving, etc. I am so glad you are my girls and have been there for the ride!

Fifth, I would like to thank my friends and coworkers who were my cheerleaders… especially Rev. Dr. Michelle Parker, Dr. Terri Marshall, Dr. Emma Rathkey, Monique Reese, LaTanya Sothern, Veda Byrd… I am grateful to you for keeping my spirits up and pushing me to always keep my eyes on the prize.

Sixth, I would like to thank THE BESTIES… Michon Hicks and Tracey Davis-Taylor!!! These ladies are my ride or die…Day 1s…they kept me grounded while surrounding me with love and prayer…they pushed me.. shoved me.. stretched me. They

provided a safe space for me to vent, cry, scream throughout this entire process. I love you to the moon and beyond!!

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank my loves: my daughters LeShae and Harmoney, my brother and brother-in-law, Christopher Philyaw and Scott Maddison, my bonus children, Ahvee, Typhanie, and Garrick, my grandchildren, and most of all, my Mommy, Crystal B. Philyaw. You all have been my inspiration, cheerleaders, encouragers, prayer warriors, meal providers, shoulders to cry on, and peacekeepers. Thank you for your patience with me throughout this journey.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

According to Stark and Koslouski (2021), one out of five special education teachers is licensed through alternative programs. Other research stated a quarter of the teaching force, both general and special education teachers, have left assigned classrooms at alarming rates (He et al., 2015; Peyton et al., 2020). Several researchers explained many novice teachers leave the classroom within the first 5 years of teaching due to a lack of preparedness to teach in urban classrooms, student behavior problems, classroom intrusions, and lack of support from administration (Banks, 2015; Mason-Williams et al., 2020). In response, national legislators for education reforms have struggled to fund and retain new positions required to meet Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements (J. Billings, personal communication, June 19, 2018). School districts nationally have used innovative alternative preparation programs and have provided novice teachers with tools to transition into and remain in urban classrooms (Curry et al., 2016). Barth et al. (2016) mentioned that maintaining highly effective special educators has been a challenge as demonstrated by the nationwide shortage of special education teachers. Andrews and Brown (2015) discussed how, in special education, there is a comparatively lower retention rate compared to teachers in general education. In this study, I examined the descriptions of why special education teachers, trained through alternative teacher preparation programs, have exited the classroom.

Van Overschelde et al. (2017) stated that the reasons why teachers leave the classroom are essential to improving the retention of high-quality middle-level teachers. The more school districts help teachers become capable, the more teachers increase

student learning and achievement (Song & Alpaslan, 2015). There has been an exploration of how both structural factors and psychological variables (e.g., job satisfaction, commitment, and occupational stress) contribute to attrition and an adjustment in teachers (Wang et al., 2015). Some research suggested that teachers in urban school settings leave at a lower rate than peers in rural and suburban schools due to mobility obstacles (Gray et al., 2015). Job satisfaction decreases as teachers experience some problems related to student misbehaviors, workload, relationships with colleagues and administrators, salary, and career growth (Song & Alpaslan, 2015). Additionally, the difference might be that teachers entering urban schools are expecting to teach diverse and needy students, while teachers in rural and suburban schools might expect homogeneity and predictableness.

Background

Few studies have been conducted on why special education teachers alternatively prepared for employment, often leave the classroom within 5 years of initial hire. In a quantitative study, Van Overschelde et al. (2017) examined Texas State University's middle-level teacher preparation program using middle-level teacher retention data obtained from the Texas Center for Research, Evaluation, and Advancement of Teacher Education's (CREATE) Performance Analysis for Colleges of Education (PACE) report. The findings suggested 85% of Texas State University's graduates were still teaching after 5 years: a rate significantly higher than the states' average retention rate of 71%. The purpose of the research study was to identify the rationale as to why teachers decide not to leave the classroom in comparison to special educators alternatively trained and

leaving the classroom. Curry et al. (2016) presented a qualitative study that analyzed novice teachers' perceptions of alternative teacher preparation programs using drawings created by the teachers. The authors used 58 out of 72 participating novice teachers in which five themes emerged within pictures: (a) concerns about students, (b) overwhelmed and struggling, (c) relationships with others, (d) concerns about education quality and excessive accountability, and (e) issues with administration. Curry et al. discussed teachers' perceptions of alternative teacher preparation programs as it relates to contributive causes for leaving the classroom. Glennie et al. (2016) used survey data to investigate whether novice teachers in a particular school reform model are more satisfied with school leadership than peers in traditional high schools. Glennie et al.'s qualitative study used teacher employment data and examined whether schools in an American whole-school reform model are better able to retain novice teachers. The study is relevant to the research discussing perceptions of novice teachers and school administrators and why alternatively prepared teachers have left the profession.

Haj-Broussard et al. (2016) used a sample drawn from the Center for Career Changers to the Classroom national database ("Teacher Recertification Courses Online" ,2016) to examine the percentage of alternative certification candidates becoming fully certified and hired into teaching positions beyond the induction period. Haj-Broussard et al. provided insight into retention rates of alternatively certified teachers completing a preparation program, the reasons alternatively certified teachers leave the classroom, and the 2- and 3-year retention rates of alternative certification teachers once fully certified and hired into school systems. The authors found3-year retention rates ranged from 74%

to 92% for the programs. The Haj-Broussard et al. study was essential to my research to understand why teachers trained in alternative certification licensure programs exit the teaching profession.

Zhang and Zeller (2016) examined the relationship between teacher preparation experiences and teacher retention. The authors used a longitudinal study to explore alternative certification programs and retention rates of educators in several states. The results found that teachers prepared through a traditional teacher preparation program had higher retention rates than teachers prepared through alternative preparation programs but did not discuss the contributive cause. The study provided empirical data between traditional teacher preparation programs to alternative teacher preparation programs.

In their research study, Andrews and Brown (2015) examined special education teachers' ideal perceptions of teaching compared to current experiences. The authors used the Perceptions of Success Inventory for Beginning Teachers (Corbell et al., 2010), which included a sample of 14 participants employed as special education teachers in one school system located in the southeastern United States. The research may provide local administrators within this study with insight into what special education teachers view as essential or ideal for effective teaching. He et al. (2015) used a case study to report findings from one educator, where the authors explored the teachers' journey from the teacher education program through his fifth year of teaching in an urban high school. He et al. influenced the study, lending insight into teachers' perceptions and experiences with traditional teacher preparation programs.

D. T. Marshall and Scott (2015) studied urban teacher residency programs and the preparation of teachers for the classroom. The study used the Haberman Star Teacher Inventory (1995) method to synthesize and select candidates based on a rigorous process, including a demonstration lesson, panel interview, writing sample, and group interview. The findings from D. T. Marshall and Scott included an analysis of the five variables used in the selection process. The work of D. T. Marshall and Scott aligned with the study focusing on alternative teacher preparation programs. Insights from D. T. Marshall and Scott provided me with information on selecting teachers in a particular alternative teacher preparation program.

Brownell et al. (2018) discussed how teacher shortages in special education have been a long-standing concern for professionals and parents of students with disabilities. The authors stated that the struggle to staff schools with highly qualified special educators is even more significant in rural districts. Brownell et al. addressed the challenges faced by rural school administration and concluded with advocates demanding a more comprehensive approach to solving the teacher supply and demand.

Bruno et al. (2018) examined special education teachers' perceptions trained through alternative and traditional teacher preparation programs in a quantitative study. Findings from the study revealed teachers in both alternative and traditional teacher preparation programs perceive these programs provide training toward meeting professional preparation standards. Additionally, Bruno et al. indicated some differences between traditional and alternative teacher preparation. Bruno et al. surveyed a total of 465 pre-and in-service special educators nationwide. The study may add knowledge of

alternative teacher preparation programs and the effectiveness of preparing special education teachers by demonstrating the advantages and disadvantages of the two preparation programs.

Problem Statement

Little is known regarding why special educators prepared through alternative teacher preparation programs leave the classroom after 2-5 years of classroom experience. Several researchers state the causes of why special educators leave: rate of pay, job dissatisfaction, environment, caseload, administration (e.g., Conley & You, 2017; Hagaman & Casey, 2018; Kaden et al., 2016). I found no research on special education teachers trained through alternative teacher preparation programs and reasons for leaving the classroom. According to He et al. (2015), a quarter of the teaching force, both general and special education teachers, have left assigned classrooms after 1 year, and almost half have left within 5 years. Therefore, special education teachers in school districts are even more likely to leave the classroom. In response, national legislators for education reform have struggled to fund and retain new positions required to meet the ESSA requirements (J.Billings, personal communication, June 19, 2018).

School districts, nationally, have used innovative alternative preparation programs and have provided teachers with tools to transition into and remain in classrooms (Curry et al., 2016). Barth et al. (2016) mentioned that maintaining highly effective special educators has been a challenge, as demonstrated by the nationwide shortage of special education teachers. Besides, Andrews and Brown (2015) discussed how, in special education, there is a comparatively lower retention rate compared to teachers in general

education. Therefore, I examined special education teachers trained through an alternative teacher preparation program and inquired for a rationale for exiting the classroom altogether.

Van Overschelde et al. (2017) stated why teachers leave the classroom is central to improving the retention of high-quality middle-level teachers. The more school districts help teachers become increasingly productive, the more teachers contribute to increasing student learning and achievement (Song & Alpaslan, 2015). There has been an exploration of how both structural factors and psychological variables (e.g., job satisfaction, commitment, and occupational stress) contribute to attrition and adjustment in teachers (Wang et al., 2015). Some research suggested teachers in urban school settings leave at a lower rate than peers in rural and suburban schools due to mobility obstacles (Gray et al., 2015). Job satisfaction decreases as teachers experience some problems related to student misbehaviors, workload, relationships with colleagues and administrators, salary, and career growth (Song & Alpaslan, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to determine why special education teachers enter school districts through alternative teacher certification programs but exit the classroom. Teacher retention has been an increasingly critical issue because teacher turnover instills instability and negatively influences quality education (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Ingersoll (2012) coined the term the "revolving door effect" to describe teacher turnover and the frustrating cycle that school systems incur when replacing new teachers who leave the classroom. When qualified teachers leave, new

teachers must replace them; therefore, a substantial cost was attached to hiring and training new teachers. A basic qualitative research study model of special education teacher interviews helped to gain insights into why teachers leave the classroom. Participant interviews included school administrators and special education teachers from alternative teacher preparation programs, having taught for a maximum of 5 years. The study makes evident a significant variance in special education teachers and their rationale for exiting the classroom even after being trained through alternative teaching certification programs. I sought to generate recommendations to assist school districts in hiring effectively, transitioning, and retaining special educators.

Research Questions

After concluding a preliminary review of current and relevant research on the topic of special educator attrition, the following research questions guided this research study:

RQ1: How do former special education teachers trained through alternative teacher certification programs describe the reasons for leaving the classroom?

RQ2: How do school administrators describe the reasons special education teachers trained through alternative certification programs leave the classroom?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was in societal theory attributed to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. The societal theory is based on deciding factors employees use to leave the classroom. The approach is reasonably applicable to the teaching profession and guided me as to whether the type of teacher preparation program

impacts special educators' decisions to leave. Maslowian theory directly influenced the conceptualization of other theories, such as the theory of job satisfaction (Larkin et al., 2016) and the theory of organizational commitment (Vagi & Pivovarova, 2017). The theories influenced the origination of this study's research questions and literature review. Job satisfaction is gained when the job and work environment meets the individual teacher's needs (Maslow, 1954). Motivation falls under the section of job satisfaction: closely related to personal and professional achievement (Larkin et al., 2016). Vagi and Pivovarova (2017) defined organizational commitment as a "strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a definite desire to maintain organizational membership" (p. 784). Organizational theories were developed during the industrial revolution to understand organizational structure. Both theories of job satisfaction and organizational commitment were instrumental in developing teacher attrition/retention as it is today.

Nature of the Study

I employed a basic qualitative research design for this study using interviews to identify recurrences of reported causes for special educators leaving the classroom. Qualitative research is best suited to solicit a richer and more in-depth understanding of the reasons for alternatively trained special education teachers leaving the classroom (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) described basic qualitative research as one which is (a) interested in how people interpret their experiences, (b) how they construct their worlds, and (c) what meaning they attribute to their experience. I

used a qualitative research design to observe the trends and patterns in the lived experiences of special educators and descriptions or rationales for leaving the classroom to flush out those trends and patterns.

Using random sampling, I selected 20 teachers and 10 school administrators as participants for this study. Due to the recent changes in research protocol from COVID-19 and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, I used social media outlets to recruit special education teachers and school administrators. The special education teacher participants had to have trained through an alternative teacher preparation program and have 2-5 years of teaching experience. School administrators needed to have 2 or more years of administration experience.

Research interviews are a primary qualitative research method and are used across methodological approaches (Gill & Baillie, 2018). Interviews allow the researcher to gather in-depth information about the participant's perspectives, experiences, beliefs, and motivations. Gill and Baillie (2018) stated interviews might be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured according to the purpose of the study, with less structured interviews facilitating a more in-depth and flexible interviewing approach. Structured interviews are like verbal questionnaires and are used if clarification is needed on a topic; however, they produce less in-depth data about a participant's experience. Unstructured interviews may be used when little is known about a topic and involves asking an opening question; the participant then leads the discussion. Semi-structured interviews are commonly used in social sciences and involve asking predetermined questions while ensuring the participant discusses issues they feel are essential. Interviews can be

undertaken using digital methods when the investigator and participant are in different

locations. I conducted interviews via Zoom due to restrictions on social interaction.

Data collection was conducted through interviews. Interviews were recorded and

selected data was transcribed. I recorded interviews through secure audio or video

recording method and transcribed them electronically through Otter.Ai. The data

collected from the interviews will be stored for up to a year in a secured data warehouse.

I used a social media account to solicit teacher volunteers who met the sampling criteria.

Definitions

The following section offers conceptual or operational definitions of terms

specific to the research study:

Alternative Teacher Certification Program: Alternative Teacher Certification

Program is a non-traditional teacher preparation program where candidates may begin

teaching in the field immediately while taking classes; the emphasis is on field-based

training in a short period (Bruno et al., 2018).

Attrition: Attrition is the term in education that refers to qualified teachers leaving

the classroom before reaching the age of retirement (Kelchtermans, 2017).

Retention: Retention is the ability to keep teachers from leaving the classroom

before retirement (Kelchtermans, 2017).

Special Education Teacher: A Special Education Teacher is a teacher certified by

a state agency to teach students with disabilities (Maryland State Department of

Education, 2019).

Traditional Teacher Certification Program: Traditional Teacher Certification Program is an accredited baccalaureate-level college or university-based teacher education program (Zhang & Zeller, 2016).

Assumptions

I focused this basic qualitative method study using interviews with alternatively trained special education teachers and the recurring rationales for leaving the classroom. The first assumption was the participants would be willing to participate and answer the interview questions honestly and without hesitation. The second assumption was teachers licensed through alternative teacher preparation programs leave the classroom. The third assumption was that alternative preparation programs might cause the departure of special educators. The qualitative method study aimed to gather knowledge, beliefs, or perspective, and justify such views.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of the qualitative method study, with interviews, was determined by the gap in the research and the research question. I explored a small sample of special education teachers who have left the classroom within the first 5 years and have been trained in an alternative teacher preparation program. I also interviewed school administrators about their perceptions of why special educators leave the classroom. The study was conducted in the eastern region of the United States, although recruitment of participants was done throughout the United States. The participants offered experiences and perceptions transferable to case studies to establish a foundational reference from which further study and consideration might be generated. The decision to use recently

hired special education teachers trained in an alternative certification program was based on the gap in the literature.

The delimitations of the study are special educators who have taught for more than 5 years, special education teachers trained in a teacher preparation program that is not an alternative teacher preparation program, and general education teachers. I did not focus on veteran teachers (teachers who have taught for more than 5 years), general education teachers, or teachers who have been trained in a teacher preparation program that is not an alternative teacher preparation program.

Limitations

Using random sampling, I selected teachers from a list of special educators. Due to the recent changes in research protocol from COVID-19 and the CDC guidelines, I used social media outlets to recruit novice special education teachers certified alternatively. A potential limitation was that this study only included special education teachers who have been teaching for 2-5 years. Another limitation was the small sample size. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) stated the size of the sample within the study is determined by several factors relevant to the purpose of the study. A third limitation was researcher bias considering I am a special educator. Lastly, a fourth limitation was the collection of data through social media.

Significance

School districts experience an annual teacher attrition rate of about 20-25%, leaving low-income and minority students the hardest hit by the constant turnover (Curry et al., 2016). An investigation of special education teacher shortages revealed most

teacher shortages occur within urban school districts placing diverse, English Second Language, and underprivileged children at risk (U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2018). Researchers continued to make evident low retention rates for qualified special educators reflected throughout many school districts (USDE, 2018). Studies have shown with the current teacher workforce in urban school districts diminishing, alternative teacher preparation programs are being used in creative ways to attract candidates to ensure schools in urban districts keep their staff filled with highly qualified teachers (D. T. Marshall & Scott, 2015). Legislated educational reform focused on meeting all children's needs (USDE, 2017). Problem significance centered upon advancing academic achievement through continuity of teaching staff (Van Overschelde et al., 2017). To meet the needs of students, governing boards of education required teachers to obtain certifications, licensures, and/or endorsements in special education through alternative licensure programs (USDE, 2018). There is little research assessing the effect of the locally implemented alternate approach to professional licensure. I sought to provide school districts with valuable evidence of why special education teachers exit the field and reported descriptions of contributors to premature departure from assigned teaching positions.

Summary

School districts are overwhelmed with the shortage of highly qualified special education teachers and students are missing valuable instruction because of the scarcity of personnel (Barth et al., 2016). Districts seek alternative ways to fill vacancies with trained staff and retain teachers (Curry et al., 2016). The chapter detailed the problem,

nature of the study, the background supporting the study, and the purpose statement, which aligned with the research questions. The conceptual framework, definitions of key terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations were defined to frame the processes considered for this study. The significance represents how the study may inform the profession. Chapter 2 reveals how the conceptual framework is developed and the literature review.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 discusses the problem and purpose of the study supported by a review of the literature aligned with topics of special educators and alternative certification programs. In addition, the analysis revealed if the type of teacher preparation program and the training from the program have any posture on why special educators leave the classroom

Research has shown a shortage of highly qualified special educators in the United States, but little to no research has exposed why special educators leave the classroom (Brownell et al., 2018; He et al., 2015). I developed this basic qualitative study from a gap in the research on special education teachers, alternative and traditional teacher preparation programs, as well as the retention and attrition rates of teachers. This literature review exhausted all found existing research in the areas of the role of special education teachers, alternative and traditional teacher preparation programs, and discussed the theories framing the concepts of the basic qualitative study.

The following literature review begins with a glimpse into the history of teacher education in the United States. I discussed the roles of special education teachers and the different types of certification and licensure programs in teacher education in the literature. Literature was also presented on the retention and attrition rates of special education teachers. Finally, I examined literature supporting the conceptual framework through societal theory, Maslow's theory of needs, theory of job satisfaction, and theory of organizational commitment. From the review of literature, the following themes

emerged: (a) teacher preparation, (b) alternative teacher certification, (c) traditional teacher certification, (d) teacher perceptions, and (e) teacher attrition.

Literature Search Strategy

Within the literature search, recurring research terms such as teacher retention, teacher attrition, teacher preparation, alternative teacher certification, and traditional teacher certification and teacher perceptions were evident. Research databases supporting this study were ERIC, EBSCO, Education Source, and ProQuest. The keywords used to conduct research were *teacher retention rates, teacher perceptions, alternative teacher certification, traditional teacher certification,* and *teacher attrition*. In the literature search, 50 peer-reviewed articles were used out of the 70 articles initially discovered. By continuously embarking upon new and current research, I began to see trends and themes emerge. The topics consistent within the literature were (a) teacher retention, (b) teacher perceptions, and (c) teacher preparation.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the research study was in societal theory attributed to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. The societal theory is based on what factors make teachers leave the classroom, and if the type of teacher preparation impacts their decisions to leave. Larkin et al. (2016) discussed Maslow's theory concerning job satisfaction, stating that the needs of individuals include physiological, social-emotional, safety, love and belongingness, esteem, and intellectual, and the basic need is satisfaction. Youngs (2013) used teacher characteristics, school characteristics, working conditions, and routes to certification to influence the retention/mobility or attrition of

beginning teachers. Youngs defined teacher characteristics as environment, family, friends, and leisure time. The body of literature reveals topics on retention of novice teachers, teachers in urban school districts, and administrative support of novice teachers. Other theories contributing to the framework of the study are the theory of job satisfaction (Locke, 1976) and the theory of organizational commitment (Vagi & Pivovarova, 2017). Job satisfaction is gained when the job and its environment meet individual teachers' needs (Maslow, 1954). Motivation falls under the section of job satisfaction as it closely relates to personal and professional satisfaction (Larkin et al., 2016). Vagi and Pivovarova (2017) defined organizational commitment as a "strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a definite desire to maintain organizational membership" (p. #784). Organizational theories were developed during the Industrial Revolution as a means to understand the organizational structure (Vagi & Pivovarova,2017). The approach with organizational commitment theories was all the rage during the early 20th century until World War II. The theories played an intricate part in the development of teacher attrition/retention.

Theory of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is considered one of the most highly examined characteristics of working individuals due to its potential effects on employees and organizations (Moniarou-Papaconstantinou & Triantafyllou, 2015). Locke (1976), Maslow (1954), and Herzberg et al. (1959) are considered the traditional theorists behind motivation and satisfaction as it relates to job satisfaction. Maslow, the theorist of the hierarchy of needs,

discussed how job satisfaction is gained when the job and its environment meet the

individual teacher's needs. Locke stated job satisfaction is "a pleasurable or positive

emotional state resulting from the self-appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (p.

1300). Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory of motivators and hygiene categorizes job

satisfaction as cause satisfaction and cause dissatisfaction. Herzberg et al. (1959)

described those who lead with positive job attitudes and hygiene may also lead with some

negative job attitudes.

Many studies define job satisfaction as one's emotional reaction to working

situations (e.g., Chandrasekara, 2019; Khanna, 2017; Sewell & Gilbert, 2015; Top et al.,

2015). Top et al. (2015) discussed how job satisfaction is the extent to which people like

or dislike their jobs, whereas Chandrasekara (2019) stated job satisfaction is associated

with how an employee anticipates the work experience with actual outcomes.

Researchers Sewell and Gilbert (2015) and Khanna (2017) approached job satisfaction,

differently from theorists Locke and Herzberg, who motivated them. Studies revealed

how Locke and Herzberg both emphasized the effects of job satisfaction and job

dissatisfaction, and motivation. Motivation falls under the section of job satisfaction:

closely related to personal and professional satisfaction (Larkin et al., 2016).

Job satisfaction is one of the most important reasons for special education teacher

attrition (Hagaman & Casey, 2018). Special education teachers reportedly have high

attrition rates, especially among new special education teachers. Special education

teachers have been noted to mark dissatisfaction with the job, lack of support on the job,

or inefficient organizational resources as key factors to why special educators leave the classroom.

Theory of Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is defined as a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a definite desire to maintain organizational membership (Vagi & Pivovarova, 2017). Organizational commitment theories were developed during the Industrial Revolution to understand organizational structure. Some studies have discussed how the theory can be an intricate part of the psychological condition of employees, including the attitudes of such employees about their organization (Larkin et al., 2016). Larkin et al. (2016) asserted organizational commitment is crucial to retaining and attracting qualified teachers; only satisfied and committed teachers are willing to continue involvement with organizations.

Meyer and Allen (1991) are instrumental theorists in the evolution of the three components of organizational commitment. The authors pondered three components of organizational commitment: affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment. According to Meyer and Allen, affective commitment is the emotional attachment of employees to organizations, desire to see the organization succeed, and a feeling of pride in being a part of the organization. In affective commitment, the employee is willing to volunteer for the organization and is ready to internalize the norms and values of the organization as their own (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Next, normative commitment is defined as the moral or ethical obligation of an

organization. In contrast to the affective commitment employee, the normative employee

feels a commitment to the organization is the "right thing to do" (Meyer & Allen, 1991,

p. 65). Finally, the authors defined continuance commitment as the employee's perceived

need to continue with the organization even after weighing the pros and cons of staying

with the organization and considering leaving the organization would be costly. This

employee will commit to the organization out of fear of the unknown and will need to

stay (Meyer et al., 1993). This theory supports special education teachers who decide to

leave the classroom even if the "right thing to do" is to commit to education and their

students.

History of Teacher Education

The education of teachers in the United States has evolved significantly over the

past century (Sutcher et al., 2016). To address the issue of quality teacher education, a

growing body of literature has emerged, focusing on the history of teacher education

(Bohan, 2016). O'Sullivan (2015) revealed the United States had been devoted to

education for all, theoretically, but well into the 19th century, formal schooling was

haphazard and family based. Therefore, schools became more systematic with the rise of

the common school movement (O'Sullivan, 2015). Massachusetts natives and

instructional leaders in education, Carter and Mann, established normal schools to

educate and train teachers in the late 19th century (Bohan, 2016). The movement was

known as the Common School Movement of the 1830s and the beginning of formal

teaching (Breitborde & Kolodny, 2015). In the quest for formalizing education, Mann

and Carter brought structure and professionalism to the craft of teaching (Breitborde &

Kolodny, 2015). Schools were organized into the different grade levels of elementary, grammar, and high school, and formatted into school districts. The popularity of normal schools began to spread throughout the United States. Still, by the early 20th century, teacher colleges and colleges of education with 4-year degree programs replaced normal schools (Bohan, 2016). The change in teacher training birthed the push from higher education for better teacher preparation programs. Colleges and universities determined teachers, specifically secondary school teachers, should have a mastery of subject matter and be prepared on campus; thus, the teacher preparation program was initiated (Breitborde & Kolodny, 2015).

The shift in teacher education brought significant concern about how children were prepared for the future. Bohan (2016) discussed how local and state governments began the development of measurements and qualifications for the education of teachers in each normal school. Diversification was an arduous task due to the regulations for teacher certification. In addition, during this time, free public education drove the number of children who needed to be educated, and the number of qualified teachers grew up significantly (Breitborde & Kolodny, 2015). Breitborde and Kolodny (2015) argued the sole purpose of the development of normal schools was to address the teacher shortage. Bohan (2016) also explained that due to the local government's minimal establishment of standards for teachers, the vocation of teaching did not qualify as a profession.

Normal schools were under fire at the turn of the century and were fiscally unstable (Bohan, 2016). The normal school was developed into skeleton community colleges. The community-based schools took the original normal school curricula,

expanded them, and refocused the attention on the teacher's preparedness. According to

Breitborde and Kolodny (2015), community colleges grew, the demand for qualified

teachers increased, and state and local governments took control. As a result, college and

university teacher preparation programs evolved. The expansion of colleges and

universities adding teacher programs to offerings led to the 1960s' explanation of

canonical teacher education (O'Sullivan, 2015). According to O'Sullivan (2015), the

model is currently being utilized today in most higher education teacher preparation

programs.

      Concerns about the decline in teacher education enrollment have emerged as the

demands for qualified teachers have begun to skyrocket (Sutcher et al., 2016). In 2015

and 2016, the USDE identified special education lacking qualified teachers (Sutcher et

al., 2016). The current demand of teachers due to the Every Student Succeeds Act

(ESSA), where the requirement is to produce more effective teachers, especially those

working with students with disabilities (Whitford et al., 2018), has thrust school districts

into finding innovative and creative ways of training teacher candidates.

Teacher Education and Brain-Based Learning

      Brain-based learning research has recently made evident a critical component of

any operational definition of qualified teachers. Qualified educators understand the

principles of brain-based learning and purposefully use strategies (USDE, 2017). The

instructional path is all about an educator understanding the reasoning behind teaching. A

qualified teacher is also one staying updated continuously through continuous

professional development (Jensen & McConchie, 2020). How the profession is taught is

no longer relevant to how the professional will teach based on the discoveries in the field of brain-based learning.

"One of the strongest applications of research in psychology, neuroscience, and cognitive science is brain-based learning. It allows individuals to leverage research on how the brain learns in creating a new set of guiding principles for learning, teaching, training, and education. Brain-based learning is a paradigm of learning which addresses student learning and learning outcomes from the human brain. It involves specific strategies for learning, which are designed based on how human attention, memory, motivation, and conceptual knowledge acquisition work. Brain-based learning and teaching can optimize learning holistically.

Historically, teaching and learning are largely based on what the students, teachers, and policy-makers think. Their opinions, experiences, logical arguments, and quasi-experiments in the classroom inform the teaching and learning process. Brain-based learning takes a different approach. The way students are motivated, the way attention works, how memories are formed, how information is presented, and so on become the central aspects of teaching and learning "(Shukla, 2019,p#1). As education evolves and research looks at the future of teacher certification programs and ongoing licensure processes, a discussion cannot be void of the sound insights of the brain-based learning community.

Special Educator Training

Within the past 10 years, educational policy has shifted, and policymakers have dug deeper into the complexity of the role of the special education teacher (Shepherd et

al., 2016). Shepherd et al. (2016) asserted before the issuance of the Education for All

Handicapped Children Act in 1975 (renamed Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

or IDEA in 1990), preparation programs for teachers, specifically special education

teachers, narrowed the focus on providing skills to novice teachers to deliver specialized

instruction to students with particular disability categories, mainly in separate settings.

With the reauthorization of IDEA 2004, No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001),

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (USDE 2015a) to most recent, the Every

Student Succeeds Act (USDE, 2017), teacher preparation programs have begun to

develop programs equipping special educators to provide specialized instruction to the

students with the most intensive needs (Shepherd et al., 2016). The future special

education teacher must be extremely familiar with an extensive knowledge base of

special education, content standards, technology for instruction and assessments, and

possess the ability to collaborate with families from diverse backgrounds (Shepherd et al.,

2016). Leko et al. (2015) reported political representatives have discussed how traditional

teacher preparation programs have been ineffective in preparing novice teachers to move

students toward achievement gains. In contrast, many policymakers have offered

solutions to improving quality teacher preparation by including alternative routes to

teacher preparation; "fast track" programs such as Teach for America that provide on-the-

job training instead of pedagogy training (Shepherd et al., 2016).

Role of the Special Education Teacher

The special education teacher has a vibrant role in the lives of students, especially

students with disabilities. In a special education position, a teacher usually has an hour of

contact with students with disabilities (Williams & Dikes, 2015). Williams and Dikes

(2015) stated that 6.5 million students with disabilities are receiving instructional and

supplemental services from a special educator. In comparison, general education teachers

have a variety of duties concerning their position, whereas special educator has additional

duties added to their teaching responsibilities. Before the reauthorization of IDEA 2004,

special education teachers were placed in special schools and residential placements,

serving students and adults with disabilities; as such, the roles of special educators were

defined by a vast set of expectations (Shepherd et al., 2016). However, with the re-

authorization of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), there was a significant transference

where federal policy led to additional changes in the roles and preparation of special

educators (Shepherd et al., 2016). According to Williams and Dikes, special educators

must complete all reevaluations, functional behavior assessments (FBA), behavior

intervention plans (BIP), and individual education plans (IEP) on a computer-based

program. The amount depends upon the teacher's caseload, which is defined as the

number of students with special needs files the teacher is responsible for maintaining,

implementing, and writing.

Unlike the general education teacher, special education teachers are expected to

assist the general education teacher in teaching students with disabilities in all subject

areas, modify the general education curriculum to meet their needs, and implement all

supplemental services and accommodations (Williams & Dikes, 2015). In addition to

these instructional responsibilities, the special education teacher is responsible for

facilitating all IEP meetings, maintaining hard copy files of each student on caseloads

(files are scrutinized by special education chairperson, supervisors, administration, and state-level education departments), and staying current with all local, state, and federal laws about special education. Lastly, special education teachers must monitor student progress in both academics and behavior (Williams & Dikes, 2015). With the insurmountable amount of paperwork, instructional, and clerical responsibilities, special educators often suffer from burnout, resulting in resigning from the profession (Williams & Dikes, 2015). Researchers have described teachers' exit for 5 years as "the revolving door effect" (Ingersoll, 2004, p. 20; Williams & Dikes, 2015).

Teacher Certification and Licensure Programs

The shortage of qualified teachers in the U.S. educational system is a primary concern shared by many states (Donitsa-Schmidt & Zuzovsky, 2016; Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Zhang and Zeller (2016) noted the most significant controversy with the teacher shortage is how and where teachers are prepared, certified, and licensed. According to the USDE (2016), a certified teacher is a teacher who has met all applicable state teacher certification requirements for a standard certificate. Certified teachers are teachers who have obtained regular or standard licensure that has been issued by the state (USDE, 2016). An ESSA press release (USDE, 2015c) discussed the need for effective teachers and the initiatives taken by the USDE to address the issue of attaining qualified teachers. Two types of teacher preparation programs were researched for the study and literature review: traditional teacher preparation programs and alternative teacher preparation programs.

Traditional Teacher Preparation Programs

Traditional teacher preparation programs produce about 80% of the nation's teachers (NCTQ, 2018). Traditional teacher preparation programs are usually found in four-year accredited colleges or universities and are highly regulated by the USDE (2015b). For undergraduate teacher candidates, "the program lays out a path that includes liberal arts courses to build broad content knowledge as well as specialized content knowledge for secondary candidates, education school professional courses, and a culminating student teaching experience" (NCTQ, 2018, p. 1). The traditional teacher preparation program path typically includes only professional coursework and a student teaching experience for graduate teacher candidates. For definition purposes, when candidates graduate with degrees, they are also considered "certified (licensed) to teach" (NCTQ, 2018). Other researchers have described 'traditional' teacher preparation programs as when teacher candidates complete an undergraduate program and receive an undergraduate degree (Banks, 2015). Banks (2015) also commented teachers from traditional preparation programs complete coursework on psychological principles, subject matter, and teaching methods before beginning student teaching. Once coursework has been completed, teacher candidates are assigned a mentor and undertake student teaching assignments. Banks argued teacher candidates often are taught in isolation and with brief exposure to classroom practices. Looking at teacher preparation concerning special educators, Bruno et al. (2018) further stated that there is very little research on special educators and how effective traditional teacher programs are regarding knowledge and skills covered in professional special education teacher

standards. According to Bruno et al. (2018), this is a crucial factor when discussing special educators and their rationale for leaving the classroom.

Alternative Teacher Preparation Programs

Alternative teacher preparation programs, according to NCTQ, are any other programs used to prepare teachers for the classroom that are not classified as traditional teacher preparation programs (NCTQ, 2018). This category encompasses any program that deviates in any respect from the "traditional" model of university-based graduate teacher prep. In essence, the program may be offered by a non-profit or for-profit rather than a university. A university may also provide it as a non-degree program operating side-by-side with the university's traditional degree-granting program. The National Center for Teacher Quality stated, "professional coursework may start before or after the teacher candidate begins teaching, but the number of courses candidates take before they begin teaching is usually quite limited" (NCTQ, 2018, p. 2). During the clinical practice period, that substitutes for student teaching, the candidate may be unpaid and supervised by the classroom's "teacher of record" (here the teacher candidate is known as a "resident") or be paid and serve as the teacher of record (in this case, the candidate is called an "intern"). Some alternative teacher preparation programs grant master's degrees by affiliating themselves with university partners or by becoming accredited by state agencies to offer master's degrees themselves. Still, some simply provide certification to graduate (NCTQ, 2018). Zhang and Zeller (2016) defined alternative certification as completing a university-based master's degree or post-baccalaureate certification program. Examples of alternative certification programs include Teach for America,

state-level residency programs, and district-wide, university-based degreed programs (NCTQ, 2018). The trend in the United States has been for teachers, especially novice teachers, to follow some alternative certification route (O'Sullivan, 2015). The alternative certification routes have many faces, including routes through P-12 school systems. One such system is found in Los Angeles Unified Schools where the district has taken on the task of certifying their teachers in their district (O'Sullivan, 2015). National programs such as Teach for America attempt to recruit, retain, and certify teachers across the nation. Other alternative routes include in-service routes such as Georgia's Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESA; O'Sullivan, 2015). At times, alternative certification may be passing teacher examinations, but researchers have noted some universities such as Argosy and Phoenix offer online teacher certification programs (O'Sullivan, 2015).

Even as a popular trend in education, alternative certification remains an explosive issue in United States' teacher education (O'Sullivan, 2015). Compared to traditional teacher preparation programs, alternative certification programs may not have to follow the same criteria. Some researchers have reported traditional teacher preparation programs are faced with curricular loads and accreditation demands. In contrast, alternative certification programs are considered shortcuts into the field of education and may include very little quality management (O'Sullivan, 2015). When looking at special educators and certification, Bruno et al. (2018) noted just as with traditional teacher preparation programs, there is minimal research on alternative teacher

preparation programs and their effectiveness on special education teachers meeting professional standards.

Furthermore, Bruno et al. (2018) further asserted alternative teacher preparation programs were developed to address the teacher shortage in the United States and attract individuals not considering the teaching profession. The authors further reported alternative certification programs ultimately allow teacher candidates the opportunity to take certification classwork while working inside the classroom compared to traditional teacher preparation programs, which would enable teacher candidates to teach only after coursework and passing of licensure assessments have been completed. The certification process for alternative programs may raise a question of the effectiveness and quality of teachers leaving either alternative or traditional teacher preparation programs, both special and general education (Bruno et al., 2018).

Retention of Teachers

For decades, the shortage of qualified teachers has been a significant issue (Abitabile et al., 2019). After creating the publication of Nation at Risk, where the state of education in the United States was placed under a microscope to be probed and analyzed, the welfare of America's education systems has been in disarray (USDE, 1984). States have been charged with recruiting the best and brightest individuals to educate students (Guha et al., 2017). Guha et al. (2017) discussed how recruitment and retention challenges are the top issues facing many school districts, specifically those in urban and rural school districts. Students have faced a "revolving door of teachers" due to the recruitment and retention dilemma, coupled with low pay, inadequate training, and

work environment challenges (Guha et al., 2017). Other researchers have noted that almost a quarter of teachers entering the profession leave within 3 years (Glazer, 2018), while some note that nearly 50% of the beginning teachers leave the classroom within the first five years in the profession (National Association of Alternative Certification, 2015). Zhang and Zeller (2016) discussed how novice teachers who felt inadequately prepared for teaching tend to leave the classroom after the first teaching assignment. The authors also found 40% of the teachers would choose alternative teacher certification programs compared to 88% of the teachers who chose the traditional teacher preparation route and felt adequately prepared to teach (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). In comparison, Guha et al. (2017) found new teaching residency programs, often found in traditional teacher preparation programs, offer innovative approaches to the recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers.

Attrition of Teachers

Many school districts in the United States suffer from shortages of teachers in high need areas, including special education (Feng & Sass, 2017; Guha et al., 2017; Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Several authors have defined teacher attrition as teachers leaving the classroom for reasons other than retirement (den Brok et al., 2017; Kelchtermans, 2017). The attrition rates of special education teachers have been historically high for decades (Williams & Dikes, 2015). Due to the extremely high rate of teacher exodus in the past decade, attrition has been termed 'the revolving door' coined by several researchers (Clandinin et al., 2015; Hagaman & Casey, 2018; Ingersoll, 2004). The

authors also state student achievement has negatively been impacted because of the revolving door of high turnover of teachers (Clandinin et al., 2015; Glazer, 2018).

Some researchers have found higher attrition rates of new teachers during the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001), especially in underresourced and underfunded schools (Ryan et al., 2017). In contrast, attrition rates have not always been high. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the attrition rate in the United States was around 6%, and the demand for teachers was much lower; consequently, fewer teachers needed to be replaced (Sutcher et al., 2016). Between 1989 and 2005, attrition rates began to rise, and they have remained high (Sutcher et al., 2016).

In comparison, researchers have reported special educators tend to leave the classroom at twice the rate as their general education colleagues (Williams & Dikes, 2015). In the United States, $2 billion is spent yearly replacing exiting teachers (Clandinin et al., 2015). The estimated cost of teacher attrition ranges from $2.1 billion to $7 billion yearly (Glazer, 2018). When early career teachers leave the classroom, they leave before they can develop the craft to its full potential (Ryan et al., 2017). The early departure of teachers becomes problematic to districts that extend resources to train new teachers who do not remain. The school district does not reap the benefits of a highly qualified teacher and will not know teachers' full potential. The attrition of teachers has districts losing time and money while attempting to recoup from the loss of staff (Ryan et al., 2017).

Hagaman and Casey (2018) reported many new special education teachers leave within five years of employment. Researchers have responded to the issue of special

educator early departure stating major concerns. Hagaman and Casey discussed how special education teachers who vacate schools never become experts at the craft because of a lack of development of research-based practices. Kelchtermans (2017) argued teacher attrition becomes an economic problem: there is a cost associated with the replacement of teachers, increased workload, managing paperwork, and having to invest and train a new workforce. In the end, students suffer mostly from teacher attrition.

Gallant and Riley (2017) and Glazer (2018) noted with the shortage of experienced teachers, unqualified and inexperienced teachers are teaching students, which leaves students at risk for quality student learning and achievement. Then, when special education teachers are factored into the equation, the numbers increase. Many new special education teachers are resistant to working in high-poverty urban school districts (Banks, 2015). Teachers are against working in these environments due to low student achievement, high rates of dropout, teen pregnancy, and incidences of violence (Banks, 2015). Banks (2015) also pointed out half of the special education teachers leave because of a lack of preparedness for classroom intrusions, the problem of student behavior, and lack of support from administration.

When researchers began to document why new special education teachers leave the classroom, a variety of reasons surfaced. Personal reasons such as starting a family or leaving for a different job were at the top of the list. Still, many leave due to a lack of appropriate knowledge of the content or special education (Hagaman & Casey, 2018). In addition, Zhang and Zeller (2016) concluded that attrition rates among special education teachers are due to the level of education received as well as the quality of the teacher

preparation program. Researchers have noted the quality of the teacher preparation program can influence the amount of satisfaction in teaching and ultimately determines a teacher's decision to leave the classroom (Zhang & Zeller, 2016).

Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 2 began with an overview of the expectations of the literature review. The literature revealed a history of teacher education in the United States. I discussed the roles of special education teachers and different types of certification and licensure programs in teacher education in the literature. Additionally, I presented literature on the retention and attrition rates of special education teachers. Finally, I explored the literature and supported the conceptual framework through the theory of job satisfaction (Locke, 1976) and the theory of organizational commitment (Vagi & Pivovarova, 2017). Each topic in the literature review was chosen to improve the understanding of why special education teachers leave the classroom, and if the alternative certification program provided preparation and influenced the teacher's decision to leave the classroom. The research has demonstrated that little is known if the alternative teacher preparation program may influence teachers and their decision to exit. Chapter 3 explains the methodology put in place to gather information on special educators' perceptions to gain further understanding of the rationale to exit the teaching profession.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of the basic qualitative study using interviews was to determine why special education teachers enter school districts through alternative teacher certification programs but exit the classroom. Teacher retention has been an increasingly critical issue because teacher turnover instills instability and negatively influences quality education (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). With a basic qualitative study using interviews with special education teachers I sought insights into why teachers leave the classroom. The initial research question inquired about former special education teachers trained through alternative teacher certification programs as to if there was a relationship between the selected training reasons for leaving the classroom. The second research question inquired about local school administrators' perceptions as to why special education teachers trained through alternative certification programs might leave the classroom. The chapter begins with an overview of the chosen conceptual framework, followed by a restatement of the guiding research questions. The role of the researcher substantiating a local sphere of influence will be offered followed by a delineation of the method. The chapter concludes with a proposed analysis of data and discusses both internal and external variables and methods of control of influence of each.

The Role of the Researcher

I have spent 34 years in education as a classroom teacher working with the general and special education population. My education, position, and professional qualification as a certified special and general educator have prepared me for this research study. I currently work as a special education chairperson/resource teacher in the

school district where some of the research took place. The position has provided me with

the knowledge and context of the role that a special educator may entail. I do have a job

at schools or offices from where some of the participants were selected but without

placing me in a position of direct supervision or consistent interaction. Even though I

could identify with the participants as a special education teacher, my role as a researcher

was limited to reducing bias or undue influence. As the researcher, my activities were

limited to identifying the participants, interviewing them, collecting and analyzing the

data, and reporting my results. As the researcher, I did not communicate any personal

experiences to participants and remained objective throughout the entire process.

Although the potential biases may have impacted data collection and analysis,

maintaining my objectivity was a priority. Ravitch and Carl (2016) asserted qualitative

researchers must disclose prejudices and use strategies to avoid bias during data

collection and analysis; therefore, I adopted procedures to mitigate any personal

influences to ensure the findings were accurate responses of study participants. I assured

participants during the interviews I was objective to the entire process; all responses were

confidential and had no impact on current positions or terms of employment. By study

and informed consent design, at any time during an interview, if a participant felt

uncomfortable each was empowered to ask the interview to stop and elect exclusion from

the study.

The researcher's role is to advance the knowledge base by closing gaps in the

literature and conducting meaningful research as the primary instrument (Marshall &

Rossman, 2016). The researcher comprehends an understanding of the phenomenon and

how to construct discovery while gathering data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), the role of researchers is to emphasize the need for research and disclose bias and assumptions to enhance the dependability of the body of knowledge. Saldaña (2016) indicated a qualitative researcher should be organized and exercise practical listening skills. Social media accounts such as Facebook or LinkedIn were used to locate and recruit participants. Once Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted permission to begin recruiting participants, I invited participants using the recruitment flyer in Appendix B.

Methodology and Design

In this basic, qualitative research study I sought interviews of school administrators and special education teachers within a school district, prepared through alternative teacher preparation programs, and personal and collective rationales for leaving the classroom. The basic, qualitative study methodology using interviews included the procedures for selecting and recruiting participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis plan. The overarching approach with the data collection was to interview each participant to understand the candidates' descriptions and rationales. The rationale for the selection of the methodology and participants follows.

Participants

Participants were recruited using social media accounts specifically designed for teachers and school administrators from the school district. Twenty special education teachers were trained through an alternative teacher preparation program and 10 school administrators were recruited. The number of participants selected was deemed

representative and generalizable of the local school district meeting data satisfaction. The special educators must have taught a maximum of 5 years in the school district and trained through an alternative certification program. School administrators must have had a minimum of 2 years of administrator experience in a school district. Upon generating a list of school administrators and teachers, I contacted the selected participants to begin the process of eliminating participants who may not have met the selection criteria.

Participant Recruiting

Upon obtaining approval from the IRB and the committee, I created a social media account for recruitment purposes. The recruitment process included sending a recruitment flyer to potential participants interested in participating in the study. I contacted potential participants via email, informing them of the objectives of the study and assuring them that their privacy would be protected. I also informed participants responses would be anonymous and collected to confirm the study results. The names, identities, and places of employment were not identified in the study.

<div align="center">

Instrumentation

</div>

Within the basic, qualitative study using interviews, I developed an interview script. The interview questions were developed using the research questions as a reference point. There was a need for a locally developed interview protocol as research for an interview protocol like the one used in this study proved to be unsuccessful. I used the research questions to theorize the interview questions and pull the answers from the participants that would align with RQ1 and RQ2. Once interview questions were drafted, I engaged my committee chairperson, committee methodologist, and several fellow

colleagues who are seasoned researchers in the field. By soliciting the expertise of these

individuals, I was able to provide well written interview questions that sought the data I

desired and were reliable to the task. Table 1 provides the interview protocol engaged in

the study.

Table 1

Research Questions and Interview Question Alignment

RQ 1: How do special education teachers, trained through alternative teacher certification programs, describe the reasons for leaving the classroom?	- What type of teacher certification program did you use for your certification? - Why did you choose your particular route for licensure? - Describe some of the reasons why special educators leave the classroom? - If you exited the teaching profession, did you leave the job altogether or did you leave the classroom (i.e., coaching position, administration) - Do you think your certification program adequately prepared you to teach? - What support did you need while in the classroom?

RQ 2: How do school administrators describe the reasons special education teachers trained through alternative certification programs leave the classroom?	● What are some of the obstacles/challenges have special educators under your administration encountered while in the classroom? ● Describe some of the reasons why special educators leave the classroom. ● To your knowledge, do you think alternative teacher preparation programs adequately prepare special education teachers for the classroom? ● What types of support have you provided as an administrator towards special educators in the classroom?

Data Collection

I conducted semi-structured interviews based on the research questions inquiring about special education teachers' rationale for leaving the classroom and the role of training and preparation in their reasoning for leaving. Due to current COVID-19/CDC regulations, the interviews were conducted via Zoom Meetings. Participants consented to Zoom Meeting recordings for interviews. I used the recordings to extract qualitative data and purge recordings upon completion of the study.

Individual interviews allowed participants the autonomy to describe their lived experiences in either supervising teachers or teaching and their descriptions of why special educators would leave the classroom. Research interviews are a basic qualitative research method and are utilized across methodological approaches (Gill & Baillie, 2018). Interviews help to gather in-depth information about the participant's perspectives, experiences, beliefs, and motivations. Castillo-Montoya (2016) noted how interviews provide rich and detailed qualitative data for understanding participants' experiences. The interview process included gaining access to and selecting participants, building trust with the participants, selecting the location and time of the interview, the order, quality, and clarity of the interview questions, and the overall process of conducting the interview (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

Teacher A, Teacher B, Administrator A, Administrator B, and so on labeled the interviews. Bell and Kothiyal (2018) discussed how ethical principles used in qualitative research – protection from harm, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity – are universal in the world of research. After receiving agreements from twenty teachers and

10 school administrators to participate in the study, I provided the participants with a consent that outlined the conditions of the study and reiterated that their responses would be kept confidential and anonymous. Participants who were not special education teachers and have taught for more than 5 years were not chosen to participate in the study. Participants who were not school administrators and have been in an administrator position for less than two years were also excluded from the study. Then, I scheduled phone or Zoom conferences for interviews and recorded and transcribed interview responses with Otter.Ai.

Interview questions included open ended questions, which allowed a conversation with follow-up questions to clarify any misunderstandings or elaborations on experiences. I interviewed each participant individually face to face via Zoom Meetings and recorded the interviews. Zoom interviews allowed at least 30 to 60 minutes per participant, depending on follow-up questions and any additional information that may have been needed from the participant. There was a minimum of three interview questions per research question. The interviews were conducted with each participant individually via Zoom and each participant was assigned a number code to differentiate among the participants. Each participant received their transcribed interview to review, approve, and, if necessary, request possible revisions to responses. I analyzed and coded the final data utilizing NVivo. Afterward, I forwarded the confidential results to each participant to identify commonalities in perspectives and themes for ranking purposes. Participants answered questions based solely on experiences. To increase the validity of

the interview, participants were able to review interview responses and add/or change any information.

Data Analysis Plan

Upon completion of tasks, I transcribed each interview and provided each participant with a copy to review for accuracy and to inquire for additional comments. I received all additional comments without prejudice and added them to the original transcripts. If additional Zoom Meeting interviews were necessary, these interviews were also recorded and transcribed as well. When transcriptions were completed, I contacted each participant via email to thank them for their participation in the study and to reassert all responses were coded to avoid identification and security.

After participants approved the interviews, I coded responses using NVivo©. Coding in qualitative research is comprised of processes that enable collected data to be assembled, categorized, and thematically sorted, thus, providing an organized platform for the construction of meaning. While qualitative research orientations differ theoretically and operationally relative to managing collected data, each employs a method for organizing data through coding. Coding methods use processes that reveal themes embedded in the data, in turn, suggesting thematic directionality toward categorizing data through which meaning can be negotiated, codified, and presented. Coding is a crucial structural operation in qualitative research, enabling data analysis and successive steps to serve the purpose of the study (Williams & Moser, 2019).

All common and discrepant descriptions were analyzed and coded as both were relevant and informed this study on the teachers' rationale for leaving the classroom. No

responses or contributions were excluded. After reading, transcribing, and revising all interviews using Otter.Ai., and the thematic analysis was completed and coding done, codes were committed to a frequency scale based on most frequent to least.

Validity and Reliability

Ravitch and Carl (2016) discussed how validity refers to how researchers can affirm findings are valid to the participants' experiences. Researchers adhere to a set of criteria to assess trustworthiness standards. Within the basic, qualitative design I did not vary from established criteria for whether participation or data analysis. Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted how credibility allows investigators to consider-complexities presented within a study and patterns not easily explained. I triangulated and captured different perspectives about similar issues by first surveying both school administrators and teachers to find a common theme, then interviewing both school administrators and teachers and analyzing data to find common patterns. Saldaña (2016) mentioned the importance of combining various studies and theories to compare them with the current study to assess human actions. Within the literature review, I engaged such studies and theories, applied each to the current study as a reasonable defense, then found within the study theories transferable to other locations. I further established transferability through thick descriptions of interviews with school administrators and teachers. Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted thick descriptions increase the complexity of research by thoroughly and clearly describing the study's contextual factors, participants, and experiences. Dependability was achieved by providing school administrators and teachers with their transcribed interviews for their review and additional comments. This same process was

used throughout the study. Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted qualitative research strives to confirm data during the research process. I attained confirmability by maintaining detailed files and records of the processes and interviews to confirm data with recordings. Study participants had the opportunity to review their transcribed interviews and make additional feedback, comments, edits, or omissions.

Ethical Procedures

I sought IRB approval (01-07-21-0670771), through a Letter of Permission to Institution (see Appendix A) and recruited participants via social media using a Recruitment Flyer (see Appendix B). Participants who qualified for the study received an email inviting them to participate in the study (see Appendix C). After making contact with selected participants, I sent an Informed Consent for Teachers and an Informed Consent for School Administrators. Institutional Review Board documents were prepared through the Walden University website accordingly. Participants had to sign a consent form to participate in the study.

I informed participants of being neutral parties to gain their trust. My goal was for participants to feel at ease when answering questions honestly and that I was not representing the school district in any way through this study. I used alphabetical codes to identify the participants; thus, allowing them to answer questions without fear of their identity being revealed or being penalized for their participation. I informed participants that this study was voluntary, and at any moment during the interview, they may stop the interviewing process and withdraw from the study without penalty. I ensured that participants were treated with dignity, sensitivity, and fairness. This treatment was also

free from prejudice regardless of the participants' political beliefs, disability, faith, partnership status, cultural identity, nationality, class, ethnicity, race, gender, age, or any other significant difference. Finally, I complied with all the legal requirements regarding the use and storage of personal data by informing participants of how and why their personal information was stored and used, and to whom they were made accessible. Such data were only accessible to me and committee members and shall be destroyed upon completion of the five-year limit.

Summary

This chapter discussed the basic, qualitative methodology using interviews. I described the conceptual framework, the sample selection, instrumentation development, identification and selection of participants, method of analysis, and exercised validity and reliability. The chapter represents a defense of research activities, integrity of data analysis, and legitimacy of study product to infer findings. Chapter 4 will now inform my use of data to inform a gap in knowledge likely relating to recommendations for corrective action.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perspectives of special education teachers and determine if their teacher preparation program influenced them to leave the classroom. I also explored administrators' perceptions and how or why special education teachers who were alternatively prepared leave the classroom. Data were collected through semi-structured virtual interviews with 29 participants and a phone interview with one participant.

Included in this chapter are the results of this study based on findings compiled through individual virtual interviews of special education teachers and school administrators. I described the setting for the study as well as the demographics of the participants. The data collection process and data analysis are presented in this chapter as well as the trustworthiness and results collected from the interviews.

Setting

I recruited participants for this study from various groups and sites on social media; therefore, the participants span across the United States. Special educators and school administrators have worked or continue to work in K-12 schools. Many of the participants coincidently taught in the eastern region of the United States. Locations included Maryland; Washington, D.C.; New York; Virginia; West Virginia; Philadelphia; and New Jersey.

Demographics

All participants worked or are still working in American elementary, middle, or high schools. These schools range from Title I schools to charter schools. Twenty

participants were special education teachers certified through an alternative teacher preparation program. As defined in Chapter 2 and according to National Center for Teacher Quality (2018), alternative teacher preparation programs are any other programs used to prepare teachers for the classroom that are not classified as a traditional teacher preparation program. Examples of alternative teacher preparation programs include but are not limited to Teach for America, Resident Teacher Program, Teaching Fellows, emergency certification, and conditional accreditation. I asked each participant about their rationale for choosing their particular route for licensure. One teacher trained in an alternative teacher preparation program reported that Teach for America provided a platform for him to financially support his goal of becoming a special educator. Another teacher felt her alternative teacher preparation program was a stepping stone into special education. One teacher stated, "There was a huge need for teachers in special education, and having a certification in special education is pretty powerful. I thought this program was a good program and a way of solidifying myself within the school system." Another teacher explained, "The resident teacher program is the quickest way to get into the world of special education, I just wanted to get my foot into the door, so I jumped on this track." Many participants trained through an alternative teacher preparation program used this licensure route to switch careers.

Data Collection

After receiving IRB approval, I recruited participants through several social media sites. I used Facebook, Instagram, and Linkedin. Twenty special educators and 10 school administrators responded to my recruitment flyer (Appendix B). Once the

participants indicated they were interested, I sent an email (Appendix C) containing the consent form. I selected 20 participants who identified as former special education teachers to participate in this study. Of the 20 teacher participants, 11 were certified through an alternative teacher preparation program while nine were certified through a traditional teacher preparation program. Ten school administrators volunteered for the study. Of the 10 school administrators, nine are still currently serving as K-12 school administrators. One administrator currently serves as a consultant for school administrators. I conducted semi-structured interviews via Zoom Meetings during times convenient for each participant. The average time for interviews was 30 minutes but I allowed participants up to 60 minutes to complete their interviews. One variation in conducting interviews was that I interviewed one participant by phone. I recorded all interviews using video recording through Zoom Meetings. After each interview, I transcribed the audio using Otter.Ai. Then, I emailed the transcription to each participant for review and approval. No participants wanted a second interview and were satisfied with the first interview. Participants had to respond to the email with "I approve."

All the participants seemed to understand the interview questions, even though I had to provide clarity to some questions or ask follow-up questions to participants whose responses were not aligned with the question. I was able to schedule, coordinate, and conduct all 30 interviews within 8 weeks. I used Otter. Ai to transcribe because it was the most user friendly. I found NVivo cumbersome to use for transcribing but found it helpful to begin coding my transcriptions. NVivo was very effective in locating trends and common themes from the interviews.

Data Analysis

I transcribed interviews using Otter.Ai and I used NVivo to find common themes and trends. Names of the participants or any other identifiers were excluded from the interview transcription. I assigned each participant a code: Teacher A for teachers and Administrator A for school administrators. After using NVivo to find common themes and trends, I manually coded transcripts. Coding consisted of a color-coded system where I colored each theme that emerged. I used colored highlighters for each theme found in the transcript of interviews. From the coded units, five themes emerged through interviews with the participants aligned to why alternatively trained teachers leave the classroom: (a) overwhelmed, (b) overload of paperwork, (c) not properly trained, (d) lack of support, and (e) student behaviors. The most common theme was "overwhelmed" by both teachers and administrators. Teachers described being overwhelmed by the amount of paperwork, growing caseloads, the pace of the curriculum, and lack of support with student behaviors. School administrators described being overwhelmed with empathy for teachers as they were able to recognize this factor as a teacher's need for administrative support. Teacher N stated, "Teachers are just overwhelmed. In my honest opinion, people didn't sign up to get sued to deal with advocates, to deal with attorneys, to deal with parents with a whole lot of issues in special education." Administrator G reported

> I think the workload special education teachers have can be overwhelming. So, I
> think having to do my case management and teaching would be overwhelming. I
> also think some teachers require direct support from the administration, but the

support may not be there because administrators do not understand the role of

special educators.

When discussing the overload in paperwork, several teachers exclaimed, "It is too

much!" One teacher, Teacher F, remarked

So, I think the big thing in why special education teachers leave is the paperwork.

I just felt like when I had a caseload of 17 kids it was excruciating and stressful

with the amount of paperwork required from us.

Administrator D agreed. He stated "I think the biggest issue special education teachers

have is keeping up with the amount of paperwork on a daily or weekly basis. Often they

[special education teachers] are staying late just to complete IEPs or meeting notes."

The results from these themes will be discussed further throughout this chapter. There

will be some overlapping in findings from special educators and school administrators

but there will be distinctions between the different participants.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted how credibility allows the researcher to consider

all the complexities presented within a study and not easily explained patterns. I captured

different perspectives from both teachers and school administrators. Through their

interviews, common patterns emerged. Several themes surfaced when analyzing data,

such as "overwhelmed" and "stress"; overwhelmed theme was common among both

teachers and school administrators who described why teachers leave the classroom.

Transferability was established through thick descriptions of interviews with

school administrators and teachers. Ravitch and Carl (2016) reported thick descriptions to

increase the complexity of research by thoroughly and clearly describing the study's contextual factors, participants, and experiences. Transferability was demonstrated through my descriptions and analysis of participants' interviews. Dependability was achieved by providing school administrators and teachers with their transcribed interviews for their review and additional comments. Ravitch and Carl noted qualitative researchers strive to confirm data during the research process. Each participant received their interview video via email and was allowed time for review. After reviewing their video, the participant emailed me and responded "I agree" if they agreed with the contents of the video interview allowing me to proceed with the analysis of the interview. Confirmability was attained by maintaining detailed files and records of the research processes and interviews to confirm data with recordings. Study participants had opportunities to review their transcribed interviews and make additional feedback, comments, edits, or omissions.

Results

RQ1

The first research question for my study was "How do special education teachers trained through alternative teacher certification programs describe the reasons for leaving the classroom?" Five themes identified and confirmed through interviews with the participants aligned with why alternatively trained teachers leave the classroom: (a) overwhelmed, (b) overload of paperwork, (c) not properly trained, (d) lack of support, and (e) student behaviors.

Overwhelmed, Stressed, Burn Out

Most participants agreed that special educators are overwhelmed, stressed, and burned out. The subthemes that emerged from this theme were (a) expectations for special educators and (b) management of caseloads. According to Shepherd et al. (2016), general education teachers have various duties concerning their position. These duties range from preparing lesson plans and differentiating instruction, to collaborating with grade level teachers and communicating with parents. In contrast, the special educator has additional responsibilities added to their teaching responsibilities; leading to further changes in the roles and preparation of special educators (Shepherd et al., 2016).

Unlike the general education teacher, special education teachers are expected to assist the general education teacher in teaching students with disabilities in all subject areas, modify the general education curriculum to meet the students' needs, and implement all supplemental services and accommodations (Williams & Dikes, 2015). In addition to these instructional responsibilities, the special education teacher is responsible for facilitating all IEP meetings, maintaining hard copy files of each student on caseloads (files are scrutinized by special education chairperson, supervisors, administration, and state-level education departments), and staying current with all local, state, and federal laws pertaining to special education. Teacher J speaks to these issues

> I think it's an overwhelming environment. I mean, teaching, in general, is an
> overwhelming environment, but special educators have a lot of paperwork to
> complete, IEPs, as well as just routine classroom paperwork. I do lesson planning

as well as lesson plans that address IEP goals. Overall, I think it is an

overwhelming environment.

Teacher M summarized the views of many of the participants when he remarked "It's a

very overwhelming job…. It is almost like two jobs!" Many participants mirrored

Teacher M's response. A majority of the participants stated being overwhelmed was a

key factor in why they decided to leave the classroom.

Overload of Paperwork/Workload

Most of the participants stressed that the tremendous amount of paperwork and

the heavy workload is probably the number one reason special education teachers leave.

All 30 participants commented on the amount of paperwork. One participant, Teacher G,

stated, "I think the overload of like, the paperwork, you know, we have to keep up with

the caseloads so we will remain compliant, then on top of that we are teaching our

students, so it just becomes a lot." In addition, Teacher N remarked

The workload is crazy! I understand ideas, original intent, but it seems as if the

paperwork is more important than teaching. I know the reason for paperwork; you

must document our students so we won't have lawsuits. But I think it takes away

from teaching my students.

Teacher I summed this issue up when she stated

I do feel that the workload is overwhelming. Every year, your caseload grows

larger and larger, the IEP requirements get more intense, and the compliance

deadlines become more intense as well. And even though it's one thing of you to

have to multitask or move in a fast-paced environment once in a while, but to do

it consistently year after year can be draining and lead to burnout. I also noticed

the paperwork increased as well, which has teachers working on the weekends.

And so, when you compare the amount of paperwork/workload special education

teachers have to the amount they are paid, special educators are underpaid. We

should be fairly compensated. Several teacher participants stated if they were not

burdened by the overwhelming amounts of paperwork thrust upon them, they may

have stayed in the classroom.

Along with the overload of paperwork, special educators also agreed the lack of proper

training when completing such paperwork has been a major factor in why they leave the

classroom.

Not Properly Trained

Participants discussed how the lack of training was a significant issue with special

educators and why they leave the classroom. Some participants reported special

education teachers needed to know almost every subject area in addition to interventions,

differentiation, IEP goals, objective writing, assessment, report writing, meeting note

writing, and all laws/regulations pertaining to special education. One teacher indicated

When I was a special education teacher, one of the hardest things, just being

honest, was the lack of training. I didn't have anything to compare it to, like a

traditional teacher preparation program. Although our program was thorough, it

was condensed, and you can't learn enough in six weeks. I know there is a

difference between practical and real-life knowledge, but I wish they had given us

more in-person teacher training.

The lack of training is a common thread, especially among alternatively trained teachers. Alternatively trained special educators may have condensed programs, which allows them a smaller window to grasp pedagogy. Many of the participants described their lack of training or lack of knowledge of special education laws and procedures as a reason for leaving the classroom.

Participants also remarked on how special education teachers are required to know many content areas; therefore, teachers are responsible for using multicurricula to address the grade level and instructional level goals and objectives on student IEPs. Another participant, Teacher K, shared

> If you are not well versed with the curriculum, you will struggle. You will struggle with the curriculum, the paperwork, lesson plans, etc. Compared to teachers who may be dually certified in special education and general education or teachers who have mastered the curriculum, some special education teachers struggle to keep up with the constant influx of special education issues.

As stated from the literature in Chapter 2, the special educator must know multiple content areas as well as specialized instruction to instruct students with disabilities (Williams & Dikes, 2015). Special educators are given the task to differentiate instruction for their students while collaborating with their general education colleagues, who often are not trained to teach students with disabilities.

I also asked participants if their particular teacher preparation program adequately prepares them to teach in a special education classroom. Many of the participants replied that the preparation program had not prepared them well enough. Some stated the

coursework was adequate to address the content but not how to deliver content. All participants trained in an alternative teacher preparation program discussed how they did not feel their program sufficiently trained them to work with students. Teachers commented on how they were not prepared for the student behaviors, the juggling of IEP goals and objectives writing and teaching a class, and the number of students on their caseload. Teacher L explained

> I had 18 students in a self-contained room in my first year, all with emotional disabilities and not one aide. So much effort had to go to just the social-emotional piece that I was forced to allow some of the academics to fall. I just always felt like I was running into a rock wall.

Another participant, Teacher O, remarked

> Once you get into the field [special education], I feel like most of my experience came from hands-on learning instead of my degree. I don't think my program adequately prepared me. I needed more real-life experience, videos, case studies, something, but I was definitely not fully prepared to go into a special education classroom and teach.

One participant, Teacher S, reported

> There were definitely aspects of my program that prepared you to be a teacher, but they don't prepare you for the paperwork side of special education. When I went into my internship after being in college for four years, there were so many words and acronyms that I didn't even know existed. We never learned about the

different types of disabilities. I literally had one class on learning disabled

students.

Many teachers discussed how they wished their particular teacher preparation

program would have provided real-life experiences or concrete examples of classroom

life. Teacher O and R both agreed that they needed concrete examples of challenges that

may occur within the classroom. Teacher I summarized the overall thoughts of the

participants when she remarked

A lot of the things you learn in the classroom as a student teacher doesn't

necessarily prepare you for everything, but it gives you a base, or it gives you a toolbox

that you can go to and use because there is no way to know or teach every single possible

real case scenario that happens in education. To obtain a richer discussion surrounding

this question, I asked participants an additional probing question. I asked participants if

there was a correlation between their teacher preparation program and their decision to

leave the classroom. Many participants did not correlate their teacher preparation

program with their decision to remain in their current profession. One participant,

Teacher S, stated

> Everything I really learned about being a special education teacher was on-the-job
>
> training. I learned from my school, I learned from my teacher I worked with
>
> during student teaching. So yes, aspects of my program helped me, but a majority
>
> were learned with experience.

Another participant, Teacher L, reported, "No. I think I just received some basic survival

stuff, nothing that would really help me in the classroom, like dealing with the different

behaviors and the environments some of the students deal with daily." Yet, another participant, Teacher M, discussed how her preparation does not link back to where she is professionally, at all. Then, Teacher N stated, "I think it's a small correlation in a way because the position that I'm in, I'm not a fan of, so my program helped me to transition from one grade to another." Another participant, Teacher D, discussed

> I believe my program helped prepare me for the good, bad, and ugly of the profession. I definitely believe it gave me the mindset that student progress is not going to happen overnight. Special education is a process in itself, but we are going to work on it as a team, and we have an overall goal, and at the end of the day, I want to do all I can for my students. So, if anything, I learned this from my professors.

The teacher participants reported their teacher preparation program had little or no impact on their rationale for leaving the classroom. These results also align with the literature from Chapter 2 where it was referenced how little is known if teacher preparation programs adequately prepared special education teachers.

Lack of Support or Resources

Many participants reported they did not receive adequate support while in the classroom. Support or resources fell under two sub-themes: support/resources from administration and additional adult support/resources in the classroom. Providing support to teachers is beneficial for teachers and students. Teachers who have been supported have correlated high student achievement with their ability to thrive in the classroom and remain in the profession (Banks, 2015).

Lack of Administration Support

Several participants remarked they did not receive adequate support from a school administrator. Support was described as assistance with student behaviors, difficult parents, being allowed to attend professional development, and providing sufficient classroom resources. Teacher I stated

> Administrative support can be as simple as reducing my workload or students on my caseload from 20 to 10 to 12 students. I need the administration to listen to us and give us the work parameters that actually make our job feasible.

Another participant, Teacher D, retorted

> I need administrative support when dealing with the different student behaviors! This is an area that I struggle with even now. Also, we need more academic support, considering we only had one academic intervention. If this intervention did not work, well, we didn't have anything else. We need support in getting adequate resources.

Another participant, Teacher F, felt that there was no equity in the amount of administrative support. Teacher D echoed, stating administration seemed to support general education teachers far more than special education teachers. In contrast, the administrator participants all stated they were very supportive of their special educators. Administrator E discussed

> So, with my special education teachers, we take time during the first two weeks of school to sit down and look at their caseloads and go over IEPs. Then, as the school year progresses, we meet at least one Wednesday a month during

professional development and go in-depth about addressing student behaviors, instructional strategies, and specific disabilities.

Another participant, Administrator H, stated

I assisted my special education teachers with behavior management strategies, IEP implementation, instructional strategies and ensured that everything in their classrooms from A to Z was available. I met one-on-one with a teacher as a check-in to see if they looked at individual student IEPs and asked if they needed assistance with aligning the student goals and objectives with the curriculum.

Support is viewed differently by special educators and school administrators. Special educators reported support from school administrators is little to none whereas school administrators from various schools have stated they have been extremely supportive. Effective communication between special educators and school administration may alleviate these issues.

Additional Adult Support

Many participants wholeheartedly exclaimed they needed additional adult support in the classroom. Most of the teacher participants stated that ideally, they would like to have one to two additional adults in the classroom to assist. Additional Adult Support (AAS) ranges from Paraprofessionals (Para) to Instructional Special Education Assistants (ISEA) to Dedicated Aides (DA). The acronyms may vary within each school district. Some teachers declared that they did not have any AAS during their first year of teaching. Teacher O reported, "My first year was crazy. No, I did not have additional

staff in the classroom. But when I finally received a para, they were excellent. As a matter of fact, they were amazing." Another teacher, Teacher L, stated

> In the first six months into my first year, I got an aide but only two hours a day. I just needed more aides so I could at least group the students. We could have done more academically with more hands-on deck.

> Another participant, Teacher P, discussed how she had paraprofessionals in her first year, but they were not supportive. Teacher S also discussed how he had an AAS in the classroom, but at times, he had to retrain them to fit the needs of his students. Researchers have reported paraprofessionals may not have been trained prior to entering the classroom or the paraprofessional is working outside of his or her role in the school (Zobell &Hwang, 2020). Many special educators and school administrators stated Additional Adult Support often are not properly trained to work with students with disabilities. Poorly trained Additional Adult Support places another burden on the special educator.

Student Behaviors

Many participants noted that student behaviors were a significant reason why special educators decided to leave the classroom. According to Williams and Dikes (2015), special education teachers must monitor student progress in academics and behavior. Some participants reported difficulty with monitoring and managing behaviors of students with disabilities both in the general education setting and in self-contained classrooms. Students with severe behaviors or a disability code of Emotional Disturbed must be assessed and monitored using a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and a

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). Both tools are updated yearly, which is another task the special educator must add to her list of duties. One participant, Teacher P, stated

The reality is [that] teaching students with disabilities is very challenging. It is challenging on the level of the students and seeing different types of behaviors. In one room, you can have children with varied abilities and varied behaviors. So, the teacher needs to be flexible with a positive attitude and a real commitment.

Another participant, Teacher C, reported

Often, special education teachers are thrown into a classroom with students from across the spectrum of disabilities, the same with behaviors. These same teachers are expected to work miracles with all of these disabilities and, most times, the added behaviors. We probably had one or two classes in dealing with emotionally disturbed students and giving just a small number of strategies to deal with the different behaviors. Quite frankly, most special educators are not sufficiently trained to handle moderate to severely emotionally disturbed students.

Student behaviors, extreme and mild, affect special educators and retention. Special educators stated if they had adequate support from school administrators with student behaviors, they [special educators] may have opted in remaining in the classroom. Many special educators reported student behaviors led to burnout and teachers exiting the classroom.

RQ2

The second research question of my study was "How do school administrators describe the reasons special education teachers trained through alternative certification

programs leave the classroom? Three major themes emerged from the interviews with school administrators. Those themes were (a) Overwhelming/Stress/Burnout, (b) Overload of paperwork/Workload, and (c) Not Properly Trained.

Overwhelming/Stress/Burnout

A majority of the school administrators agreed the number one issue why special educators leave the classroom is teachers being overwhelmed, stressed, or burned out. Concerning this issue, Administrator E stated

It's overwhelming. It's overwhelming. They [special educators] have a lot, and they do a lot. You have a caseload; you're writing IEPs, you're going in-depth with student IEP goals, keeping an exceptionally detailed data binder, assessing students every two weeks, and keeping in contact with parents. Special Ed. Teachers do what a general education teacher does but so much more.

Another administrator, Administrator F, noted

Stress and burnout are significant issues why SPED teachers leave. I think the accountability piece is a little over the top. You're measuring the success of special education students using the same measuring stick as you would with somebody in the advanced placement classes. The pressure that is created for the special education teacher is overwhelming in that regard.

All of the school administrators interviewed agreed special educators are overwhelmed in the classroom. Most of the school administrators discussed they attempted to support special educators as much as they can in areas that affect their instruction and professionalism.

Overload of Paperwork/Workload

Fifty percent of the school administrators reported that the amount of paperwork special educators endure daily is insurmountable. Many claim to find ways to decrease paper and workloads for teachers as much as possible. One school administrator, Administrator E, stated

> Even though our teachers may have classes of five or six students, sometimes, those five or six students can present like 20 students with the amount of work that they have to do for them. And so that is what becomes really overwhelming, where it's like, I'm literally working, you know, non-stop.

Meanwhile, Administrator H shared, "I think the workload is number one. I believe special education teachers struggle with the amount of paperwork from the caseloads and being able to teach their classes." Administrator A added to this comment

> So, a lot of them [special education teachers] talk about the sheer quantity of the paperwork that is done. I know a lot of them feel stressed about it. In our school, the special education teachers have a planning period, just like any other teacher. But I don't always know that is enough time, especially during IEP season. Some teachers have expressed concern about liabilities that are attached to paperwork and not meeting timelines.

School administrators agreed paperwork for the special educator can be overloading and overwhelming. Several school administrators commented they offer additional time during the instructional day to alleviate the stress of completing paperwork for the special educator in the school buildings. Other school administrators reported building blocks of

planning time for special educators to complete paperwork. This report from school

administrators was not in alignment with reports from special educators.

Not Properly Trained

School administrator participants were in agreement at 50% when discussing if

teacher preparation programs impacted the performance of special education teachers.

Many stated they could not tell the difference between a traditionally trained teacher and

an alternatively trained teacher. Some discussed how most of the learning teachers

received comes from on-the-job training. Administrator H revealed

> So the fact that I've seen or have seen where training is concerned is that not
>
> enough is given in training… a lot of what SPED teachers know how to do, they
>
> had to learn on the job, you know, like from a mentor, or from someone else
>
> within their department. And I think across the board in education, the training
>
> doesn't really prepare you for what you will do.

Another participant, Administrator E, stated

> I have been questioning this for years. Our teachers are coming from a prep
>
> program, but there's still a lot that they have to learn, which I really feel they
>
> should have brought into the job. And so that really makes me question those prep
>
> programs, like what exactly are the teachers working on, you know, outside? I
>
> mean, we know they're doing a lot of reading, and we know they're doing a lot of
>
> case studies. But in reality, is that really the best way for them to learn what it is
>
> that they're going to do? Because case studies are very different from when you
>
> actually step into the classroom.

Yet, Administrator F reported

> I don't have insight into the training process. What I can share with you is that it's a crapshoot, like to me, there's no real correlation between special education training, and how well teachers do once they're on the job. It could impact that there's still that insight into the training process, but there is no real consistent, benchmark of performance, for teachers who enter the profession, especially special education teachers.

A few school administrators stated that special education teachers are prepared in their pedagogy, but may not be prepared for the classroom climate. Administrator G admitted

> I think that from a pedagogical standpoint, teacher preparation programs have had an impact. And probably from a case management perspective, so being able to write appropriate IEPs and participate in meetings and do that side of things. But the part that I think has not had an impact is that most of them [special educators] did their student teaching in traditional schools, and with us being an alternative school, they are not prepared for the climate and culture of that type of school setting.

Many school administrators agreed the teacher preparation program did not influence special educators exiting the classroom. Several school administrators reported special educators are well versed in their chosen content areas but may lack training in certain areas concerning special education laws, procedures, and differentiating instruction.

Summary of Findings

Through my basic qualitative study approach, school administrators and teachers' contributions from semi-structured interviews, five major themes emerged regarding why special education teachers leave the classroom. The themes aligned with the research questions. These themes also reaffirmed prior studies (Banks, 2015; Gallant & Riley, 2017; Guha et al., 2017; Hagaman & Casey, 2018; Williams & Dikes, 2015; Zhang & Zeller, 2016), the rationale for special education teachers' reasons for leaving the classroom, and if their particular teacher preparation program correlated with their decision to leave the classroom. Chapter 5 summarizes and interprets the significant findings reported in Chapter 4, compares them with the existing literature, and presents recommendations for educational policy, leadership, and management.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the reasons for special education teachers entering school districts through alternative teacher certification programs but exiting the classroom. I addressed two central research questions: (a) "How do special education teachers trained through alternative teacher certification programs describe the reasons for leaving the classroom?" and (b) "How do school administrators describe why special education teachers trained through alternative certification programs leave the classroom?" This chapter detailed the discussion and implications for this research.

Summary of the Study

I conducted virtual semi-structured interviews with 30 participants (20 teachers, and 10 school administrators) using two central research questions and six sub-questions. Participants' recruitment took place through social media sites: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and the Walden University Participant Pool. The first research question was addressed through sub-questions answered by both special education teachers and school administrators. Five themes emerged from the qualitative data: (a) overwhelmed, (b) overload of paperwork, (c) not properly trained, (d) lack of support, and (e) student behaviors. These themes were supported by the literature found in Chapter 2 and the conceptual framework aligned with the theory of job satisfaction (Locke, 1976). Previous research supported this study as it relates to job satisfaction and special educators remaining in teaching. The second research question was answered by the sub-question results from special education teachers on how their preparation programs prepared them

for success in the classroom. Again, responses from participants were supported by the previous research found in Chapter 2.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings from the study confirmed knowledge in the discipline when examining the literature from the previous studies (Banks, 2015; Gallant & Riley, 2017; Guha et al., 2017; Hagaman & Casey, 2018; Williams & Dikes, 2015; Zhang & Zeller, 2016). I interpreted the study's results in the societal theory attributed to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, the theory of job satisfaction (Locke, 1976), and the theory of organizational commitment (Vagi & Pivovarova, 2017). With the focus on two central research questions and six sub-questions from special educators and school administrators, I concluded with several interpretations

Research Question 1

Evidence from the study demonstrated how special educators trained through alternative teacher preparation programs and school administrators agreed that the primary reason special educators leave the classroom is work overload/burnout. Ninety percent of the teacher participants trained through alternative teacher preparation programs stated the overwhelming workload, paperwork, and student caseload were all determining factors in leaving the classroom or transitioning to a different area in education. These same teachers also reported that lack of extensive training with the paperwork in special education, the number of hours dedicated to real-life classroom experiences, and training in the interpretations of laws behind special education were reasons why special educators leave the classroom.

The next reason for special educators leaving the classroom was the lack of support. Responses from special educators differed from school administrators with this response. School administrators responded with the type of support they gave their special education teachers. Support ranged from providing support staff, coaching, classroom supplies, time for planning, and student behavior support. Special educators responded differently; most stated that the support from some administrators was very minimal, support staff was difficult to retain, and resources were limited.

Research Question 2

There was substantial evidence from the study that supported this question and the sub-questions. Eighty percent of the school administrators agreed the top three reasons why special educators leave the classroom were teachers being (a) overwhelmed, (b) overloaded with paperwork, and (c) not being properly trained. Other reasons discussed but only received less than 10 % responses from administrators were lack of support and student behaviors.

Overwhelmed

Special educators and school administrators all agreed that special educators who are overwhelmed with their role as special educators ranked as the leading reason special educators leave the classroom. The results determined that special educators felt overwhelmed by several factors from class sizes of students with multiple disabilities to numerous IEP meetings. The findings are consistent with the literature previously reviewed. Williams and Dikes (2015) stated that with the insurmountable amount of paperwork, instructional, and clerical responsibilities, special educators often suffer from

burnout, resulting in resigning from the profession. Other researchers have described teachers' exit for 5 years as "the revolving door effect" (Ingersoll, 2004, p. 20; Williams & Dikes, 2015).

Overload of Paperwork

Special educators and school administrators ranked overload of paperwork as the second reason special educators leave the classroom. Several school administrators admitted they attempted to put support systems in place to assist special educators in their buildings with minimizing the amount of paperwork (providing extra planning time, relieving teachers to provide time for completion of paperwork). This is aligned with the literature as Williams and Dikes (2015) conveyed that in addition to instructional responsibilities, the special education teacher is responsible for facilitating all IEP meetings, maintaining hard copy files of each student on caseloads (files are scrutinized by special education chairperson, supervisors, administration, and state-level education departments), and staying current with all local, state, and federal laws about special education. Special educators specifically stated the overwhelming amount of paperwork in combination with the overstretched class sizes for students with disabilities (most school districts cap special education classrooms with class sizes at 15 students) are reasons why they left the classroom.

Not Properly Trained

Special educators and school administrator participants both ranked special educators not being adequately trained as the number three reason why special educators leave the classroom. The training discussed by both participants was specifically on

special educators and their roles in the classroom. One researcher stated that before the

reauthorization of IDEA 2004, special education teachers were placed in special schools

and residential placements, serving students and adults with disabilities; as such, the roles

of special educators were defined by a vast set of expectations (Shepherd et al., 2016).

However, with the reauthorization of ESSA, there was a significant transference where

federal policy led to additional changes in the roles and preparation of special educators

(Shepherd et al., 2016). Williams and Dikes (2015) reported special education teachers

are expected to assist the general education teacher in teaching students with disabilities

in all subject areas, modify the general education curriculum to meet their needs, and

implement all supplemental services and accommodations. It is in these areas that many

special educator participants described their insecurities in not being properly trained and

felt ill-equipped to either teach all subject areas, implement all supplemental services,

modifications, and accommodations, or create/implement FBA and/or BIP. The literature

also aligned with the alternative training as an attribute to special educators not being

properly trained. According to O'Sullivan (2015), alternative certification programs are

considered shortcuts into the field of education and may include very little quality

management. This supports the rationale from special educators and their statements

behind the lack of training in specific areas within the responsibilities of the special

educator. Still, many leave due to a lack of appropriate knowledge of the content or

special education (Hagaman & Casey, 2018). In addition, Zhang and Zeller (2016)

concluded that attrition rates among special education teachers are due to the level of

education received as well as the quality of the teacher preparation program. Researchers

have noted the quality of the teacher preparation program can influence the amount of satisfaction in teaching and ultimately determines a teacher's decision to leave the classroom (Zhang & Zeller, 2016).

When asked, "Do you think your certification program adequately prepared you to teach?" the special educators trained through alternative teacher preparation programs stated that their teacher preparation program did not have a role in their decision to leave the classroom. Special educators from alternative teacher preparation programs stated their programs prepared them to teach content but did not adequately provide enough guidance in classroom management or real-life situations in the classroom. Most special educators stated that their program prepared them in the teaching pedagogy but did not prepare them for the additional issues connected to special education such as paperwork, caseloads, legal issues, and student behaviors.

Lack of Support

The results from special educators and school administrators differed on the theme of lack of support. Special educators discussed how school administration often provided little to no support from assistance with minimizing amounts of paperwork to providing additional adult support in the classroom to helping with students with challenging behaviors. Responses from school administrators were vastly different. Administrators reported they provided special educators support that resembled provisions for extra planning time to alleviate paperwork overload and assistance with students with challenging behaviors. These findings align with the literature as Hagaman and Casey (2018) discussed how job satisfaction is one of the most important reasons for

special education teacher attrition. The authors stated special education teachers reportedly have high attrition rates, especially among new special education teachers and they [special educators] have been noted to mark satisfaction with the job, support on the job, or organizational resources as key factors to why special educators choose to leave the classroom.

Student Behaviors

Student behaviors did not rank as high with school administrators as it did with special educators. Special educators ranked this as the fifth top reason for why they leave the classroom. This finding is aligned with the literature as Banks (2015) pointed out half of the special education teachers leave because of a lack of preparedness for classroom intrusions, the problem of student behavior, and lack of support from administration. Other researchers (e.g., Hagaman & Casey, 2018; Williams & Dikes, 2015) stated student behaviors are an overwhelming factor in teacher attrition, especially among special education teachers. School administrators responded to student behaviors as a concern but not a factor for special educators leaving the classroom. School administrators reported supporting special educators with student behaviors; therefore, this factor is looked upon as a means of support rather than an issue for special educators.

Limitations of the Study

There were two identified limitations of this study. One limitation was my position in the county as a special education teacher. As a special education teacher, this position may have influenced some participants and their responses during their interviews. Next, participants may have been hesitant in discussing their concerns or

struggles as novice special educators. These concerns were mitigated with the anonymity of the interview transcription as the names of the participants were not used in the study.

Recommendations for Further Research

As discussed in Chapter 1, a quarter of the teaching force, both general and special education teachers, have left assigned classrooms after one year and almost half have left within five years of teaching (He et al., 2015). School districts have responded to the rising teacher attrition with innovative alternative teacher preparation programs and provided novice teachers with tools to transition into and remain in classrooms (Curry et al., 2016). Other research mentioned maintaining highly effective special education teachers has been a challenge, as demonstrated by a nationwide shortage of special education teachers (Barth et al., 2016). Most importantly, research has shown the more school districts assist teachers in becoming capable, the more teachers contribute to increasing students' learning and achievement (Song & Alpaslan, 2015).

Teacher retention and attrition in the United States remain a priority. According to GarcĆa and Weiss (2020), teacher shortage in the United States is real, and many factors drive complex problems. Research also determined that the issue may worsen without intervention (GarcĆa & Weiss, 2020). In my opinion, additional research examining novice teachers with five years or less and how to retain them in the teaching profession is needed.

Implications

This study has a potential impact on positive social change at the school district and national levels concerning special education teacher retention and attrition as it

relates to increased rates of achievement in special education students. I hope policymakers and district leaders will use this research to guide and develop policies that address the increasing special education teacher shortage. This study would also assist decision-makers on what resources and supports school districts would need to recruit and retain a diverse workforce of educators.

Conclusion

This study was designed to address two specific research questions. First, how do school administrators and special education teachers trained through alternative teacher certification programs describe why special educators leave the classroom? Second, how do special education teachers describe the role of training and preparation in their decision to retain their current professions? This chapter provided a discussion and implications of the results of this research.

The findings from the first research question showed how many of the participants stated several reasons why novice special educators, alternatively trained, leave the classroom and some of the top reasons stated were being overwhelmed, overworked, alarming amounts of paperwork, lack of support inside of the classroom, and student behaviors. Findings from the second research question demonstrated how school administrators described the factors of why special educators decided to leave the classroom. All of the special educators reported their particular training did not have a role in their final decision to leave the classroom. These factors need to be considered by policy and decision-makers to address the increasing teacher shortage, teacher attrition, and teacher retention in the United States.

References

Abitabile, A., Klafehn, M., & Kiger-Williams, A. (2019). Special section: Teacher and

teacher retention shortage: Administrative support and mentoring are key.

Principal Leadership, *20*(1), 26–33.

Andrews, A., & Brown, J. L. (2015). Discrepancies in the ideal perceptions and the

current experiences of special education teachers. *Journal of Education and

Training Studies*, *3*(6), 126–131. https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v3i6.984

Banks, J. A. (2015). *Cultural diversity and education: Foundations, curriculum, and

teaching*. Routledge.

Barth, P., Dillion, N., Hull, J., & Higgins, B. H. (2016). *Fixing the holes in the teacher

pipeline: An overview of teacher shortages.* Center for Public Education.

http://www.centerforpubliceducaion.org

Bell, E., & Kothiyal, N. (2018). Ethics creep from the core to the periphery. In C. Cassell,

A. L. Cunliffe, & G. Grandy (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative business

and management research methods* (pp. 546-561). Sage.

https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526430212

Bohan, C. H. (2016). The past, present, and future of teaching and teacher education

curriculum. *Curriculum & Teaching Dialogue*, *18*(1/2), 3–12.

https://eds.s.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=cf4982dc-d48e-

4440-9a3a-00ffb9b92a85%40redis

Breitborde, M. L., & Kolodny, K. (2015). The people's schools for teachers of the people: The development of Massachusetts' state teachers colleges. *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, *43*(2), 2–23. https://www.westfield.ma.edu/historical-journal/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Breitborde-and-Kolodny-combined.pdf

Brownell, M. T., Bishop, A. M., & Sindelar, P. T. (2018). Republication of "NCLB and the demand for highly qualified teachers: Challenges and solutions for rural schools." *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, *37*(1) 4–11. https://doi.org/10.1177/8756870517749604

Bruno, L. P., Scott, L. A., & Willis, C. (2018). A survey of alternative and traditional special education teachers' perception of preparedness. *International Journal of Special Education*, *33*(2), 295–312.

Castillo-Montoya, M. (2016). Preparing for interview research: The interview protocol refinement framework. *Qualitative Report*, *21*(5), 811–830.

Chandrasekara, W. S. (2019). Relationship among big five personality traits, job performance & job satisfaction: A case of school teachers in Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Information, Business Management, 11*(2). https://www.proquest.com/openview/e1db1d638c80b6e8b4c4aaecf21ef278/1.pdf?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=2032142

Clandinin, D. J., Long, J., Schaefer, L., Downey, C. A., Steeves, P., Pinnegar, E., McKenzie Robblee, S., & Wnuk, S. (2015). Early career teacher attrition: Intentions of teachers beginning. *Teaching Education*, *26*(1), 1–16.

Conley, S., & You, S. (2017). Key influences on special education teachers' intentions to

    leave: The effects of administrative support and teacher team efficacy in a

    mediational model. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*,

    45(3), 521–540. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143215608859

Corbell, K., Osborne, J., & Reiman, A. J. (2010). Supporting and retaining beginning

    teachers: A validity study of the perceptions of success inventory for beginning

    teachers. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, *16*(1), 75–96.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611003722325

Curry, J. R., Webb, A. W., & Latham, S. J. (2016). A content analysis of images of

    novice teacher induction: First-semester themes. *Journal of Educational Research*

    and Practice, 6(1), 43–65.

den Brok, P., Wubbels, T., & Van Tartwijk, J. (2017). Exploring beginning teachers'

    attrition in the Netherlands. *Teachers and Teaching*, *23*(8), 881–895.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2017.1360859

Donitsa-Schmidt, S., & Zuzovsky, R. (2016). Quantitative and qualitative teacher

    shortage and the turnover phenomenon. *International Journal of Educational*

    Research, *77*, 83–91. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2016.03.005

Feng, L., & Sass, T. R. (2017). The impact of incentives to recruit and retain teachers in

    hard-to-staff subjects. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *37*(1), 112–

    135. https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22037

Gallant, A., & Riley, P. (2017). Early career teacher attrition in Australia: Inconvenient truths about new public management. *Teachers and Teaching*, *23*(8), 896–913. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2017.1358707

GarcĆa, E., & Weiss, E. (2020). *A policy agenda to address the teacher shortage in US public schools: The sixth and final report in the Perfect Storm in the Teacher Labor Market series.* Economic Policy Institute. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED611178.pdfhttps://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED611178.pdf

Gill, P., & Baillie, J. (2018). Interviews and focus groups in qualitative research: An update for the digital age. *British Dental Journal*, *225*(7), 668–672. https://doi.org./10.1038/sj.bdj.2018.815

Glazer, J. (2018). Learning from those who no longer teach: Viewing teacher attrition through a resistance lens. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, *74*, 62–71. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.04.011

Glennie, E. J., Mason, M., & Edmunds, J. A. (2016). Retention and satisfaction of novice teachers: Lessons from a school reform model. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, *4*(4), 244–258. https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v4i4

Gray, L., Taie, S., & O'Rear, I. (2015). *Public school teacher attrition and mobility in the first five years: Results from the first through fifth waves of the 2007–08 Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study* (NCES 2015–337). National Center for Education Statistics. http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch

Guha, R., Hyler, M. E., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). The teacher residency: A practical path to recruitment and retention. *American Educator, 41*(1), 31–34. https://eds.p.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=142f9b9c-ac95-4642-b98f-5c3259ff032e%40redis

Haberman, M. (1995). Selecting "star" teachers for children and youth in urban poverty. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *76*(10), 777–781. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ505022

Hagaman, J. L., & Casey, K. J. (2018). Teacher attrition in special education: Perspectives from the field. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, *41*(4), 277–291. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406417725797

Haj-Broussard, M., Hall, T., Allen, S., Stephens, C., Person, V., & Johnson, T. (2016). Alternative certification teacher and candidate retention: Measures of educator preparation, certification, and school staffing effectiveness. *Journal of the National Association for Alternative Certification*, *11*(2), 4–13. https://doi.org/EJ1122591

He, Y., Cooper, J. E., & Tangredi, C. (2015). Why do I stay? A case study of a secondary English teacher in an urban high school. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *42*(1), 49–66. https://eds.p.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=142f9b9c-ac95-4642-b98f-5c3259ff032e%40redis

Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. B. (1959). *The motivation to work*. John Wiley & Sons.

Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). Why do high-poverty schools have difficulty staffing their classrooms with qualified teachers? *Brookings Papers on Education Policy, 2004*(1), 45–71. https://doi.org/10.1353/pep.2004.0005

Ingersoll, R. M. (2012). Beginning teacher induction what the data tell us. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *93*(8), 47–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171209300811

Jensen, E., & McConchie, L. (2020). *Brain-based learning: Teaching the way students really learn.* Corwin.

Kaden, U., Patterson, P. P., Healy, J., & Adams, B. L. (2016). Stemming the revolving door: Teacher retention and attrition in arctic Alaska schools. *Global Education. Review*, *3*(1), 129–147. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1090201

Kelchtermans, G. (2017). 'Should I stay or should I go?': Unpacking teacher attrition/retention as an educational issue. *Teachers & Teaching*, *23*(8), 961–977. https://doi-org. /10.1080/13540602.2017.1379793

Khanna, V. (2017). Measuring job satisfaction of academicians using Herzberg theory. *Delhi Business Review*, *18*(2), 75–86. https://search-ebscohost-com. /login.aspx?direct=true&db=edb&AN=127767246&site=eds-live&scope=site

Larkin, I. M., Brantley-Dias, L., & Lokey-Vega, A. (2016). Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention of online teachers in the K-12 setting. *Online Learning*, *20*(3), 26–51. https://eds.p.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=9&sid=142f9b9c-ac95-4642-b98f-5c3259ff032e%40redis

Leko, M. M., Brownell, M. T., Sindelar, P. T., & Kiely, M. T. (2015). Envisioning the future of special education personnel preparation in a standards-based era. *Exceptional Children*, *82*(1), 25–43. https://doi.org/10.1177/0014402915598782

Locke, E. (1976). The nature and causes of job satisfaction. In M. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial trial and organizational psychology* (pp. 1297–13499). Rand McNally.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (2016). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). Sage.

Marshall, D. T., & Scott, M. R. (2015). Urban teacher residencies: Indicators of successful recruitment. *New Waves*, *18*(2), 29–39. https://search-proquest-com./docview/1781565529?accountid=14872

Maryland State Department of Education. (2019). www.msde.org. https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/pages/special-education/index.aspx

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, *50*(4), 370–396. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346

Maslow, A. H. (1954). *Motivation and personality.* John Wiley & Sons.

Mason-Williams, L., Bettini, E., Peyton, D., Harvey, A., Rosenberg, M., & Sindelar, P. T. (2020). Rethinking shortages in special education: Making good on the promise of an equal opportunity for students with disabilities. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 43(1), 45–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406419880352

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* Jossey-Bass.

Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of

organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*, *1*(1), 61–89.

https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-4822(91)90011-z

Meyer, J. P., Allen, N. J., & Smith, C. A. (1993). Commitment to organizations and

occupations: Extension and test of a three-component conceptualization. *Journal*

of Applied Psychology, *78*(4), 538–551. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-

9010.78.4.538

Moniarou-Papaconstantinou, V., & Triantafyllou, K. (2015). Job satisfaction and work

values: Investigating sources of job satisfaction with respect to information

professionals. *Library and Information Science Research*, *37*(2), 164–170.

https:// 10.1016/j.lisr.2015.02.006

National Association of Alternative Certification. (2015).

http://www.alternativecertification.org/naac-retention-study_2015final-1/

National Center on Teacher Quality. (2018).

https://www.nctq.org/dmsView/NCTQWhat_Makes_Teacher_Prep_Traditional_o

r_Non_Traditional

No Child Left Behind Act 2001. (2001).

https://www2.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/execsumm.html

O'Sullivan, S. (2015). Teacher education in the United States. *International Journal of*

Arts & Sciences, Cumberland, *8*(7), 497–507.

Peyton, D. J., Acosta, K., Harvey, A., Pua, D. J., Sindelar, P. T., Mason-Williams, L.,

Dewey, J., Fisher, T., & Crews, E. (2020). Special education teacher shortage:

Differences between high and low shortage states. *Teacher Education and Special*

Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for

Exceptional Children, *44*(1), 5–23. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406420906618

Ravitch, S., & Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual,*

theoretical, and methodological. Sage.

https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/#/books/9781483351759/

Ryan, S. V., Nathaniel, P., Pendergast, L. L., Saeki, E., Segool, N., & Schwing, S.

(2017). Leaving the teaching profession: The role of teacher stress and

educational accountability policies on turnover intent. *Teaching and Teacher*

Education, *66*, 1–11. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.03.016

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Sewell, B. B., & Gilbert, C. (2015). What makes access services staff happy? A job

satisfaction survey. *Journal of Access Services*, *12*(3-4), 47–74.

https://doi.org/10.1080/15367967.2015.1061435

Shepherd, K. G., Fowler, S., McCormick, J., Wilson, C. L., & Morgan, D. (2016). The

search for role clarity: Challenges and implications for special education teacher

preparation. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, *39*(2), 83–97.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406416637904

Shukla, A. (2019). *Brain-based learning: Theory, strategies, and concepts.*
https://cognitiontoday.com/2019/08/brain-based-learning-theory-strategies-and-
concepts/

Song, S. S., & Alpaslan, M. A. (2015). Factors impacting on teachers' job satisfaction
related to science teaching: A mixed-methods study. *Science Education
International*, *26*(3), 358–375. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1074879.pdf

Stark, K., & Koslouski, J. (2021). The emotional job demands of special education: A
qualitative study of alternatively certified novices' emotional induction. *Teacher
Education & Special Education*, *44*(1), 60–77.
https://doi.org/10/1177/0888406420931497

Sutcher, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). *A coming crisis in
teaching? Teacher supply, demand, and shortages in the US.*
https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/coming-crisis-teaching-brief

Teacher Recertification Courses Online. (2016). www.ccteach.org/teaching-certification

Top, M., Akdere, M., & Tarcan, M. (2015). Examining transformational leadership, job
satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational trust in Turkish
hospitals: Public servants versus private-sector employees. *International Journal
of Human Resource Management*, *26*(9), 1259–1282. https://search-ebscohost-
com. /login.aspx?direct=true&db=edb&AN=101121261&site=eds-
live&scope=site

U.S. Department of Education. (1984).

U.S. Department of Education. (2015a). *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*.

>   https://oese.ed.gov/files/2016/07/NCLB-ESSA-Equitable-Services-Comparison-

>   Chart-FINAL.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2015b). *Enrollment in teachers' preparation programs*.

>   https://title2.ed.gov/Public/44077_Title_II_Issue_Brief_Enrollment_ V4a.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2015c). *Every Student Succeeds Act*.

>   https://www.ed.gov/essa?src%3Drn

U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Prevalence of teachers without full state*

>   *certification and variation among schools and states.*

>   https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/teaching/teachers-without-certification/

>   report.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2017). *Every Student Succeeds Act*.

>   https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BILLS-114s1177enr/pdf/BILLS-

>   114s1177enr.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2018). www.usdoe.org

Vagi, R., & Pivovarova, M. (2017). Theorizing teacher mobility: A critical review of

>   literature, *Teachers and Teaching, 23*(7), 781–793.

>   https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1219714

Van Overschelde, J. P., Saunders, J. M., & Ash, G. E. (2017). Teaching is a lot more than

>   just showing up to class and grading assignments: Preparing middle-level teachers

>   for longevity in the profession. *Middle School Journal*, *48*(5), 28–38.

>   https://doi.org/ 10.1080/00940771.2017.1368319

Wang, H. H., Hall, N. C., & Rahimi, S. (2015). Self-efficacy and causal attributions in teachers: Effects on burnout, job satisfaction, illness, and quitting intentions. *Teaching &* Teacher *Education*, *47*, 120–130. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2014.12.005

Whitford, D. K., Zhang, D., & Katsiyannis, A. (2018). Traditional vs. alternative teacher preparation programs: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *27*(3), 671–685. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-017-0932-0

Williams, J., & Dikes, C. (2015). The implications of demographic variables as related to burnout among a sample of special education teachers. *Education*, *135*(3), 337–345. https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-Implications-of-Demographic-Variables-as-to-a-Williams-Dikes/d6101ea6b00e61e041cc21001b8ff772ddf2f64f

Williams, M., & Moser, T. (2019). The art of coding and thematic exploration in qualitative research. *International Management Review*, *15*(1), 45–55. https://search-ebscohost-com.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed). Sage.

Youngs, E. (2013). *Factors impacting Catholic school teacher turnover including alternative teacher certification* [Dissertation, Catholic University of America]. http://aladinrc.wrlc.org/handle/1961/14406

Zhang, G., & Zeller, N. (2016). A longitudinal investigation of the relationship between teacher preparation and teacher retention. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *43*(2), 73–92. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1100322

Zobell, E., & Hwang, J. (2020). An examination of the current status of paraprofessionals through their lens: Role, training, and supervision. *Journal of Special Education Apprenticeship*, *9*(1), Article 6. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1241843.pdf

Appendix A: Letter of Permission to Institution

Dear Lorraine,

This email is to notify you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your application for the study entitled, "Investigating Why Alternatively Prepared Special Educators Frequently Depart the Teaching Profession."

Your approval # is 01-07-21-0670771. You will need to reference this number in your dissertation and in any future funding or publication submissions. Also attached to this e-mail is the IRB approved consent form. Please note, if this is already in an on-line format, you will need to update that consent document to include the IRB approval number and expiration date.

Your IRB approval expires on January 6, 2022 (or when your student status ends, whichever occurs first). One month before this expiration date, you will be sent a Continuing Review Form, which must be submitted if you wish to collect data beyond the approval expiration date.

Your IRB approval is contingent upon your adherence to the exact procedures described in the final version of the IRB application document that has been submitted as of this date. This includes maintaining your current status with the university. Your IRB approval is only valid while you are an actively enrolled student at Walden University. If you need to take a leave of absence or are otherwise unable to remain actively enrolled, your IRB approval is suspended. Absolutely NO participant recruitment or data collection may occur while a student is not actively enrolled.

If you need to make any changes to your research staff or procedures, you must obtain IRB approval by submitting the IRB Request for Change in Procedures Form. You will receive confirmation with a status update of the request within 10 business days of submitting the change request form and are not permitted to implement changes prior to receiving approval. Please note that Walden University does not accept responsibility or liability for research activities conducted without the IRB's approval, and the University will not accept or grant credit for student work that fails to comply with the policies and procedures related to ethical standards in research.

When you submitted your IRB application, you made a commitment to communicate both discrete adverse events and general problems to the IRB within 1 week of their occurrence/realization. Failure to do so may result in invalidation of data, loss of academic credit, and/or loss of legal protections otherwise available to the researcher.

Both the Adverse Event Reporting form and Request for Change in Procedures form can be obtained on the Tools and Guides page of the Walden website: https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/research-center/research-ethics/tools-guides Doctoral researchers are required to fulfill all of the Student Handbook's Doctoral Student Responsibilities Regarding Research Data regarding raw data retention and dataset confidentiality, as well as logging of all recruitment, data collection, and data management steps. If, in the future, you require copies of the originally submitted IRB materials, you may request them from Institutional Review Board.

Both students and faculty are invited to provide feedback on this IRB experience at the link below:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qHBJzkJMUx43pZegKlmdiQ_3d_3d

Sincerely,

Elyse V. Abernathy, MSL, MSM
Research Ethics Support Specialist
Office of Research Ethics and Compliance

Walden University
100 Washington Avenue South, Suite 1210
Minneapolis, MN 55401
Email: irb@mail.waldenu.edu
Phone: (612) 257-6645
Fax: (612) 338-5092
Information about the Walden University Institutional Review Board, including instructions for application, may be found at this link:
http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orec

Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

Doctoral study seeks participants for a study on why special educators leave the teaching profession

There is a new study called "Investigating Why Alternatively Prepared Special Educators Frequently Depart the Classroom" that could help stakeholders in education make better decisions concerning teacher retention/attrition. For this study, you are invited to discuss your descriptions and experiences of how special educators who have been trained through alternative teacher preparation programs leave the classroom.

This flyer is part of the doctoral study for **Lorraine R. Philyaw, a Ph.D. student at Walden University**.

About the study:

One 30-60-minute interview, via Zoom Meetings

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

18 years old or older

Former Special Education Teachers

Two to five years of teaching experience

Trained through an alternative teacher preparation program

To confidentially volunteer, please contact the researcher at lorraine.philyaw@waldenu.edu.

Appendix C: Email Invitation

Thank you for volunteering for my study. The title of my study is " Investigating Why Alternatively Prepared Special Educators Frequently Depart the Teaching Profession." In this study, I will be looking at why special educators with two to five years of experience leave the classroom. After reading the criteria and protocol for this research, please respond to this email with the following information:

your job title (special education teacher or school administrator.)

your years of experience (SPED teachers- 2-5 yrs. (past or present); school administrators-2+ years (past or present)

the statement "I consent" if you agree to the terms of the study. the best time you are available for an interview.

The interview should take no more than 30 minutes. If you have any additional questions or concerns, feel free to email me @ lorraine.philyaw@waldenu.edu. Again, thank you for your support!