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Principal Leadership Style and Teacher Retention in China's Bilingual Kindergartens

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College of Education

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Feng Yang

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Principal Leadership Style and Teacher Retention in China's Bilingual Kindergartens

by

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MA, East China Normal University, 2011

BS, East China Normal University, 2008

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

June 2022

Abstract

High teacher turnover affects school development and student achievement in bilingual kindergartens in China. Relying on this gap in practice, the project study explores how teachers perceive the influence of their principals' leadership styles on their decisions to stay in or leave bilingual kindergartens in Shanghai. The concepts of instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and distributed leadership from leadership theory were used as the conceptual framework for the study. The research questions addressed bilingual kindergarten teachers' reasons to stay or leave and, in particular, their perceptions of their principal's leadership style as a retention factor. In this basic qualitative research study, eight teachers who once worked at the bilingual kindergarten participated in the study. Data were collected through semistructured interviews and were analyzed and coded to identify common themes. The findings revealed the work environment quality, development opportunities, salary, and some personal reasons as the main factors affecting the teachers' decisions to stay or leave the bilingual kindergarten. In addition, supportive instruction, the existence of a shared vision among teachers, and the possibility to build trustful relationships were perceived as the primary principal leadership strategies influencing participants' retention decisions. Building upon the findings, a professional development plan was proposed to aid teacher retention in bilingual kindergartens. This professional development may reduce teacher turnover in the kindergarten and provide a model for other kindergartens and schools with teacher turnover issues, in consequence inducing positive social change.

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Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to my younger sister, Yang Cui, whose encouragement, support, and accompany on this journey, made it possible for me to arrive at this milestone. I am fortunate to have such a loving sister.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

Shanghai Observation News (2017) reported that the number of children in kindergarten in Shanghai exceeded 600,000. Only around 1,500 students majoring in early childhood education graduated from colleges and universities in Shanghai each year. Compared with the total demand of 2,000–3,000 kindergarten teachers per year in Shanghai, the professional organizations that educate and credential the future early year teachers can not satisfy the kindergarten market demands. The principals of kindergartens and the human resource center of the Education Bureau in Shanghai faced the challenges of teacher shortage and difficult recruitment (*Shanghai Observation News*, 2017). The Shanghai Hongkou District Education Human Resource Service Center director stated that about 20% of preschool teachers in the Hongkou District would retire from school (Eastday.com, 2018). The deputy director of the Kindergarten Office of Shanghai Songjiang District Education Bureau stressed that the teacher shortage of private kindergartens in Songjiang District this year was 30% (*Shanghai Observation News*, 2017).

A shortage of kindergarten teachers has become a general challenge because the principals and education bureau human resource center faces increasing early year teacher turnover (Duan, 2017). According to a survey of 131 preschool teachers conducted by the *China Education News* (2016), 31.3% of the teachers had the intention to leave or had already left their current schools or the profession. Further, *China Legal Weekly* (2019) reported that there had been a loss of 830,000 kindergarten teachers in

China in the past 5 years, which was equivalent to 40% of kindergarten teachers leaving their original teaching positions every year.

There is a similar situation in bilingual schools and private school kindergartens that use Chinese and English as instructional teaching languages, which became popular in China with economic development and globalization. The teacher turnover rate of bilingual kindergarten teachers in Shanghai reached 45% in the teachers' first 2 to 4 years of working in the school, far higher than the usual level of teachers' turnover (*China Education Daily*, 2018). According to the principal of a bilingual kindergarten in Songjiang District in Shanghai, the average annual teacher turnover rate in the past 3 years has reached 50%.

On January 1, 2016, China began to fully implement the policy that a couple can have two children, referred to as the two-child policy (Wang et al., 2016). According to Shanghai Municipal Planning Commission (2017), implementing the comprehensive two-child policy would bring about 3 to 5 years of population growth. The registered residence population of Shanghai may increase the birth population from 60,000 to 120,000. The annual increase of 20,000 to 30,000 people will cause a peak of admissions to kindergarten. In 2021, private kindergartens accounted for 38% of Shanghai's total number of kindergartens (Shanghai Municipal Planning Commission, 2017)). Furthermore, the number of bilingual kindergartens in Shanghai will have to increase in the next few years (Shanghai Education, 2021). In Songjiang District, the bilingual kindergartens comprised 80% of private kindergartens (Songjiang Education, 2020). However, as previously stated, professional institutions cannot provide enough new

teachers for schools and the high teacher turnover rate in private kindergartens exacerbates the shortage of teachers. Therefore, exploring how to increase the teacher retention rate in bilingual kindergartens becomes imperative and has practical value.

Rationale

The General Secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission stated that the development of preschool education in Shanghai was facing challenges and that the number of existing kindergartens cannot meet the demand of many children due to the birth peak (*China Education News*, 2018). The General Secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission continued, stating that,

In addition to appropriately expanding the enrollment scale of preschool education major in colleges and universities, and further improving the training system of early childhood teachers, we need to prevent the further loss of kindergarten teachers. The Education Bureau and schools should pay attention to supporting and retaining in-service kindergarten teachers to maintain the stability of teachers. (*China Education News*, 2018, p. 16)

High teacher turnover is a particular problem in kindergartens. According to a report in which the Wieland Education Think Tank (2019) analyzed 1,537 questionnaires completed by kindergarten teachers from 30 provinces in China, 92.3% of the interviewed teachers had thought about leaving the profession of kindergartens. Moreover, 41% of the kindergarten teachers surveyed said they frequently transferred schools or had decided to leave the profession. The high teacher turnover problem and challenges of retaining teachers in private kindergartens have become common in recent

years (Chen, 2019; Ding, 2017; Duan, 2017; Hu & Zhang, 2018; Li, 2020). China Central Television (2018) reported that the severe loss of early childhood teachers had caused the critical concerns of parents, principals, teachers, and relevant government institutions. The President of the China Preschool Education Research Association also voiced concerns about the vast loss of kindergarten teachers and appealed for policies and strategies to retain the profession's teachers.

As globalization continues to develop, the number of bilingual schools grows in Shanghai, which is the most significant international city in China. Bilingual kindergarten, which is an essential part of private kindergarten, accounts for 65% of Shanghai's total private kindergartens. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate how to retain teachers in bilingual kindergartens.

Factors that have been identified to be related to teacher turnover included noncompetitive salary, teacher qualification, working environment, teacher workload, the length of teacher tenure, school cohesion, motivation, school leadership, and organizational commitment (Allen et al., 2018; Ding, 2015; Fuller et al., 2016; Imran et al., 2017). Principal leadership styles were recognized as essential factors to predicting and helping teacher retention (Le, 2020; Player et al., 2017; Urick, 2016). In China, He (2020) and Li (2019) found that teacher turnover was related to leadership level and characteristics and suggested that the teacher retention rate could be increased through effective principal leadership. Therefore, in this study I investigated how teachers perceive the influence of the principals' leadership styles on their decisions to keep working in or to leave China's bilingual kindergartens.

Definition of Terms

Private kindergarten: The preschool education institutions undertaken by social organizations or individuals other than state institutions. Private kindergartens mainly use nonstate financial funds to recruit children from society, according to the Regulations on Running Schools by Social Forces and the Law of the People's Republic of China on Promotion of Civil Running Education (The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, 2016).

Bilingual kindergarten: One type of private kindergarten that uses both Chinese and English as instructional teaching languages (Yang et al., 2019).

Leadership: The sum of various factors that played a role in the process of activities, including unique personality, charm, accurate foresight and judgment ability, super-strong communication ability, continuous innovation ability, and constant extension ability (Zhang et al., 2016).

Leadership style: The behavioral pattern when directing, motivating, guiding, and managing groups of people. Principal leadership styles are the behavioral patterns that a principal adopts to influence school staff's behavior (Dong, 2017).

Teacher retention: Teachers' willingness to remain or plan to stay in the same school or teaching profession (Williams, 2018).

Significance of the Study

It is widely acknowledged that teachers play a critical role in student achievement and school development. Although researchers in Western countries have found a correlation between principal leadership and teacher retention, most studies have focused

on middle school, high school, and college-level principals and teachers (Fuller et al., 2018; Grissom & Bartanen, 2019; Grissom et al., 2016). Similarly, Chinese researchers have also focused on middle and high schools (He, 2020). I found few studies exploring what may support teacher retention in bilingual kindergartens. Therefore, this project study could provide additional statistical data to fill the gaps in the literature regarding principal leadership and share strategies that principals and schools could use to help keep teachers in their schools.

Due to the severe challenges posed by the teacher shortage and the difficult recruitment of teachers faced by the principals of kindergartens and the human resource center of the Education Bureau in Shanghai (*Jie Fang Daily*, 2017), it is necessary to find effective methods to retain teachers in schools. Recent studies have noted that school leadership is strongly associated with decreased teacher turnover (Kraft et al., 2016). Principals providing effective leadership are more likely to retain high-performing teachers (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019). By evaluating teacher turnover in bilingual kindergartens and mainly focusing on how principal leadership strategies support teachers in the profession in this study, researchers, educators, and policymakers can use the practical methods found in the results to reduce the teacher turnover rate and promote education quality in private kindergartens. The findings of this study could help school leaders and policymakers in Shanghai deeply understand how bilingual kindergarten leaders retain excellent teachers. The results of this research could also contribute to knowledge of effective principal training for the early childhood education stakeholders.

Research Questions

With the implementation of China's comprehensive two-child policy, more children will be required to enter kindergarten in the future. The high turnover rate of preschool teachers makes the shortage of preschool teachers more serious. Previous studies have shown that a principal's leadership style affects teachers' motivation and turnover (Baptiste, 2019; Qadach et al., 2020; Tatlah et al., 2019). Therefore, this study of how principals' leadership styles support teachers' retention in kindergartens was needed to address the problem. The problem and purposes of this study align with the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the teachers' reasons to keep working in or leave China's bilingual kindergartens?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive the influence of their principal's leadership strategies on their decisions to keep working in or to leave China's bilingual kindergartens?

Review of the Literature

Teacher turnover has been an ongoing problem and has received significant attention worldwide. Teacher turnover could disrupt curricular cohesiveness, interrupt teacher-student relationships (Fuller et al., 2018) as well as increase school financial costs and the number of inexperienced teachers in school (Liu, 2017). Additionally, Chinese researchers have found the impact of high teacher turnover on private kindergartens included causing instability in the teaching staff, making other teachers have intentions to leave (Lu, 2017). High teacher turnover has also reduced the public's trust in the value of

private kindergartens (Li, 2015). In China, along with implementing the comprehensive two-child policy and the rapid development of globalization, the severe shortage of bilingual kindergarten teachers has become a critical challenge for stakeholders. Therefore, educational leaders are constantly searching for effective methods to retain quality teachers in schools and decrease the teacher turnover rate.

This literature review includes a discussion of teacher turnover, principal leadership styles, principal leadership, and teacher retention. This study's conceptual framework was grounded in leadership theory with a specific focus on three leadership styles: instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and distributed leadership. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how teachers perceive the influence of principals' leadership strategies on their decisions to keep working in or to leave China's bilingual kindergartens.

Literature Search Strategy

I used various strategies to locate literature on the topics of teacher turnover, teacher attrition, teacher retention, leadership theory, and principal leadership. I used computerized reference databases to identify articles, reports, doctoral dissertations, peer-reviewed journal articles, and conference papers published between 1992 and 2021. The databases searched were Educational Resources Information Clearinghouse, Emerald Management, ProQuest Central, SAGE Premier, ScholarWorks, Science Direct, and CNKI.NET. I searched these databases for all publications that included the following key words: *teacher turnover*, *teacher attrition*, *teacher mobility*, *teacher retention*,

leadership, leadership theories, leadership style, and principal leadership. The Google Scholar and Baidu Scholar search engines were also used.

Conceptual Framework

This study was grounded in leadership theory with a focus on leadership styles. Kouzes and Posner (2007) regarded leadership as the leader's ability to voluntarily encourage others to make outstanding achievements in the organization. Zhang et al. (2016) defined leadership as the sum of various factors that played a role in the process of activities, including unique personality, charm, accurate foresight and judgment ability, super-strong communication ability, continuous innovation ability, and constant extension ability. With the development of the systematic theory of leadership behavior in the early 20th century, researchers, including Bass (1985), House (1977), House and Shamir (1993), and Bass and Avolio (2004), began to focus on the impact of leadership styles on individuals and organizations (Nawaz & Khan, 2016).

Instructional Leadership

In the mid-1908s, based on absorbing the research results of related disciplines, some scholars defined instructional leadership and put forward a new interpretation framework. Among many definitions, the model proposed by the U.S. scholars Hallinger and Murphy (1986) is the most influential and cited one. They defined instructional leadership as the principal's leading and managing the school's teaching work, promoting teachers' teaching and students' learning behavior. They also drew lessons from the work analysis technology in human resource management and put forward the critical work areas, functions, and behaviors reflecting the principal's instructional leadership. They

determined three crucial strands of instructional leadership: defining the school's mission, managing curriculum and teaching, and creating a positive school.

However, constructivist scholars believed that instructional leadership is a concept of social construction (Southworth, 2010). According to the concept of social construction, in the relevant exchanges and discussions, individuals use the ideas they adopt or create, and everyone's construction will be different. In different organizations, many factors influence instructional leadership, such as organizational structure, leadership style, organizational culture, etc. (Southworth, 2010). Some researchers have used qualitative research methods to analyze the definition of instructional leadership. The two most typical and influential studies analyzing the definition of instructional leadership were completed in the late 1990s. The first study was conducted by Blasé of the University of Georgia in 1998 (Blase & Blase, 1998). The results showed that the three kinds of instructional leadership most important were interact with teachers, promote teachers' professional development, and promote teachers' reflection. Southworth (2010) completed the second study at the University of Reading in 1999, finding that effective instructional leadership should include the following six components: hard work, decisiveness, positive personality, accessibility, teamwork, and school improvement. The instructional leadership models in the two studies have some commonalities. For example, both emphasize the interaction between principals and teachers and students, require principals to be proficient in teaching, pay attention to regulatory variables (such as teacher motivation and teacher development) and situational factors (such as organizational culture). More importantly, they began to analyze

excellent instructional leaders' core qualities and critical performance. These findings expanded the understanding of the definition and components of teaching leadership.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, education quality has become the strategic theme of the reform and development of primary education in various countries. The learning and development of students have been widely considered by educators, researchers, and policymakers. In this context, the study of instructional leadership strengthens the learning-centered orientation. Hallinger and Murphy (1986) advocated taking students' learning and development as the center and understanding instructional leadership from two dimensions: the key links and core content of leadership behavior. This two-dimensional analysis framework focuses on the principal's instructional leadership activity and emphasizes the connection between instructional leadership behavior and students' learning and development.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership theory connects the roles of leaders and subordinates and creates a process between leaders and subordinates to improve the motivation and morale levels of both sides (Bass et al., 1987). Transformational leaders optimize members' interactions by setting an example of their behavior and caring for their subordinates' needs (Bass et al., 1987). Simultaneously, through the cocreation and promotion of the organizational vision, the leaders can create an atmosphere of change in the organization and promote the organization's adaptive evolution in achieving the organizational goals efficiently (Bass, 1985).

As an essential theory of leadership, transformational leadership was first put forth by political sociologist, Burns (1978), who described leaders as individuals who could stimulate followers' enthusiasm to achieve the goals of leaders. Burns also defined transformational leaders as leaders who facilitated the subordinates' high-level needs and wishes by making employees aware of the significance and responsibilities of the tasks they undertook. Bass et al. (1987) initially divided transformational leadership into six dimensions and then summarized it into three key factors: charisma, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Avolio (1995) summarized transformational leadership behavior into four aspects: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized care consideration. Idealized influence refers to someone that can make others trust, worship, and follow, which includes leaders becoming the model of subordinates' behavior and gaining the subordinates' recognition, respect, and trust. Inspirational motivation refers to leaders who express their high expectations to the subordinates, motivate them to join the team, and become part of the team to share their dreams. Leaders often use team spirit to achieve team goals. Intellectual stimulation is used to encourage subordinates to innovate and challenge themselves, including instilling new ideas into subordinates, inspiring them to express new ideas, and motivating them to solve problems in work with new means and methods. Personalized care refers to caring for each subordinate; paying attention to personal needs, abilities, and wishes; listening patiently and carefully; and training and guiding each subordinate according to their different situations and conditions. Leaders with these

factors usually have solid values and ideals. They can successfully motivate employees to go beyond their interests and work together for the team's greater goal.

Distributed Leadership

Since the 1970s, instructional leadership and transformational leadership have been important to the West's idea of educational leadership. However, in recent years, educational leadership research has paid more attention to how to put leadership into practice. Distributed leadership, a perspective or theory that emphasizes leadership practice, has received significant attention throughout this process. As Harris (2008) stated, "the current field of leadership seems to be dominated by distributed leadership. Whatever your position, distributed leadership is at the center of today's leadership agenda" (p. 14). In recent years, the view of distributed leadership has become more and more complex. Harris stated that there are three different perspectives that focus on various aspects of distributed leadership: analytical, empirical, and practical.

The concept of distributed leadership can be traced back to Gibb's (1954), *Handbook of Social Psychology*. Gibb's defined distributed leadership by stating that there can be multiple leaders in an organization, and each person bears different roles. Gibb's core assumption was that everyone has leadership ability, which the organization also needs at a specific time (Gronn, 2008). A series of studies by Gronn (2008) and Spillane and Diamond (2007) laid the foundation for distributed leadership.

The core concept of distributed leadership is leadership practice based on the perspective of practice, which mainly refers to the distribution of leadership and the actual operation process of leadership function in specific school situations (Spillane &

Diamond, 2007). To determine how the leadership practice works, Spillane and Diamond (2007) conducted a series of case studies that fully combined with the characteristics of each school and explained how the distributed leadership practice works in different schools. They summarized distributed leadership practice with two core words: interaction and context. The researchers pointed out that interaction is the primary core concept of distributed leadership practice (Spillane & Diamond, 2007).

Review of the Broader Problem

Factors Affecting Teacher Turnover or Retention

Intensive research on teacher turnover has been conducted in the past 20 years. The literature regarding teacher turnover mainly focuses on the causes of turnover or factors related to teacher turnover, the influence of teacher turnover, and the strategies to decrease teacher turnover rate. In this study, I focused on the literature regarding causes of turnover or factors related to teacher turnover because of my study topic. Although the number of studies examining the causes of turnover or factors related to teacher turnover have grown in recent years, researchers have categorized teacher turnover correlates into limited and precise dimensions through meta-analysis of the literature.

Nguyen et al. (2020) completed a recent meta-analysis of the literature on teacher turnover correlations. The authors further developed Borman and Dowling's (2008) conceptual framework for teacher turnover by incorporating new insights, identifying the three main factors of teacher turnover as personal factors, school factors, and external/policy factors. Individual factors of teacher turnover related to teachers' personal characteristics are age, gender, marriage status, distance to school, years of experience,

educational background, qualifications, and certificates. The researchers found personal factors had a crucial impact on teacher turnover. Nguyen et al. pointed out that special education teachers and young and inexperienced teachers were more likely to leave schools. Their findings also showed that school factors, such as working conditions and salary, could strongly affect teacher turnover intention. However, scholars identified increased teacher turnover studies focused on external/policy factors, including teacher evaluation and retention bonuses in recent years.

Nguyen et al. (2020) only synthesized quantitative studies that focused on elementary or secondary schools based in the United States, so they called for more insight from other contexts. Therefore, I also examined the literature on this topic, focusing on kindergarten or early-year teachers from the United States and mainland China. The factors contributing to or relating to the kindergarten teacher's teacher turnover showed nearly the same pattern as found in Nguyen et al.'s meta-analysis. Personal factors, such as career satisfaction, workload, and work stress, have been identified as strongly linked to turnover intention among kindergarten teachers from the United States and the Chinese mainland (Hong et al., 2021; Hu, 2020; Jia, 2020; Yang et al., 2018). School factors, especially school resources, work conditions, teacher collaboration, and administrative support had a substantial impact on kindergarten teachers' turnover intention (Grant & Buettner, 2019; Hong et al., 2021; Jia, 2020; Kwon et al., 2020; Lambert et al., 2019; Schaack et al., 2020). Furthermore, Chinese scholars found external factors, such as low salary, and school factors, including high work stress

and lack of school environment and support, are the leading causes of kindergarten teachers' turnover (Hong et al., 2021; Jia, 2020; Yuan, 2019).

Previous researchers also investigated teacher retention factors, including working conditions, teacher preparation, and teacher motivation. The schools where the teachers considered their working conditions as satisfactory had lower teacher attrition (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). Moreover, teachers who graduated from a traditional certification program had a higher retention rate than those from alternative certification programs (Van Overschelde & Wiggins, 2020; Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Besides working conditions and preparation type, teachers' intrinsic values to choose to teach and stay in schools are related to teacher retention. Teachers with higher motivation were more likely to have higher job satisfaction and more likely to remain in the schools (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). In China, Liu and Yan (2019) and Li (2019) found that teachers' turnover intention was related to leadership level and characteristics.

Further, the reasons that support teacher retention changed from extrinsic factors to intrinsic factors (Wang, 2019). In the early stage of employment, the factors supporting teacher retention mainly comes from essential family members' support. However, after 3 to 5 years, the factors that support teacher retention become professional growth gained in the experience and self-efficacy. A skilled and experienced teacher retains in the school with the pursuit and self-realization of individual life's meaning.

Principals' Leadership Styles

Principals were among the most influential leaders in school organizations, influencing school effectiveness and student outcomes (Agasisti et al., 2019). Their

leadership styles affected students' learning, school culture, teachers' working environment, attitude, job satisfaction, and performance (Baptiste, 2019). Among the various leadership styles, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and distributed leadership were the most recognized leadership styles in school contexts and the hot topics in leadership styles in education in recent years (Chen & Liu, 2018; Hussin & Waheed, 2016).

The importance of instructional leadership for an effective school has been recognized and researched in the United States since the 1980s. The expectation for principals to be instructional leaders in school had become popular in the world currently (Hallinger et al., 2020). Hallinger and Wang (2015) pointed out three principal instructional leadership features: determining teaching mission, managing teaching and curriculum, and creating school climate. Principals with effective instructional leadership who could provide administrative support for teachers and created an environment where teachers could develop their potentials were more likely to decrease their teachers' intent to leave (Qadach et al., 2020). Also, instructional leadership affected teachers' performance and job commitment in schools (Tatlah et al., 2019). In China, the researcher affirmed the positive relationship between principal instructional leadership and teacher professional learning through investigating a mediated-effects model of principal instructional leadership and teacher education (Liu & Hallinger, 2018).

Moreover, researchers studied the role of principal instructional leadership in building learning community schools. Dai and Wan (2016) found a coordinated, open, and supportive school culture for quality teaching and learning promoted by a principal

could contribute to the teachers' professional development and creating a supportive work environment increasing teacher commitment and student outcomes. Instructional leadership of primary and secondary school principals had a significant negative impact on teachers' turnover intention; when the principal's instructional leadership was stronger, the teacher's turnover intention was lower (He, 2020).

Transformational leadership can be defined as a leadership approach, which leaders could create visions for their followers through inspiration and motivation (Du et al., 2017). Burns (1978) believed that transformational leadership is superior to transactional leadership, a more complex and effective leadership. Also, most researchers regarded transformational leadership as an appropriate approach for today's effective schools (Anderson, 2017). Transformational leadership was more conducive to school management performance in schools with a tight organizational structure and relatively loose culture (Dong, 2017). In the words of Canadian scholar Leithwood, "Transformational leadership takes leadership as a constructive form. It focuses on arousing human potential, meeting higher-level needs, and enhancing the expectations of leaders and subordinates, motivating them to have a higher level of investment and performance" (Jovanović & Ćirić, 2016, p. 499). Leithwood applied transformational leadership theory to school organizations, aiming to help principals enhance the ability to solve problems through teamwork, establish a supportive, democratic and caring campus culture (Anderson, 2017). Transformational leadership positively and significantly affected the teachers' performance (Kartini et al., 2017). If the principal's leadership style

has been recognized as a transformational leadership style, the teachers' performance would be better in the school.

Further, principals' transformational leadership directly affected teachers' job attitudes, encouraging them stay in the profession (Thomas et al., 2020). Researchers in China conducted abundant empirical studies on the effect of principal's transformational leadership on school changes. Dong (2017) provided strategies of improving transformational leadership for the primary and middle school principals in rural areas focusing on collective benefits and visions. Moreover, transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on teachers' self-efficacy. Teachers' self-efficacy played a mediating role in the relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' organizational commitment, which meant the transformational leadership of principal influenced teachers' organizational commitment partly through teachers' self-efficacy (Liu & Kong, 2020).

Distributed leadership meant that there were multiple leaders in an organization at any time, and each person had a different role (Chen & Liu, 2018). The core assumption of distributed leadership was everyone had the leadership ability, which the organization also required at a specific time (García Torres, 2019). Studies indicated that distributed leadership was positively related to teachers' job satisfaction, contributing to teachers' retention in the United States and Singapore schools (García Torres, 2018, 2019). In Asian schools, researchers explored the situation of distributed leadership of primary school principals in Taiwan. Taiwan primary school principals created a trust culture by encouraging new teachers to introduce self-efficacy and implemented distributed

leadership by sharing school operational rights and responsibilities with the staff team (Hsieh & Weng, 2019). Besides, China's scholars Cheng and Zhang (2017) analyzed the performance and influencing factors of middle school principals' distributed leadership from an international perspective based on the 2013 data from the Teaching and Learning International Survey. Further, Cheng and Zhang (2017) found that middle school principals' distributional leadership has significant national differences; Shanghai and the other seven national principals are highly distributed leadership. There are also significant gender differences in principals' distributional leadership, the distributional leadership levels of female principals are relatively higher than male principals. In different school locations, the principal distributed leadership shows significant differences, and the fewer population paces where the school is, the higher principal's distributed leadership. The principal's distributed leadership is influenced by the school contextual variables and principals' characteristics and proves that the atmosphere of respect and trust plays an essential role in the distributed leadership.

Factors that had been identified related to teacher turnover included non-competitive salary, teacher qualification, working environment, teacher workload, the length of teacher tenure, school cohesion, motivation, school leadership, and organizational commitment (Allen et al., 2018; Ding, 2015; Fuller et al., 2016; Imran et al., 2017). Previous researchers like Geiger and Pivovarova (2018) also investigated teacher retention factors, including working conditions, teacher preparation, and teacher motivation. The schools where the teachers considered their working conditions as satisfactory had lower teacher attrition (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). Moreover, the

teachers who graduated from the traditional certification program had a higher retention rate than alternative certification programs (Van Overschelde & Wiggins, 2020; Zhang & Zeller, 2016;). Besides working conditions and preparation type, teachers' intrinsic values to choose to teach and stay in schools were related to teacher retention. Teachers with higher motivation were more likely to have higher job satisfaction and more likely to remain in the schools (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). In China, researchers (He, 2020; Li, 2019) found teachers' turnover intention was related to leadership level and characteristics.

Implications

The report of Statistical Bulletin of National Education Development in 2019 released by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China showed 281,200 kindergartens in China. Among them, 173,200 were private kindergartens, accounting for 62% of China's total number of kindergartens. Private kindergartens increased by 7,457 over the previous year, an increase of 4.50%. There were 47,138,800 children in kindergartens nationwide and 26,494,400 children in private kindergartens. The number of children in private kindergartens accounts for 56% of children's total number in kindergartens nationwide. The number of children in private kindergartens increased by 96,600, or 0.37% (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020). However, kindergartens lacked more than 3 million teachers in 2019. With the "comprehensive two-child" policy implementation, the kindergarten teachers' gap would be further increased in 2021 (*People's Daily Overseas Edition*, 2021). Private kindergartens are an important part of the kindergarten system. Still, the loss and shortage

of teachers were severe, resulting in a series of social problems, including children no school to go to and parents had to quit work to take care of their children at home (*People's Daily Overseas Edition*, 2021).

With globalization development, more and more private kindergartens begin to use English and Chinese as instructional language at school, becoming bilingual kindergartens. As part of private kindergartens, bilingual schools face a shortage of kindergarten teachers and a high turnover rate. As an essential manager and organizer of a school, its leadership style affected the teachers' motivation and retention intention (Williams, 2018). My study explored how to support principals in retaining teachers, especially high-quality teachers in bilingual kindergartens, with the perspective of leadership styles. The findings can provide insights for the principals on how to use their leadership strategies to support the teachers in retaining in the schools. Further, this study's results will potentially reduce teacher turnover and solve the problem of preschool teacher shortage facing the whole society members such as government and families.

Summary

Previous researchers (Allen et al., 2018; Ding, 2015; Fuller et al., 2016; Imran et al., 2017) have identified the factors related to teacher turnover included non-competitive salary, teacher qualification, working environment, teacher workload, the length of teacher tenure, school cohesion, motivation, school leadership, and organizational commitment. Studies from past 5 years suggested that one of the many possible causes of teacher turnover might be the principal's leadership characteristics (Fuller et al., 2018; Torres, 2016). Moreover, the study found that school leadership's improvement was

among the most important elements associated with corresponding reductions in teacher turnover (Kraft et al., 2016). Similarly, Chinese researchers (He, 2020; Li, 2019) found teachers' turnover intention was related to leadership level and characteristics. Teachers are more likely to stay in the school where the principal has high leadership and effective leadership characteristics. Teachers who were dissatisfied with the principal's leadership level and characteristics were more likely to leave their schools (He, 2020; Li, 2019). Instructional, transformational, and distributed leadership styles, as the most common leadership styles practiced by principals, were relevant or affected teacher intention to stay or leave school or the profession (He, 2020; Player et al., 2017; Qadach et al., 2020; Williams, 2018).

Section 2: The Methodology

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

I employed the qualitative method in this study. Hammarberg et al. (2016) explained it was appropriate to use qualitative methods to “answer questions about experience, meaning, and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant” (p. 499). The main question of this study was how teachers perceive the influence of principals’ leadership strategies on their decisions to keep working in or to leave China's bilingual kindergartens. Using a qualitative method I was able to develop an understanding of how principals’ leadership styles influence staff retention or attrition from teachers’ perspectives. According to Burkholder et al. (2016), the primary purpose of qualitative research is to describe phenomena that occurred. The qualitative approach was consistent with describing China’s bilingual kindergarten teachers’ decisions to remain in the profession or not and their perceptions of leadership styles, which was the purpose of this study.

In a qualitative study, researchers need to raise a specific problem worthy of study, collect data extensively around this problem, gradually understand the nature of the problem in describing and explaining the actual data, and then determine a theoretical framework (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Qualitative research tends to be a case study in specific design, and the methods of data collection mainly include observations, interviews, and document review among others (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Patton (1990) believed the profundity and detail of the qualitative approach typically came from a small

number of case studies. The particular purpose of this qualitative study determined my choice to use the case study design.

King et al. (2019) explained that two types of interviews commonly used in qualitative research (a) unstructured interviews and (b) semistructured interviews. In an unstructured interview, researchers ask open-ended questions to let the interviewees express their views and opinions on some things. Sometimes researchers may use this view as the basis for further research, especially when researchers know little about the possible results of the research problems. In semistructured interviews, researchers list the questions to be discussed in advance and stay adaptable and flexible in the process. Researchers ask questions that are closely related to the research topic in semistructured interviews. Both forms of interviews are helpful for understanding the actual thoughts of the interviewees and problems that the researchers did not think of in advance.

According to Rahi (2017), quantitative and qualitative methods are the current research method classifications. The quantitative method is used to answer research questions when factual data are required and when variables can be isolated and defined and linked to hypotheses before data collection (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Bloomfield and Fisher (2019) stated that quantitative research is based on positivism regarded social phenomena as independent, objective facts and does not involve individual, subjective attitudes and conditions. A quantitative research paradigm can be used to explore the causal relationship existing in social phenomena. Sampling and mathematical statistics are used to verify the hypotheses based on natural science research. The purpose of the current study was not to explore the relationship between principal leadership styles and

teacher retention; instead, I investigated teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership styles, which focused on one person's subjective understanding at a time. The primary question of this study was how teachers perceive their principals' leadership styles, which links to individual subjective attitudes and could not be answered with factual data. Therefore, a quantitative approach was not appropriate for this study.

Participants

The population for this study consisted of teachers working in a bilingual kindergarten located in the Songjiang district in Shanghai. I chose this school because of its high teacher turnover rate. The head of this school reported that the average annual teacher turnover rate in the past 3 years had reached 50%. All the participants in this study were employed full-time and had worked in the school for more than 1 year. The participants in this study were qualified teachers, meaning they had passed China's Preschool Teacher Qualification Exam.

According to Moser and Korstjens (2018),
the usually small sample size in qualitative research depends on the information richness of the data, the variety of participants (or other units), the broadness of the research question and the phenomenon, the data collection method (e.g., individual or group interviews) and the type of sampling strategy. (p. 11)

Based on these authors' estimation, phenomenological studies require fewer than 10 interviews. Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained that narrative studies needed one or two interviews, phenomenological research required three to 10 interviews, grounded theory studies needed 20 to 30 interviews, ethnography included one culture-sharing

group, and case studies needed five to six cases. In this qualitative phenomenological study, I focused on teachers' lived experiences within bilingual schools in China. Relying on the recommendation for phenomenological research, four teachers working at the study site school and four teachers who had left the school were interviewed.

I contacted participants by sending email invitations requesting their participation. A description of the purpose of the study and informed consent were included in the email. The participants were reminded that the research study was voluntary, and the information acquired would be kept confidential. I followed up with a reminder email 5 days after the first email invitation. If necessary, another follow-up reminder would have been sent to teachers via email after another 10 days.

The relationship between researchers and their research participants or informants is integral to the quality of the research output. According to Sun and Zheng (2019), the researcher-participant working relationship in qualitative research includes three aspects: the interaction between the researcher and the participants, such as trust, empathy, and emotional influence; the researcher's life experience, including cognitive attitude; and the identity between the researcher and the participants. Harvey (2017) noted that a deep level of trust needs to be established and carefully nurtured to sustain the researcher-participant working relationship. Establishing trust can be formalized using documented consent forms and codes of conduct as well as through informal behaviors and reassurances of the confidentiality and anonymity of the informant's involvement in the research. In this study, I used informed consent forms and provided reassurances of

confidentiality and anonymity to establish and sustain a good researcher-participant working relationship.

Data Collection

Creswell and Creswell (2018) listed the various data collection methods in qualitative research as observation, interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and documents. Among the qualitative data collection methods, interviews, which are more of a dialogue or interaction, seek to describe the meanings of central themes in the life world of the participants. Furthermore, the primary task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what participants say (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). According to the standardization of the interview process, there are three fundamental types of research interviews: structured, semistructured, and unstructured (Hammarberg et al., 2016). In the semistructured interview, questionnaires or interview questionnaires are used. In this type of interview, although the interviewers have specific control over the interview structure, they leave ample space for the interviewees to express their views and opinions. The nature of semistructured interviews allows researchers to explore, probe, and ask questions to clarify and illuminate a particular topic (McGrath et al., 2019). In this study, I conducted semistructured interviews with the participants to elicit their attitudes and opinions for a more profound insight into why teachers stayed at or left the school.

For the current investigation, teachers' interview responses constituted the data for the study. I conducted interviews by telephone in a natural setting convenient to the interviewees. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim afterward because this process protects against bias and provides a permanent record of what was

and was not said (see Moser & Korstjens, 2018). I ensured the participants' anonymity and provided them with an explanation of what the results of the study would be used for. The interviews times ranged from between 40 minutes to approximately 1 and a half hours in length.

McGrath et al. (2019) suggested that an interview guide should be developed in advance because the researcher might be asking the interviewees to reflect on matters that are potentially vital to them. McGrath et al. also pointed out a semistructured interview guide might include only one or a few predetermined questions, and the interviewer could probe into the interviewees' responses with follow-up questions. In the current study, the interviews with participants remained open and conversational. At the beginning of the interview, I started with an opening and easy questions to let participants feel comfortable. This approach helped to establish rapport. Once the relationship was established, the participants were asked to reflect on the school principal's leadership style and how it affected their decisions to stay or leave the school. The interview questions were exploratory, and I asked about background information, perceptions of principal leadership style/characteristics, the school's climate and culture, the role of the principal in retaining and mentoring teachers, and specific teacher support systems to keep teachers (see the Appendix C for the interview protocol). Descriptive, systematic, and reflective statements were captured in the audio recorded interviews, and transcriptions of the interviews were made afterwards.

According to Flick (2018), the role of the researcher in qualitative research is to attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of study participants, which involves asking

people to talk about things that might be very personal to them. My professional role at the time of this study was as a principal working in a bilingual kindergarten in Shanghai. I once was a teacher in a bilingual school, so the experiences of both a bilingual schoolteacher and principal supported my understanding of the study setting. Moreover, Flick pointed out that the researcher's primary responsibility was to safeguard participants and their data. I articulated the safeguarding mechanisms to the participants, which a relevant research ethics review board approved (the approval number for this study is 09-08-21-0741418) before the research began.

Data Analysis

I followed Moser and Korstjens's (2018) qualitative research data analysis suggestions in this study. This meant that I used a verbatim transcription that reported exactly what was said in the recorded interview to create a complete, written copy of the qualitative interview data. Once the transcribing was finished, I read it while listening to the recording and corrected any spelling or other errors. The transcript was also anonymized so that the participant could not be identified from anything said. Pauses, laughter, looks of discomfort, and punctuation were also inserted into the transcriptions as contextual information that affected the participant or added to the data. After completing the transcriptions, I created electronic files that could be retrieved and reviewed easily to organize the data.

Following the advice of Mai Skjott and Steffens (2019), I used two coding cycles in this study. An inductive approach was used to create initial categories and abstraction in the first coding cycle. After that, the key phrases or terms were underlined in the

process of reviewing data line by line. Based on this close examination of what emerged from the data, I made as many labels as needed. In the second-cycle coding process, categories and subcategories were established. I made a coding sheet in which I collected the labels and, based on my interpretation, clustered the labels in preliminary categories. After completing this, similar or dissimilar categories were compiled into broader, higher order categories. Each category was named using content-characteristic words. Then, I used abstraction by formulating a general description of the phenomenon under study: Subcategories with similar events and information were grouped as categories, and categories were grouped as common themes.

To enhance the credibility of data analysis and internal validity of study results, I presented verbatim quotes and used member checking in this study (see Varpio et al., 2017). Collins and Stockton (2018) explained that a discrepant case was one in which respondents' experiences or perspectives differed from the explanations emerging from the research. Discrepant cases can also open the data to multiple interpretations, and the researcher should search for discrepant information that runs counter to themes or analyses developed in the research (Rose & Johnson, 2020). In this study, I used discrepant cases to help elaborate and modify the themes in the later stages of the study after the data had been collected and analyzed. In addition, discrepant cases were explained separately to strengthen the general explanation of the typical cases in this study.

Limitations

The present study has certain limitations, so I have provided suggestions for future research. Although the qualitative approach was the most appropriate method and an interview was the most suitable research instrument for this study based on the nature of the research questions, there are weaknesses related to using this approach. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative interviews provide indirect information through participants' views and rely on respondents' ability to recall specific details accurately and honestly about their thoughts and opinions; therefore, data results might be misinterpreted by respondents' lies, inaccurate expressions, or inability to remember certain details. In this study, I interviewed eight teachers to describe their perceptions of the influence that principals' leadership styles have related to their retention decisions. The teachers' personal experiences and understandings of principal leadership styles affected the research findings. For future research, I would recommend collecting data from multiple sources. For instance, observations about the teachers' interactions with the principal, the principal's leadership practices, and teachers' behaviors in the natural setting could provide additional information when interpreting the interview data.

Further, the study's findings were collected through self-reported perceptions of principal leadership styles from eight teachers in one bilingual kindergarten. Future research could use sources such as principals and directors and multiple methods such as observations and focus groups on triangulating the data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In this respect, it could be helpful to include the principal's self-perception of his/her

leadership styles and observations of the principal's leadership practices in the data sources.

In addition, although the findings of this study revealed reasons for making teachers stay or leave a bilingual kindergarten and how bilingual kindergarten teachers perceived the principal leadership styles influenced their decisions to remain or leave their teaching positions, a future qualitative or mixed-method design could be used to examine the relationship of the perceived reasons/principal leadership styles and teacher retention or turnover. Also, prospective longitudinal studies could provide more evidence to address what predicts teachers' retention.

Lastly, the findings of this study are limited in generalizability. This study consists of relatively small sample size with eight teachers working in one bilingual kindergarten and discussed the same principal's leadership styles. Given the possible variations in working conditions, qualifications, and instructional programs within and across districts and cities in China, larger-scale studies with more participants in various contextual schools or locations are needed.

Data Analysis Results

This qualitative study project aims to explore how teachers perceive the influence of their principals' leadership styles on their decisions to stay or leave China's bilingual kindergartens. In this section, I present the study's setting, data collection and generation process, data analysis, the evidence to address the data's accuracy, the study's findings, and the project description.

Setting

This study was conducted in the Songjiang district in Southwest Shanghai. According to the Shanghai Bureau of Statistics (2022), the estimated population of Songjiang district is 1.59 million, which is the fourth largest population district in Shanghai. The community educates 50,317 students aged 2-6 in 149 kindergartens (Songjiang Education Bureau, 2021). Among the 149 kindergartens, the number of private kindergartens is 87, which takes up 58% of the entire early schools in Songjiang District and provides preschool education for 15,718 children in this district. Further, there is 7,532 staff working for the kindergartens in the district, and 38% of them are private kindergarten workers. The participants for this study were selected from one bilingual kindergarten, one of the district's private early schools. To maintain the confidentiality of the school, it is referred to as the researched school in this study. The researched school serves four grade levels for 207 children aged from 2 to 6 years old and has 40 full-time working teachers. The school principal reported a high teacher turnover rate that arrived average 50% in the past 3 years. Teachers who participated in this study were qualified, had full-time employment at the research school, and stayed for 1 or more years.

Data Collection

For this study, I interviewed eight teachers, four of them had left the researched school when I conducted the interview. The teachers participated in 1 to 2 hours of a telephone interview in a natural setting when they were available. Each interview's audio was recorded using an audio recording device, and all the audios were stored on my

password-protected computer and backed up on a password-protected cloud drive. There were no unusual circumstances encountered when collecting data.

Data Analysis

After I provided participants with opportunities to review and clarify their responses to the interviews when all interviews were transcribed, I began the coding process using Mai Skjott and Steffen's (2019) coding cycles. I started by breaking large bodies of text into smaller, more manageable units to organize the data. In the first coding cycle, I carefully read through the transcripts to get a feel for the entire database and wrote reflective notes on the margin. During the process of reviewing data line by line, the keywords, phrases, and sentences that described the interview questions were highlighted, which formed many pieces of basic meaning units. Then, I carefully identified these meaning units, gave a label to each unit, and clustered similar labels together after that. Next, I went back to my data and abbreviated the labels as codes. In the second cycle coding process, I reviewed the codes carefully to determine reoccurring patterns, which allowed me to inform categories and subcategories. The initial categories expanded when I repeatedly examined the data and classified each piece accordingly. After organizing the data, I combined similar categories to develop the main themes used to present the study results.

Results

Demographic profile of participants

Three out of the total of eight respondents were married, and five were single. The age range of the eight participants was 25-40 years. With respect to their educational

level, 100% of respondents had a bachelor's degree. Regarding work experience, three participants were with 1-5 years of early year teaching experience, while half of the participants had 5-10 years of early year teaching experience that accounted for the largest amount, followed by one participant with 10-20 years early year teaching experiences. Additionally, Teacher 3, Teacher 6, Teacher 7, and Teacher 8 had left the research school but still working in the teaching profession when I conducted the interviews with them. See Table 1 for demographic information of participants.

Table 1

Demographics of the Participants

Code	Marital Status	Age	Experiences	Years at Current School
Teacher 1	Single	25	3	3
Teacher 2	Married	28	5.5	2
Teacher 3	Single	29	6	1
Teacher 4	Married	39	17	3
Teacher 5	Single	26	4	1
Teacher 6	Married	31	8	3
Teacher 7	Single	27	5	1
Teacher 8	Single	26	4	1

When asked why they became a kindergarten teacher, five respondents mentioned their study experiences with a focus on their majors in preschool education. They mentioned the charm and interest of early childhood education they found when they were on the journey to get their Preschool Education bachelor's degrees. These five teachers explained they hope to find a job relevant to their majors in university and believe the programs they took at university have prepared them for a new kindergarten teacher. Teacher 7 stated,

Because my major in university is Preschool Education and I want to find a job fit with my major. I think it is wasting time if I have spent four years in the major but did not work in this profession. That's why I chose this job, becoming a kindergarten teacher after I graduated from the university.

In my interviews, 62% expressed that the traditional preparation program - university Preschool Education major drove them into the kindergarten teaching profession when asked why they became a kindergarten teacher.

Moreover, two teachers said they chose to work in kindergartens because they considered their personalities suitable for working in early year schools. Teacher 5 described,

I'm patient and gentle and always get along with young children. I don't know why I have ways to deal with various kids; perhaps I just fit for the kindergarten job because of my personality.

However, one teacher reported her reason for becoming a teacher because of kindergartens' "simple and less complicated working environment."

Common Themes

Seven themes emerged from the analysis of the data providing insights into some common teacher retention and attrition reasons and teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership styles on their retention or attrition decisions. Table 2 shows the categories of codes and common themes emerged from the data analysis process.

Table 2*Codes, Categories, and Common Themes*

Codes	Categories	Themes
parent meetings, child observation and records, lesson plans and evaluations, children's celebrations and activities, and paperwork for the government inspection	Workload	Work Environment with A Focus on Leadership Styles
Needs from the colleagues, feel supported, respect colleagues, communications and talk, share life stories, be listened and listen to colleagues, show concerns	Relationship with their colleagues	
Affirmation, direct orders, listen to teachers, communication, provide support, focus on goal, job distribution and task assignment, monitor and evaluation, be visible	Leadership practices	
Job promotion, upgrade to the next level, different position available, career development path, promotion plans	Career development prospects	Development Opportunities
Skill-based training, group discussion, demo lesson observation, peer observation, seminars or conferences, workshops, collective planning, certified programs	Professional development chances	
Basic salary, increased salary, performance bonus	Basic salary and Salary increment	Salary
marital status change, planning to move, stating to have a child, hoping to be more involved in their child's care and education, other job opportunities	Family Commute Spouse	Personal Reasons
Visit class, in the classroom, play with children in the classroom, communications in the classroom	Being in the classroom	Supporting Instruction
Lesson observation, feedback about the lesson plans and lessons, attend teachers' lesson planning meeting, listen to teachers' teaching ideas, teaching evaluation	Instructional supervision	
Coaching, mentoring, demo lesson, examples of teaching, instruction skills' workshop	Professional learning	
School goals and missions, school development plan, teacher development plan, school philosophy, action plan, develop guiding rules,	A strategic plan	Creating A Shared Vision
Involved in discussion, ideas can be listened, have voices in the process, feel helped, provide support in the process, find out a common solution, effective communication,	Collaborative decision-making	
Teacher involved, student involved, parent involved, community involved	Critical individual involvement	
Be listened, communication opportunity, face to face talk, teacher voice matters, transparent, open-door policy	Listening and open communication	Building Trustful Relationships
Thank you letter, say yes, public praise, shout-outs, oral	Recognition of their	

appreciation, handwritten notes	work and achievement
Care about teacher's emotion, feelings about work, provide support for life challenges, listen to teacher's life stories, showing empathy,	Showing personal care

After I analyzed the data, all the codes were categorized and general themes were developed. A chart was created to display the data and allow me to analyze and determine how each theme and corresponding codes answered each research question. Table 3 demonstrated how each theme aligns with each research question.

Table 3

Theme Alignment With Each Research Question

Research Question	Themes
What are the teachers' reasons to keep working in or leave China's bilingual kindergarten?	Work environment with a focus on leadership styles Development opportunities Salary Personal reasons
How do teachers perceive the influence of their principal's leadership strategies on their decisions to keep working in or to leave China's bilingual kindergarten?	Supporting instruction Creating a shared vision Building trustful relationships

Themes Related to RQ1

Work Environment With A Focus on Leadership Styles. In this study, all the respondents highlighted that the work environment was one of the primary reasons keeping teachers staying or making them leave the school. Three teachers commented they had a heavy workload, such as excessive teacher-parent communication, various

ways of student observation sheets, lesson plans and evaluations, preparing children's celebrations and activities, and paperwork for the government inspection. The teachers could not balance their life and work and felt stressed and overwhelmed during their job because of the heavy workload (Teacher 5 and Teacher 8). When asked the thoughts about the factors behind the school's high turnover rate, Teacher 8 said,

The second reason I believe is the intensive work. When I left that school, my workload was moderate; that is to say, it was acceptable. But as far as I know, their workload increased a lot after I left. They have to prepare more frequent children's reports by semester to monthly evaluation. To boost the admission, the teachers are required to design and participate in the school open house activity, which is usually held on weekends. Yes, so this is also the reason for causing them tremendous psychological pressure. Several of my previous colleagues at that school shared with me that most of them got the diseases like hyperthyroidism because of the heavy workload.

Out of eight participants, three respondents mentioned the comfortable and supportive relationship with their colleagues was the main reason to keep them stay in the school. Teacher 3 reported,

The teachers have their own class to manage, and there are no alternative ways for teachers to earn money except the standard salary at school. So we don't have much competition, and I enjoy discussing teaching or sharing life stories with my coworkers.

The pattern referring to good relationships with colleagues make teachers feel supported and satisfied with their schools, which leads to teacher retention. Positive relationships among faculty and staff could help ease teachers' stress and make them feel confident when the teachers meet challenges and difficulties. Teacher 7 stated,

The work environment is crucial to me, especially the relationship with my colleagues since I spend most of the day with them. Sometimes, it's challenging to deal with children's issues, and we have challenging parents. When I feel frustrated or depressed, my co-teachers and occasionally the teachers from the same grade will check with me about what's going on. They told me that they had the same experience before and sometimes even worse, which made me feel I was not alone or incapable of being an early childhood teacher.

Lastly, all the eight participants in this sample mentioned leadership style when describing why teachers choose to stay or leave a kindergarten. Unfit for the principal's leadership style, disliking the direct supervisor's communication, or disagreeing with the principal's method of managing staff when facing problems are the identified factors that make the teachers leave the schools (Teacher 2, Teacher 3, and Teacher 6). Teacher 2 shared,

The second primary reason I believe must be related to the leadership style of the direct leader. For example, the director of teaching is the lineal manager of the teaching department, and her daily work is directly related to us teachers. The new director's management model is different from the previous one, stricter and more arbitrary. Sometimes, she did not define the job role clearly, which led to

teachers' confusion about how to complete the assigned job and the teachers' frustration. So some teachers feel they are not adapt to her leadership style, then they just choose to leave the school.

On the contrary, the interviewed teachers, such as Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 5, said the experience like open communication with the supervisor, timely support from the principal, listening, and respect from the leaders made them remain in the school. Teacher 1 reported when interviewed what you thought the reasons making teachers stay in a bilingual kindergarten,

There is a leadership style I appreciate and the ways the leaders deal with the issues and problems I like. I remember being blamed heavily by a grandma because the boy fell on the cupboard and bumped his head with a deep cut. The child's injury made me sad, but the grandma's harsh words made me angry and hurtful. After receiving the grandma's complaint, my principal did not criticize me and even stood by my side to help me have conversations with the parents. She also taught me how to deal with this situation and comforted me with kindness and patience. I felt so touched, and I know that it's worth staying with such a leader in the school.

Development Opportunities. In terms of development opportunities, career development prospects and professional development chances were identified as two overarching reasons to keep or make the teachers leave their kindergartens. A total of eight respondents have mentioned these factors when asked their thoughts about the main reasons a teacher chose to stay or leave a bilingual kindergarten. Out of the eight

respondents, five teachers said they would leave a school if they could not see their career development prospects. Teacher 1 reported,

From my point of view, if I feel I don't have my career development paths or prospects in this kindergarten, or I don't get the growth I want, I will choose to leave the school. For me, it's very important to see the development opportunities in the place; I need to know that I can step forward if I keep working here or I have to leave and seek a new job.

Accordingly, five teachers responded they would stay in a school that could provide them with career growth opportunities. Teacher 7 stated, "If I choose to continue working there, there must be growth opportunities for me. The school can provide the classroom teachers like me various development paths, like moving to senior teaching positions."

As a usual way for organizations to provide employee job advancement and personal growth, Job promotion is regarded by staff to raise their level of responsibility and help them improve and advance. Promotion serves salary increase and as a mark of recognition of individual work performance. At school, teachers seek job promotions to raise their salaries, take up more responsibilities, enhance their career competencies, and boost their social status.

Furthermore, the teachers motivated by promotion increased job satisfaction and preferred to remain in their schools. However, teachers who experienced stagnation felt frustrated in their schools and looked elsewhere for career advancement. In this study, four participants stated they would leave their schools if they could now see job

promotion prospects. Also, three participants pointed out work promotion opportunity was a critical factor in making teachers stay in their schools. When asked what reasons you believed in making teachers stay in bilingual kindergartens, Teacher 2 stated,

I believe the school promoted some teachers, which made the teachers see the possibilities that they could be upgraded to be grade leaders or other leadership roles. If they knew that the school would provide job promotions for them if they kept working, the teachers would choose to remain in the school.

In addition, the respondents repeated professional development when asked about the reasons why teachers stay or leave their kindergartens. Five respondents in this study mentioned professional development when they explained the factors they believed made teachers keep working or leave their schools. Teacher 1 described,

I graduated with a preschool education bachelor, but I found I had to continue learning to deal with the various challenges in daily work. I hope to develop new skills to improve my teaching or support classroom management in the workplace, so I won't be tired of dealing with issues. However, the school did not provide us with development opportunities, even ordinary activities like professional conferences or seminars. I feel so frustrated sometimes since I just repeated using my experience but did not gain new knowledge, so I am scared I would be left behind in the teaching field. I know that some teachers choose to leave the school with this concern.

Professionals as teachers often voluntarily seek new learning, and they continually expand their knowledge and skills to implement best practices to support their

students and yield good outcomes. When discussing why teachers stayed in their schools, Teacher 5 stated, “the school can provide teachers new things to learn, like teaching strategies or skills, educational concepts, student behavior management. For me, I prefer to learn more about children’s psychology.”

Salary. In China, private kindergarten operators typically provide teachers with a basic monthly salary, year-end bonus, performance bonus by month or semester, and festival monetary benefits, which almost contribute to teachers' remuneration.

In this interview group, three respondents identified salary as one of the main factors behind teachers' leaving. Salary is usually paid per month at schools to ensure teachers afford their basic life. However, if the teacher's struggle with the limited salary or a better salary job position is available, they might consider moving to other schools or leaving the profession. Teacher 5 stated,

As a kindergarten teacher, you would feel unbalanced in mind because you spent so much time and effort in daily work, but the reward you get is much lower than you have cost, you must feel no motivation to continue with your work. Another thing is that when you learn from your colleagues or friends in other districts that their peers are in the same teaching position but get paid much more than the same positions here, you will feel suddenly unmotivated to keep working here and want to leave the school.

However, two respondents pointed out they cared about salary but had more concerns with the salary increment. Teacher 8 explained,

The first reason why the teachers leave their schools is the problem of low salary. But why do I have to mention the salary here? The problem is not that I want to leave the kindergarten because of the low wage; the problem is the salary increment mechanism makes the teachers feel doubtful and have no confidence in the future rewards. We don't know why some staff gets the salary increase and what we can do to get the paid increment. There is no clear and standard salary increment mechanism to direct us to the right the correct way. So this is a point for us to consider leaving the school.

Overall, the interview findings suggested that low salaries could lead to teachers' turnover in bilingual kindergartens. Further, the finding in this interview shows unclear or unfair salary increment policy may tend to influence teachers' work motivation and satisfaction. These findings indicated that increasing salaries and a fair salary increment system could be effective strategies for leaders and operators to motivate and retain teachers in private kindergartens.

Personal Reasons. The last theme used to identify the reasons making teachers stay or leave bilingual kindergartens was personal reasons. Teachers in this sample explained personal reasons, such as marital status change, planning to move, stating to have a child, or hoping to be more involved in their child's care and education. Teacher 2 described, "Based on the experiences of teachers who have left their positions in my kindergarten, the first reason may be due to their reasons. The teachers are not residents; they choose to move back to their hometowns." Also, Teacher 4 stated when asked her thoughts on the factors behind the teacher turnover behaviors; the main factor is the

family reason. Two colleagues left my school because they got married, and their husbands' work locations were far from their schools. Another teacher came back to work from maternity leave and found she could not adjust to the working pace and felt very stressed, so she chose to leave.

To better understand the reasons making teachers leave or stay in their school, I am also seeking to explore how teachers perceive the influence of their principals' leadership styles on their decisions to leave or remain in the bilingual kindergarten. In this interview group, all eight respondents mentioned leadership when asked to identify the teacher turnover or retention factors. Further questions focusing on principal leadership styles were provided to interview the participants to understand better their perceptions of principals' leadership styles and teacher retention. After analyzing the interview data, the following themes emerged as the teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership styles' influence on their leaving or staying in bilingual kindergartens: supporting instruction, creating a shared vision, and building trustful relationships.

Themes Related to RQ2

Supporting Instruction. As I reviewed the interview scripts and analyzed data, instructional support became distinct when the participants described their perceptions of principal leadership practices. Teacher interviewees have identified “being in the classroom,” “instructional supervision,” and “professional learning” as the primary principal's leadership practices to support teachers' instruction. Principals play a critical role in ensuring the school's teaching quality and student learning. Classroom instruction lets the principal know where and how the teacher's instruction and student learning are

happening. Just as children in the class need support from teachers, class teachers need the support of their principal. A principal could provide the necessary support and guidance to ensure quality instruction occurs. Teachers expect the principal to be in the classroom and available because it allows for teachers to get appropriate support and helps principals understand their needs (Teacher 4 and Teacher 5). As Teacher 2 reported,

I did not feel my principal helped me in my class. She usually visits my class at noon when she is not busy and just takes a look and then leaves. I hope she can be present in the classroom to know what's happening in my class, especially since I have two students with serious discipline issues during lesson time and my teaching partner is absent for sickness. I reported the problem to the leader, but she told me that I could talk with the parents. But, this is not my expectation, and the principal would know my real needs if she could be in my class.

Instructional supervision requires principals to conduct frequent observations of classroom instruction and provide feedback about instructional practices and their impact on students. It is vital to have instructional supervision because teachers can benefit from outside and professional perspectives on their practice and glean ideas for better instruction from the feedback. In this study, respondents such as Teacher 3 and Teacher 6 have reported their needs for instructional supervision to understand better and improve their teaching practices and skills. Teacher 6 stated, "I don't know my teaching level and whether my teaching methods are effective. I hope my principal can supervise my lesson and give me feedback because a principal should be an expert in teaching." Also, Teacher

3 said, “I want to develop my teaching skills better, and I believe my principal can direct me where I should improve if she can supervise my class.”

In addition to “being in the classroom” and “instructional supervision,” “professional learning” is the frequent high repetition by the participants in the interviews. In most cases, teachers have an innate desire to learn and grow professionally. It is a helpful way for principals to support teachers’ instruction by providing professional learning opportunities. Teachers can increase their knowledge of the academic subjects they teach and their expertise in the teaching field. Also, they can get confidence in the work they are doing.

Moreover, professional instructional learning allows teachers to develop new skills while honing and improving old skills. For beginning teachers like Teacher 1, professional learning on instructional strategies helped her feel more supported and valued at the start. She mentioned,

Honestly, I felt worried and scared when I received the Jing-Hang Grand River project required to implement the STEAM concept since I’m not familiar with STEAM. Luckily, the school invited an experienced STEAM teacher as a mentor to guide us to conduct the project. We expanded our knowledge through her workshops and developed new teaching skills from her demo lessons.

Besides the mentor program mentioned by Teacher 1, Teacher 4, as a veteran teacher explained, professional learning allows her to exchange ideas, best practices, and stories, get profound learning experiences, and have time for self-reflection.

Creating a Shared Vision. A shared vision serves as an anchor for the whole school community, placing a purpose upon the school's goal-setting activities. With the goal and destination in mind, everyone involved in the school community needs to develop a map that leads them there. A shared vision is crucial for everyone because all the members become parts of the process, understanding and believing in their roles in the day-to-day pursuits of school improvement. In addition, a shared vision could establish consistency in the curriculum and teaching. This consistency supports students' learnings because teachers reinforce the exact expectations and effective practices. Principals need to have a vision or a picture of what they want their schools to be, where the staff needs to arrive, and what their students to achieve. In this study, participants mentioned, "a strategic plan," "collaborative decision-making," and "critical individual involvement" as the leading practices for principals' creating a shared vision.

A strategic plan not only articulates a shared vision, effectively organizes schools and their staff but also aids a school's board with governance decisions and provides direction for the future. In China, the Professional Standards for Principals of Compulsory Education Schools issued by the Ministry of Education in 2013, the Professional Standards for Kindergarten Principals, and the Professional Standards for Principals of Normal High Schools published in 2015 indicate leading the development of the school as the principal's primary professional responsibility, and points out the specific requirements of the principal's knowledge and ability in formulating the school strategic plan. Respondents in this study explicitly stated how vital a school's strategic plan is to them.

The principal should provide the school's three-year or five-year strategic plan for us to build an image of the school's future and know how far we can move forward in this school. Also, the strategic plan can demonstrate a principal's leadership since she is the director making the development blueprint.

Specifically, I want to know the teacher development part of the plan and I can consider it's worth staying here or not.

Teacher 1 shared her perception above. Also, Teacher 6 reported, "the strategic plan reflects a principal's leadership level at some point. If we teachers can find the future development path and know about the action plans, we would have more confidence to continue working in our school."

Collaborative decision-making in creating a shared vision ensures teachers have more ownership of the school's direction and a more outstanding commitment to its success. Teachers who feel left out or believe that others have greater access and opportunities to influence decisions can create tensions and lose confidence in their work. In this interview group, participants mentioned collaborative decision-making "increased her job satisfaction and morale" (Teacher 7), "heightened their sense of empowerment" (Teacher 4 and Teacher 5), and "felt greater ownership of school goals and priorities when she had a stake in the decision" (Teacher 2).

In most cases, the development of the school vision will be led by the school leader; however, a school where the principal and the important community members like teachers are in disagreement will be an unhappy place where much energy is wasted rather than focusing on the critical purpose of improving learning for the students.

The analysis of the interview findings revealed that teachers felt empowered, self-motivated, and increased confidence in continuing working in their schools when they experienced creating a shared vision.

Building Trustful Relationships. During data analysis, building trustful relationships with principals was crucial when teachers perceived the leadership styles' influence on their decisions to stay or leave. Participants in this study suggested principals build a trustful relationship with them by "listening and open communication," "Recognition of their work and achievement," and "showing personal care."

Teachers want to be heard and understood by their leaders in the day-to-day work. When teachers feel that their voices are listened to and supported in their attempts to make innovations, they tend to be more active practitioners in the classroom and produce better results. Teacher 4 hoped she could be listened to by the principal, "I become so frustrated and start to doubt myself because my principal always neglects my voices. No matter my ideas about teaching or children's activities, my expressions cannot be heard, and I think, am I awful?" For teachers and school leaders, a mutual understanding of the obstacles faced in school often leads to better decision-making and outcomes. Open communications about the teaching, challenging parents or children, assigned jobs even school development strategies to increase teachers' commitment to their work and trust relationship with school leaders. Teacher 5 stated, "I feel close to my principal when she communicates with me. We get mutual understanding through the communications most of the time, which encourages me to meet the challenges."

Like any profession, teachers want to feel like their work is yielding results. They want to feel successful and know they are doing a good job. When principals recognize their work, highlight their success, show their trust in them, and value their hard work.

Teacher 8 described,

I hope my principal can see my efforts in this project and acknowledge my work. You don't know how much energy I have spent on the project, which is newly developed and has limited resources. I would feel it is more worthy of the school leaders can recognize my efforts.

Teacher 5 chose to leave the school where she felt not acknowledged by the leaders,

I feel what I have done is useless at that school. Even if I don't have good teaching skills, I tried to improve my class management. But my principal did not see that I only pay attention to my poor lesson instruction and feel very depressed.

Out of eight respondents, six stressed that the principal's personal care made them feel trusted and enhanced their connections with the principal. Teachers interviewed mentioned the principal care included "asking her about the feelings of her work" (Teacher 5), "talk about their interests in life" (Teacher 2), "awareness of her emotion change" (Teacher 4), "identify her strengths and areas needed to be improved" (Teacher 6), "check with her when having problems" (Teacher 7); "share challenging or exciting stories (Teacher 8).

Various factors have been identified to contribute to teacher retention. This study demonstrated work environment with a focus on leadership styles, development opportunities, personal reasons, and salary and benefits were the main reasons Chinese

teachers stay or leave their bilingual kindergartens. In addition, principal leadership styles play an essential role in teachers' decisions to remain or quit. In this study, the teachers interviewed described their perceptions of the influence of principal leadership style, emphasizing supporting instruction, creating a shared vision, and building trustful relationships the threefold.

Discrepant Case

The results above showed the factors that bilingual kindergarten teachers self-reported making them stay or leave their schools. In addition, these findings demonstrated teachers' perceptions of their principal leadership styles that influenced their decisions to remain or leave their current positions in a bilingual kindergarten. During the interview, teachers framed their responses to fit their principals' leadership styles. However, three respondents included a different perception regarding their principals that influenced their retention decisions would not be considered: principals' personality. Although researchers such as Purnomo et al. (2020) have identified principals' personality that could influence leadership effectiveness, teachers' performance, and students' achievement, the data did not fit my research questions that focus on teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership strategies. The following discrepant cases provided additional information about bilingual kindergarten teachers' perceptions of staying or leaving their schools. Teacher 1 expressed, "I don't like the principal's personality; she is conservative and always reluctant to receive new ideas no matter about teaching changes or children's celebration activities." Teacher 3 first mentioned the principal's personality when asked about her perception of the principal's

role in the teachers' retention, "if she (the principal) is extrovert and friendly, it will be much easier for us to approach her and establish a good relationship with her." Related to principals' personality, Teacher 4 said,

One of the reasons I stayed in that school is the principal's personality charm. I admire the attitude she shows to the people around her and how she deals with issues. No matter how strange or stupid the ideas or opinions put up by the teachers, she will never use only "no" to stop our expression but give us detailed explanations or suggestions.

After analyzing the data collected in this project study, four themes were developed to answer the question of what reasons are making them stay or leave a bilingual kindergarten. In addition, participants shared their perceptions of principals' leadership strategies' influence on their decisions to stay or leave their schools, resulting in three themes from their perceptions. Besides the data explained for these three themes, some respondents reported their perceptions unrelated to the research questions in this study. These discrepant cases have been displayed separately.

Salient Data

An area disclosed from the data is that bilingual kindergarten teachers' needs haven't been met. This area was related to the instructional support and well-organized management from their direct supervisors - year group leaders. Three respondents reported that they had many opportunities to work directly with their year group leaders but did not receive support and felt disappointed in the leaders' reactions. Teacher 4 mentioned her year group leader, as her direct superior, had more impact on her work

than the principal since she had more chances to access the leader. Teacher 4 wanted instructional support, including peer observation or year group collaborative planning, as she stated, "when can I observe my colleagues' lessons? I want to get inspiration or teaching knowledge, especially from the teachers in the same group." Teacher 5 shared similar perceptions but added that "my year group leader always asks us to focus on our class management and tells us there is not enough time to visit different classes." Besides, Teacher 6 felt confused when her year group leader distributed jobs within the year group by saying, "I can't understand why she assigned jobs in that way. It seems like increasing repetitive work and wasting time." Teacher 7 also expressed similar feelings and pointed out the inconsistency of giving tasks,

The year group leader asked us to finish this job by this Friday, but she is likely to change that job the next day! I believe if she can improve her management skill so our work will be more efficient.

Instructional support and well-organized management from teachers' direct supervisors did not directly fit with the research questions, as this study focuses on the principal leadership styles. Nevertheless, these factors were perceived as necessary, and I included them in the project proposal in Section 3.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

In the words of Korstjens and Moser (2018), "the quality criteria for all qualitative research are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability". In this study, credibility was ensured by memberchecking. After the interview data were transcribed, the data briefs and the copy of the transcript were sent to the participants for their review.

The participants were asked if they had questions or concerns with the data. Moreover, the participants received a copy of the analyzed data, including the analysis process and identified themes. Also, the participants were asked if the themes made sense to them. This member-checking process allowed participants to review the documents and confirm accuracy, which also helped me confirm my interviewees' data interpretation.

During this study, I established transferability by providing a thick description of my experiences throughout the research process, which Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended. The thick description technique in this study means describing where the interviews occurred, the possibility of participants interviewing work, and other aspects of data collection that help provide a more prosperous and fuller understanding of the research setting.

In addition to transferability, dependability was obtained by having an outside researcher conduct an inquiry audit on my study. The external researcher is a vice-professor from a university in Shanghai, with her research area focusing on early childhood education. She examined the processes of data collection, data analysis, and the research study results to confirm the accuracy of the findings, which ensured the data itself supported the findings.

Lastly, an audit trial was used to establish confirmability in this study. I detailed the process of data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the data.

Summary

I explored the perceptions of teachers in regard to the reasons making them stay or leave a bilingual kindergarten and the influence of their principals' leadership styles on

their retention decisions. These perceptions were framed through the conceptual framework from leadership theory focusing on three leadership styles: instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and distributed leadership. Two research questions guided this study, and a qualitative case study design was conducted.

The first research question in this study addressed teachers' perceptions of the reasons making bilingual kindergarten teachers stay or leave their positions. Four themes, including a work environment focusing on leadership styles, development opportunities, salary, and personal reasons, were developed after coding and categorizing the data. Participants described the work environment as an essential factor in choosing to stay or leave a school. Workload, relationship with their colleagues, and leadership practices were frequently mentioned during the interview. Recent evidence from research relevant to teacher retention and work environment or conditions demonstrated school working conditions such as teacher workload and teacher cooperation were strongly associated with teacher job satisfaction (Sims, 2020; Toropova et al., 2021). Also, teachers with lower self-reported working conditions like relationships with colleagues and supervisors tend to leave or move (Grant et al., 2019).

Among the development opportunities, job promotion was acknowledged by participants as an attractive factor making them stay. This finding aligns with Bolapejum and Emmanuel (2018) 's research, which showed job promotion was positively related to teachers' retention in Nigerian secondary schools. The teachers explained they got motivated to work by job promotion since more pay and promotion had social prestige, which benefited their occupation development. The researchers suggested that providing

teachers with professional development chances was an effective strategy for school leaders to retain teachers (Nguyen et al., 2020).

The second research question examined how teachers perceived their principals' leadership strategies in their decisions to stay or leave their schools. Participants in this study reported the most influential leadership strategies from the principal included supporting instruction, creating a shared vision, and building trustful relationships. Supporting instruction in this study was described as "being in the classroom," "instructional supervision," as well as "professional learning." As Chen (2018) explained, the aims of instructional supervision include evaluating teaching performance, providing objective feedback to teachers, identifying and solving teaching problems, and fostering teachers' teaching strategies and skills.

In this study, participants mentioned "a strategic plan," "collaborative decision-making," and "critical individual involvement" when describing the applicable leadership practices to create a shared vision. Researchers such as Nugraha et al. (2020) have found principals succeeded in improving teachers working performance and competencies through their well-organized strategic plan. Also, these findings partly echoed the findings of Qadach et al. (2020), who identified the impact of shared vision on teachers' intent to leave from the 1,700 elementary school teachers' survey. Specific leadership practices, including "listening and open communication," "recognition of their work and achievement," and "showing personal care," were advised when participants perceived the principal's leadership strategies for building a trustful relationship with the teachers. Researchers claimed transformational leaders motivated open communication

and listening to individual needs (Thomas et al., 2020) and directly impacted creating positive atmospheres in Chinese kindergartens (Wang et al., 2019).

Project Deliverable

The project outcome is a 3-day professional development for bilingual kindergarten principals based on the themes that developed in this study. This 3-day professional development was designed to help bilingual kindergarten principals to support and retain high-quality teachers. The principals who attend the 3-day professional development will learn: (a) the reasons making the teachers remain or leave a bilingual kindergarten; (b) the key characteristics of leadership styles focusing on instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and distributed leadership; (c) how teachers perceive principals' leadership styles influence their decisions to stay or leave a bilingual kindergarten, and (d) how to use effective leadership strategies to retain the teachers.

Section 3: The Project

Silva (2016) defined leadership as “the process of interactive influence that occurs when, in a given context, some people accept someone as their leader to achieve common goals” (p. 3). In the school context, principal leadership refers to principals engaging school staff in activities to achieve the school's goals (Paletta et al., 2017). In this qualitative study, I addressed the problem of low teacher retention in a bilingual kindergarten in Shanghai. Eight teachers were interviewed regarding their perceptions of the influence of principals’ leadership styles on their decisions to remain or leave their teaching positions at the study site.

Results from the data analysis revealed that specific principal leadership strategies influenced teachers’ decisions to stay or leave the kindergarten. These leadership strategies included supporting instruction, creating a shared vision, and building trustful relationships. Most of the interviewed teachers reported that they did not feel supported by the principal and stressed the need for a trusting relationship with leaders. Based on the results, I created a professional development project that, if implemented, could help the principal and the study site school to increase the teacher retention rate. In this section, I provide the goals of the project, rationale for the chosen design, literature review, project description, evaluation, and implications.

The project for this study is a professional development program for bilingual kindergarten principals. Vice principals, administrators, and directors of the bilingual kindergartens, and human resource department staff from organizations that operate the bilingual kindergartens will be invited to attend the training program. This development

program consists of a 3-day workshop that focuses on principal leadership strategies to support teacher retention. Principals from bilingual kindergartens face severe challenges in retaining high-quality teachers, supporting teachers' instruction, and building trustful relationships with them in daily school life. In this professional development program, I emphasize effective leadership strategies to help teacher retention. Principals will learn to use instructional support and build trusting relationships to address and accommodate teachers' needs.

Rationale

Creating a professional development program allowed me the opportunity to provide training to address the problem of this study. The data analysis indicated critical areas to support teacher retention with a focus on principal leadership strategies. The key areas included the need for supporting teachers' instruction and building trusting relationships with teachers. I selected the project genre of a professional development program to address the issues and concerns raised by the study participants because these key areas relate to the improvement of principals' leadership and contribute to supporting principals' efforts to retain teachers. The professional development program was the most suitable genre for addressing principals' strategies for improving the teacher retention rate at the study site. With this project, I targeted bilingual kindergarten principals facing the challenge of high teacher turnover and the difficulty of retaining teachers.

The content of this professional development program was based on the results of the data analysis displayed in Section 2. I found that the teachers' perceptions of principal leadership strategies influenced their retention decisions. Bilingual kindergarten

principals need a professional development program to learn how their leadership strategies affect teachers' decisions to stay or leave and how to use principal leadership strategies to support the teachers' work and life at school. The principals also need to understand the foundations of effective leadership strategies for increasing teacher retention and gain new insights relevant to principal leadership. This professional development program will provide current bilingual kindergarten principals with the knowledge and skills to support teachers' instruction, build a trustful relationship with the teachers, and increase teacher retention at their schools.

Review of the Literature

The goal of this project study was to support the principal of a bilingual kindergarten in retaining high-quality teachers. By analyzing the interview data from the participants, I determined that the study site could benefit from a professional development program that emphasizes improving the leadership strategies currently used by the principal. This project was influenced by social support theory and the theory of relational trust. According to Lam (2019), social support is an individual- or group-centered resource node composed of interpersonal communication and social interaction and expressed as emotion, material, information, behavior, and other means. Social support can be either the intimate relationship acquired or perceived by individuals or groups from various interactions or the external subjective and objective resources. In a school context, the principal plays a critical role in providing multiple support for teachers, and social support from principals becomes a necessary resource perceived by teachers (Maas et al., 2021).

Relational trust (sometimes referred to as interpersonal trust) was defined as “a person’s willingness to participate in a relationship that involves a certain risk or potential to become vulnerable to another person” (Kolleck, 2021, p. 3). Relational trust was identified as having five dimensions: individual attitudes, time, professional and organizational proximity, power and diversity, and regionality (Kolleck, 2021). In school settings, building relationships of trust has been acknowledged as affecting school effectiveness and improvement in the literature (Arar, 2019; Fitria, 2018). Based on the findings of the current study, social support regarding instructional support from principals and the relational trust between principals and teachers were perceived by the participants to influence their decisions to stay or leave their teaching positions at the bilingual kindergarten.

I examined scholarly, peer-reviewed publications published over the last 5 years for this literature review. These resources related to the the genre and content of the professional development project and the study findings from Section 2. I used the Walden University Library to complete the searches and access the following databases: Educational Resources Information Clearinghouse, SAGE, Education Source, Academic Search Complete, EBSCO, Emerald, and ProQuest. The keywords and phrases used in the search included *professional development*, *professional development for principals*, *social support at school*, *social support from the principal*, *principal support*, *instructional support*, *instructional strategies*, *trust relationship at school*, and *principal/administrator/leader-teacher relationships*.

Defining Professional Development

According to Gubbins and Hayden (2020), professional development refers to a wide variety of specialized training and continuing education to improve individuals' skills or develop new knowledge in their profession and keep them updated on current trends. The forms of professional development included formal degree programs or courses, educational certificates or accreditation programs, meetings, conferences, workshops, seminars sponsored by professional organizations, university-school partnerships, or professional development school programs, etc. For this project, I used workshops as principals' ongoing learning opportunities to improve their leadership strategies and develop their knowledge in practical ways to retain teachers. The impact of professional development has been summarized as follows: increasing teachers' job satisfaction; teaching knowledge, instructional skills, work attitudes, and beliefs; classroom practice; reflective competence; creating collaborative ethos within organizations; enhancing student learning outcomes (Borg, 2018); and improving principal's leadership practices on instruction and positive school change (Miller et al., 2016). The goal of this project was to enhance principals' leadership strategies regarding teachers' instruction and school relationships, which may result in increased teacher retention at the study site.

Professional Development for Teachers and Principals

There is robust literature on professional development, most of which relates to teachers' professional development focusing on "the quality of teachers and helping teachers become more proficient in their respective fields" (Martin et al., 2017, p. 64).

For instance, Bragg et al. (2021) reviewed and investigated the effective practices of facilitating online professional development designs for teachers to improve their content and pedagogical knowledge. Researchers have also examined how professional development improved teachers' teaching and found that high-quality professional development should focus on content knowledge and require collective participation, intensity, and the use of coaches (Kennedy, 2016). Additionally, enhancing students' learning achievement, creativity, and motivation through teachers' professional development is a popular topic in recent studies (Bicer & Capraro, 2016; Conradt & Bogner, 2020; De Naeghel et al., 2016; Didion et al., 2020).

Principals play a critical role in improving teachers' development, students' learning, and school change. Introduced a principal professional development program intended to strengthen principals' practices in instructional leadership, human capital management, and organizational leadership, which is expected to improve school outcomes, teacher outcomes, and student achievement (Herrmann et al., 2019). Although the program conducted by the Institute of Education Science was proven not to affect student achievement, school climate, teacher retention, and teachers' perception of principal instruction feedback during the implementation period, suggestive evidence was provided that "professional development focused on principals' instructional leadership could help improve student achievement" (Herrmann et al., 2019). For novice principals, effective mentoring focuses on the three skills: diagnosis, intervention, and inference based on professional core knowledge, practical experience, self-awareness, and

reflective ability. The novice principal mentoring and professional development program was identified as a successful professional development (Pariente & Tubin, 2021).

Moreover, principals and school administrators indicated that professional development could directly influence their professional knowledge, working attitudes, and practices (McCracken, 2017). Additionally, researchers found an in-service principal professional development program named, Inspired Leadership, impacted teacher effectiveness, which in turn increased student math achievement and decreased teacher turnover (Steinberg & Yang, 2022). Based on the previous research findings and the data analysis results in Section 2, I created a professional development program focusing on principal leadership strategies that will be provided for the principals to educate them on effective practices to enhance teaching quality, teacher collaboration, and school cohesiveness, which in turn will increase teacher retention at the study site school.

Principal Support

It is widely recognized that principals are responsible for improving teaching and learning activities at their schools; hence, a variety of principal support has been previously researched to achieve these goals. For instance, principals' creation of organized professional learning activities to support teachers' professional development to improve teaching quality have been studied (Karacabey, 2021). According to Olsen and Huang (2018), principal support and teacher cooperation were strongly associated with teachers' job satisfaction. Hinson (2018) also explored transformational leadership, perceived principal support, and collective efficacy and found that perceived principal support through transformational leadership could positively affect teacher job

satisfaction. Principal support can also directly affect teacher turnover intention, and teacher job satisfaction can significantly mediate the effect (Al-Mahdy & Alazmi, 2021). Both directly and indirectly, principal support can prevent teacher burnout and foster teachers' work engagement through emotions (Slišković et al., 2019).

Researchers have found principal support contributes to building a positive school climate (Adams & Olsen, 2019; Castro Silva et al., 2017). Castro Silva et al. (2017) examined the relationship between principals' support and teacher collaboration, finding that principals' emotional and informational support and support for professional development could increase teachers' engagement in collaboration activities. The authors indicated the vital role of principals' support in creating a cohesive school atmosphere. In addition to the influence on teachers' professional development, job satisfaction, and school climate, the principals' support of student psychological needs was investigated by Adams and Olsen (2019). The researchers discussed how principals used conversations with teachers to support student psychological needs, which influences the teaching features and learning environment.

The findings of the current study indicated that teachers perceived principal support was influential in their retention decisions. This support included being visible, supervising instruction and providing feedback, providing professional learning opportunities, engaging teachers in the decision-making process, etc. During the professional development program, I will use research-based evidence to inform principals about teachers' needs, what should be provided to support teachers' needs, and how to support teachers effectively in their daily schoolwork.

Principal-teacher Relationships

School leadership literature has repeatedly identified trust as critical for creating positive school culture (Lesinger et al., 2018; Senol & Lesinger, 2018). A school culture or climate with a strong feeling of trust could encourage the good performance of teachers (Fitria, 2018) and predicted students' study engagement, creativity, and task performance (Pachler et al., 2019) as well as improved student achievements (Arar, 2019). Establishing a trustful relationship at a school falls to the school community stakeholders, including teachers, students, school principal/administration/leaders, and parents. Building trusting and healthy professional relationships between all parties usually begins at the top with the school principal. Trusting the principal directly affects teachers' perceptions of their leaders' caring and played an essential role in fostering student learning (Louis & Murphy, 2017). Hendawy Al-Mahdy et al. (2021) found that principals building a trustful climate at school could encourage teachers' engagement in professional learning, which benefits teachers and school development. Additionally, research focused on teachers' trust in principals has indicated the positive role of trust in school improvement, including teacher development and student outcomes. For instance, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2017) pointed out trust was a critical mediating variable of principal leadership and student achievement. Principals were responsible for building and sustaining trusting relationships, which contributed to teachers' collaboration and students' learning.

Moreover, robust research on school leadership explored the role of teacher trust in the relationship between principal leadership practices, teacher development, and

student learning. For instance, Li et al. (2016) examined the relationships between principals' leadership, trust, and teacher professional learning and found teacher trust played a mediated role between principal leadership and teacher learning. The authors suggested that principals' leadership indirectly influenced teacher professional learning through teacher trust. Specifically, in various leadership styles, large-scale empirical studies have been conducted recently to test teacher trust's role. Karacabey et al. (2022) analyzed data from 1,200 teachers in Turkey and found teacher trust mediated the relationship between principals' instructional and transformational leadership and teacher professional learning. The mediated role of teacher trust was also found by Talebizadeh et al. (2021). They analyzed the survey data from 886 teachers in 121 Iranian primary schools and indicated that the relationship between principals' learning-centered leadership and teacher professional learning was mediated by teacher trust and knowledge sharing practice. The authors explained that principals who developed teacher trust could enhance teacher learning. In addition, researchers identified the moderating role of teacher trust in principals in the relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' commitment and innovative practices (Kilinc, 2022) and between servant leadership practices and organizational health (Tasker-Mitchell & Attoh, 2020).

In addition to examining the role of teacher trust at school, researchers tried to discover how principals built and sustained trust from teachers' perceptions of principals' practices. For instance, Bukko et al. (2021) analyzed the data from interviewing teachers and indicated that principals demonstrated that actions including benevolence, openness, honesty, reliability, and competence could create and support a high trusting climate at

school. Nevertheless, the teachers interviewed by Balyer (2017) reported that they did not trust their principals, including principals' leadership role in a school, administrative implementations, and personality. The authors asserted that teachers lacked trust in their principals and provided suggestions for principals to build and support trust. Based on the previous literature findings and the results displayed in Section 2 of this study, principals' leadership practices, including listening and open communication, recognition of teachers' work and achievement, and showing regard to teachers, contribute to fostering and supporting teachers' trust in principals and build a trustful relationship. I will include the strategies that foster principal-teacher trusting relationships in professional learning, and principals will learn trust-building skills.

Project Description

This project is a 3-day professional development for bilingual kindergarten principals at the research site school district. The project will address the problem of the high teacher turnover rate currently at the bilingual kindergarten. This development program will explore using principal leadership strategies to enhance teacher retention rate, focusing on instructional support and trustful relationship building. In addition to principals, viceprincipals, directors, and administrators from the organizational human resources department will be invited to attend the training and learn the leadership strategies to retain teachers. The training materials, schedule, and evaluation plan will be included in the program and found in Appendix A.

Needed Resources and Existing Supports

The needed resources for this project include participants' time, room and technical facilities for the training, and training materials. Principals and other educators invited to attend the professional development need to allocate their time, 3-day in total, to engage in the training activities. A conformable room accommodating to the number of the attendees, technical facilities such as laptop, projector, and internet access needs to be provided for the training. The existing supports come from the organization that owns four bilingual kindergartens, including the research site school in Shanghai. The administrator from the human resource department of this organization will arrange the meeting space and provide the needed technical equipment for the training. To implement the professional development, I would prepare the training contents, materials, and activities and share all the copies with the participants.

Potential Barriers

The allocated time for the principals and other school administrators invited to attend the workshop would be the critical potential barrier to conducting this training. Ideally, professional development could occur during non-instructional days, such as the induction period typically arranged before each school year or the days already planned for professional learning. If this is not possible, the principals and other leaders need to share their duties with appropriate staff or plan their time accordingly to attend the training held during instructional days. To be flexible with principals, this professional development could be divided into three sessions, one day each month. The participants

could also choose a virtual method to access this training if the situations do not allow being present in the workshop.

Proposal for Implementation

As the training program facilitator, I will meet with the administrator who supports the meeting avenue in advance to secure the workshop date, place, and needed facilities. An invitation including the training's goals, agenda, and outlines will be shared with the principals and the other invitees through email. The confirmation reply email will be required to consider audience size and identity. I will provide the training timetables and outlines in the following sections.

Day One agenda

Table 4

Day One Timetable

Time line	Topic
8:00 a.m. -8:30 a.m.	Arrival and mingle
8:30 a.m. -9:30 a.m.	Welcome and introduction
9:30 a.m. -10:30 a.m.	Define leadership
10:30 a.m. -11:00 a.m.	Coffee break
11:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m.	Teacher turnover/retention reasons
12:00 p.m. -1:00 p.m.	Lunch break
1:00 p.m. -2:30 p.m.	Create a positive school climate
2:30 p.m. -2:45 p.m.	Break
2:45 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Support teacher professional development
4:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.	Wrap-up, formative assessment, and dismissal

Note. The timelines may change subject to the situations during the actual training.

The timetable for the first-day workshop is shown in Table 4. The first-day training will start with the facilitator's welcome and the facilitator's introduction. Also, the facilitator will explain the goals of this professional development as follows:

- Improve understanding of principal leadership

- Identify best practices to support teachers and build trust
- Assist principals in using effective leadership strategies to retain teachers

First, participants will discuss the differences between leadership and management.

Although the concepts of leadership and management overlap sometimes, they have been accorded different emphases in school contexts. Participants will learn between school leadership and management and define principal leadership. After the coffee break, participants will learn about the reasons causing teacher turnover or making teachers stay in their schools identified by this study. This session will help principals or other school leaders reflect on why the teachers choose to leave or stay and address the problems based on the teachers' needs. Participants then will learn the skills and practices to create a positive school climate, which positively influences teachers' motivation and job satisfaction and eventually contributes to teacher retention. Also, participants will learn the other leadership strategy, supporting teacher professional development, which researchers as an effective practice have examined to motivate teachers and enhance teacher retention. The facilitator will provide a wrap-up and encourage discussions. Participants will answer questions for a brief formative assessment and prepare for dismissal.

Day Two schedule

The second training day plan has been demonstrated in Table 5. This day's training contents will focus on the three principal leadership styles: instructional leadership, transformation leadership, and distributed leadership. The participants will reflect on the previous day's learning highlights and review the current day's general

activities. Next, participants will learn the definitions, characteristics, and applications of the three popular leadership styles in school settings. In addition, participants will learn how different principal leadership styles influence teacher motivation and job satisfaction and reflect on how to use the acquired principals' leadership strategies to motivate teachers and improve teachers' job satisfaction.

Table 5

Day Two Timetable

Timeline	Topic
8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Arrival and mingle
8:30 a.m. - 9:15 a.m.	Review and goals
9:15 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.	Instructional leadership
10:15 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Break
10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	Transformational leadership
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Lunch break
12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.	Distributed leadership
1:30 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.	Principal leadership style and teacher motivation
2:45 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Break
3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Principal leadership style and teacher job satisfaction
4:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.	Wrap-up, formative assessment, and dismissal

Note. The timelines may change subject to the situations during the actual training.

Day Three agenda

The final day of professional development will emphasize three specific leadership strategies: supporting teachers' instruction, creating a shared vision at school, and building trustful relationships with teachers. The schedule of this day is shown in Table 6. The third training day will begin with a recap of the previous day's learning highlights. After that, participants will learn the strategies to support teachers' instruction. Participants will discuss the instructional practices conducted in their schools and learn new skills to provide instructional support. In this session, participants will demonstrate

how to apply the strategies through scenarios. After the lunch break, participants will learn to create a shared vision.

Table 6

Day Three Timetable

Timeline	Topic
8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	Arrival and mingle
8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	Review and goals
9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Support teachers' instruction
11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Lunch break
12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.	Create a shared vision
1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Build a trustful relationship with teachers
3:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.	Coffee break
3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.	Wrap-up, summative evaluation, and dismissal

Note. The timelines may change subject to the situations during the actual training.

This session will start with discussing a strategic plan's role for a school, leaders, and teachers. Then, participants will learn how to engage teachers in a collaborative decision-making process. Also, the participants will learn the significance of critical individual involvement during the process of creating a shared vision and how to encourage and support those involved. During the next session, participants will learn the specific techniques to build a trustful relationship with teachers. The facilitator will encourage multiple methods such as discussion, personal experience sharing, case analysis, and setting examples to enhance the participants' trust-building skills. Also, the facilitator will ask the following questions as a summary of the training objectives:

- What has learned about principal leadership styles?
- How can you support the teachers' instruction in the future?
- How can you build a trustful relationship with your teachers?

- What leadership strategy do you think will be most effective in retaining teachers?
- Do you have any questions or thoughts about this workshop?

Additionally, participants will complete a confidential summative evaluation form listed in Appendix A. The participants' feedback would provide insights for improving the future implementation of the workshop.

Roles and Responsibilities of Students and Others Involved

I will be the facilitator for this training program. The facilitator's responsibilities include preparing the training materials, liaising the training schedule, place, and participants, and facilitating the implementation of the workshop. The administrator from the organization who offers the training space will be responsible for providing all the needed equipment and ensuring the facilities work appropriately during the training process. The roles and responsibilities of bilingual kindergarten principals and other leaders or educators invited to attend this workshop involve participating in the training activities with an open mind, sharing their leadership experiences and opinions during the discussions, and providing feedback for the training program. In addition, the participants will be responsible for implementing the leadership strategies learned from the workshop in their schools to improve teachers' instruction and build a trusting relationship to increase teacher retention.

Project Evaluation Plan

I will conduct both formative assessment and summative evaluation during the workshop. According to Dolin et al. (2018), formative assessment was described as an

evaluation based on an activity or process in the teaching process and the generated problems. It aims to understand the situation and find problems to adjust, improve and perfect the teaching design and implementation. At the same time, summative evaluation evaluated the results achieved in teaching, which aimed to understand the effect of the final teaching activities. In the case of professional development, the primary purpose of formative assessment will help participants learn from the training materials, while the main purpose of summative assessment will provide information about what learning has been achieved at the end of the workshop.

While the training is in progress, I will provide participants with an A4 blank paper on the first and the second day. The participants can write down their thoughts or ideas about the day's topics and arrangement. Also, I will propose the following questions at the last session of the first two days of training and suggest participants write down their answers on the given paper:

- What new idea do you have to create a positive school culture or support teacher development?
- How can you use what you learned today when improving your school effectiveness?
- Which parts of today's workshop could be changed to support your learning?

The goal of the formative assessment used in the first Two days will help me adjust the ongoing instructional procedures. After receiving the participants' formative assessment results by the end of the first day, I will consider how to adjust the instructional activities or provide additional instruction for the next day. On the last

session of the final day, I will provide participants with the professional development evaluation worksheet. Through answering the Likert scale questions, participants will display the extent of understanding of the implementation of the specific leadership strategies and the general perceptions for the whole workshop. The goal of the final day's summative assessment will gauge participants' comprehension of principals' leadership strategies to support teachers' retention and how they reflect the experience of the 3-day training.

As for the outcomes of the project, participants may be better prepared to

- build a positive school climate within the school;
- support teachers' development;
- improve teachers' instruction;
- create a shared vision for the school;
- build a trustful relationship with teachers;
- enhance teacher retention.

This information will benefit the key stakeholders: teachers, the human resource department, students, and parents.

Project Implications

Social Change

This project can benefit the school leaders, teachers, and students. By providing school leaders with the specific leadership strategies they need to retain teachers, they can improve their skills to build strategic school plans, create positive school cultures, and improve teachers' instructions. The principals may have better confidence in practice to

lead a successful school. Moreover, school improvement will contribute to teachers' job satisfaction, work performance, and well-being in working places. Through the principals' leadership practices to build and sustain trustful relationships, teachers and school leaders create a collaborative and collegial structure for implementing any new learning programs that may affect students' learning.

Additionally, teachers who receive school leaders' support and recognition may have opportunities to examine the best ways to teach their students and share the effective practices with their colleagues, which impact students learning to a more considerable extent. The proposed project supports positive social change by equipping school leaders with techniques to improve school effectiveness, especially in supporting teacher development and increasing teacher retention, which positively affect students' learning.

Local Stakeholders

Local stakeholders consisting of school leaders (principals and other management team members), teachers, human resource specialists, and students could benefit from the project. By learning and acquiring the specific leadership strategies from the training program, principals from the local districts can better understand the teachers' concerns and utilize effective leadership practices to satisfy teachers' needs. Furthermore, principals will increase their awareness of self's leadership strengths and weaknesses to improve their leadership skills effectively. The school teachers will get the principals' instructional support, work recognition, and personal regard. Also, the teachers may have more opportunities to participate in school-wide decision-making and express their thoughts to the school leaders. Accordingly, teachers will feel supported and build a

trusting relationship with principals through leadership strategies and may decide to continue working in their schools. By enhancing teachers' decisions to retain, the human resource specialists will save the cost of recruiting and training new staff and may use the budget to invest in the current teacher development. The instructional guidance, strategic school improvement plans, and trust in principals will support teachers in implementing their best practices in class, which benefit students' learning and achievements.

Larger Context

This project will add to the current professional development knowledge regarding principal leadership. Furthermore, this project can potentially impact the school setting beyond a bilingual kindergarten in Songjiang District in Shanghai. The proposed project could serve as a model to support the principal leadership improvement programs in various districts. The bilingual kindergarten principals, the principals from other types of private kindergartens, and even public kindergartens may use this project to improve their leadership strategies to address the high teacher turnover issues. Also, this proposed project may be used by the district human resource management centers to equip the principals with practical skills to lead their schools better, increase teachers' job satisfaction and trust, and may enhance teacher retention. Ultimately, the improved teacher retention benefits the young students needed consistent care, teaching, and support during their early school years.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

This study addressed the issues of high teacher turnover in a bilingual kindergarten by exploring how teachers perceive the influence of principals' leadership styles on their decisions to stay or leave the school. The resulting principal leadership professional development project included many practical strategies to support teacher retention. In the following subsections, I discuss the project's strengths and limitations, provide recommendations for alternative approaches to address the local problem, describe my personal growth, and reflect on the importance of the work. Finally, I provide guidance for the practice and future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Recent literature has shown principals' leadership is linked with teacher retention or turnover (Fuller et al., 2018; Player et al., 2017; Torres, 2016; Van der Vyver et al., 2020; Williams, 2018), and school leadership's improvement could reduce teacher turnover (Kraft et al., 2016). These researchers suggested effective leadership practices and strategies to reduce teacher turnover and support retention. The leadership professional development workshop created as the project for this study can improve principals' leadership practices related to retaining teachers, considering the challenges they face at their schools. This project can equip principals with a better understanding of leadership styles and characteristics, specific strategies to create positive school cultures, guiding teachers' instruction, and building trustful relationships with teachers. For instance, during the sessions regarding leadership styles, participants will mainly learn

about a successful school leader's instructional practices, such as staffing the instructional program and providing instructional support (see Leithwood et al., 2019); transformational leadership displayed in setting corporate direction, achieving common goals, and campus cohesion (see Jiao & Liu, 2017); and distributive leadership committed to establishing teacher cooperation mechanisms, stimulating the spirit of collaboration, and promoting collective participation in school culture (see Wan, 2019). Principals and other school leaders participating in the workshop will have opportunities to obtain knowledge of effective leadership strategies and acquire specific practical tips for applying the approaches in their daily school functions.

Although this project possesses various strengths, there are some limitations to addressing the issue of high teacher turnover through teaching principals effective leadership strategies. This professional development project provides principals with knowledge and tips to support and retain teachers; however, a lack of time or poor time management skills may inhibit their success in applying the leadership practices in their daily work (see Liu & Hallinger, 2018). Moreover, the principals' knowledge base related to teaching and learning may affect teachers' quality of instructional support no matter how long the principals have spent in the leadership training program (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). Additionally, the extent to which the principals implement the strategies effectively may be influenced by their traits, attitude to change, and the strategic interventions they determined to respond to the environmental impact (Goode, 2017).

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The problem of this study was high teacher turnover at a bilingual kindergarten. An alternative definition of the problem in the local setting could be a lack of principal support, which could have a negative impact on teachers' job satisfaction and lead to teachers' turnover decisions. Alternative solutions to the local problem could be investing in the principals' leadership practices in schools with high teacher retention instead of exploring the teachers' perceptions of leadership strategies on their retention decisions. Furthermore, use of a different research design could also be an alternative approach for future research. For instance, employing a quantitative design that uses questionnaires or surveys to investigate the extent of teachers' agreement that principals' leadership practices influence the teachers' retention decisions could replace the qualitative case study design used in the current study. A mixed-method approach that included investigating principals' perceptions of effective leadership strategies to retain teachers and determining the relationship between the perceived leadership practices and teacher retention intentions could also be used to address the local problem.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

Smith and Walker (2021) summarized Boyer's recommendation that "a scholar should recognize that knowledge is acquired through research, synthesis, practice, and teaching" (p. 6). I obtained various knowledge and skills needed to be a scholar as a doctorate student in the past 5 years at Walden University. While applying the acquired knowledge and skills during the research project process, I understood what it means to

be a scholar. I learned how to create logical alignment between a research problem, purpose, research questions, and other elements. While conducting the research, I read and analyzed substantive scholarly articles related to the topic. By summarizing and synthesizing the arguments and ideas from the existing literature in my research field, I established an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the previous research on the topic. My confidence grew as I implemented the current study based on prior professional knowledge.

Furthermore, the research methodology course equipped me with the knowledge of various research designs, and I developed and practiced the skills of collecting and analyzing data during the research process. The analytical abilities exercised in many Walden courses helped me understand the research problem, identify the root issue from which it stemmed, and conduct the appropriate project to address the problem. Through the final project, I learned how to translate research-based knowledge into practical applications to solve problems in life. This application echoed the broader vision of scholarship that includes applying and disseminating knowledge that many current scholars are practicing (see Driscoll & Sandmann, 2016).

Project Development

After carefully reviewing the research findings, I created a 3-day professional development to address the problem of high teacher turnover in bilingual schools by improving principals' leadership strategies. While designing the project, I learned how to consider various viewpoints to achieve the desired outcomes. Guided by the research findings and research-based practices, the goal of this project focused on increasing

teacher retention through principals' leadership strategies. I located my targeted audience as school leaders, such as principals, vice principals, directors of the teaching department, and human resource specialists. My working experience as a school principal enhanced my confidence in the project development process. Conducting the literature review and analyzing the collected data enriched my knowledge of the project contents both from theoretical and practice perspectives. The project development process allowed me to apply the acquired theory and research-based practices related to leadership and teacher retention to address the current school challenges. I used formative and summative assessments for the evaluation plan to examine whether the provided materials were being used effectively, understand what worked and what did not, and make adjustments in response to evaluation results. The project development process increased my experience in developing new training projects for the future.

Leadership and Change

Tang (2019) stated that leadership scholars regard leadership and change as indispensable and deemed that leadership necessary to create helpful change. In the school setting, successful changes needed leaders and their staff to work collectively to build a shared vision connected to teaching and learning (Pedro, 2016). Throughout this research journey, I have been exposed to rigorous literature on school leadership and how school leaders used various leadership practices to improve their schools. In the current qualitative study, I found that teachers expected their principals to use effective principal leadership strategies to improve teaching, create a shared vision, and build trust, which eventually leads to a positive change within the school. Based on the research-based

practices and the study findings, I gained new knowledge of effective strategies principals use to collaborate with teachers and deepened my understanding of how to utilize these strategies as a practitioner in my educational career. Furthermore, as a school principal, the knowledge gained from completing my doctoral degree at Walden University and conducting this research project equipped me with new skills and practices to ensure that I can make a positive change within my school and, to a more significant extent, in the field of education.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

Numerous researchers have found the negative impact of teacher turnover on school effectiveness in areas such as student learning, teacher-student relationships, school cohesion, and instruction quality (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Fuller et al., 2018; Liu, 2017; Hanushek et al., 2016). Improved principal leadership has been identified as an effective way to address the problem of teacher turnover (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019; He, 2020; Kim, 2019). In the current qualitative study, I explored how teachers perceive principal leadership styles in their retention decisions. The results of this study add to the growing body of literature regarding leadership and practical leadership strategies. The study findings indicated that teachers perceived that principals' instructional support, shared vision, and trustful relationships with teachers could support teacher retention. As a principal in a bilingual kindergarten, I gained knowledge and learned techniques to improve teaching, support teachers, and build a trusting school culture, which may help increase teacher retention within my school. I also learned the

value of teachers' voices and how to take their suggestions into account when creating an action plan for improving school effectiveness.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

In this study, I focused on effective leadership strategies that principals can use to benefit all the stakeholders in the educational process and have implications for the field education. The results of this study indicated how teachers perceived that principal leadership strategies impacted their retention decisions. The findings of the study also showed that principals could better retain teachers by supporting their instruction, creating a shared vision with them, and building a trusting principal-teacher relationship. These effective leadership strategies may be transferable to other schools facing the problem of high teacher turnover or that are struggling to retain teachers.

Furthermore, the data indicated that leadership styles associated with instructional, transformational, and distributed leadership practices enhanced teacher retention. Principals who wish to increase teacher retention may reflect on and analyze their leadership styles and find ways to modify their leadership practices. Further applications of this project could involve school leaders in extended geographic areas or adding it to the principal preparation or induction programs implemented by district-level human resource centers.

In this study, I specifically explored teachers' perceptions of the influence that principal leadership styles had on their decisions to stay or leave a school with high teacher turnover. Future research could involve the use of quantitative evidence regarding the relationship between the specific principal leadership strategies and their effect on

teachers' retention decisions. In addition, future researchers could also investigate principals' perceptions of retaining teachers in schools that have a high rate of teacher retention.

Conclusion

In this qualitative study, I explored teachers' perceptions of the influence that principal leadership styles had on their retention decisions at a bilingual kindergarten. Data collected from interviews with teachers provided insight into effective practices that principals could use to promote teacher retention at the study site. A professional development program was created based on the study findings that has the potential to enhance teacher retention in bilingual kindergartens.

In Section 1 of this project study, I described the local problem of high teacher turnover and presented the significance of addressing this problem. The two guiding research questions were stated. Literature regarding principal leadership and teacher retention was then reviewed to ascertain the existing knowledge of the topic and support the need for the study. I also discussed the implications for the project based on the anticipated findings.

In Section 2, I explained the logic of choosing the qualitative method and how the research design would be used for this study. The detailed process of locating participants, collecting data from the interviews, and analyzing data following Mai Skjott and Steffen's (2019) suggested coding steps was provided. The data analysis indicated the teachers' perceptions regarding effective leadership strategies, including supporting

teachers' instruction, creating a shared vision, and building trusting relationships with teachers.

In Section 3, I introduced the project based on my research findings and identified professional development focusing on specific principal leadership strategies as the most appropriate genre for this project. Literature regarding professional development, principals' support, and principal-teacher relationships was reviewed and analyzed to guide the project's development. I also described the goals of and necessary resources for the project and proposed an evaluation plan that used both formative and summative assessments during the implementation of the project. Lastly, I summarized the possible social change implications of implementing this project as better equipping principals with the skills to support teacher development and retain teachers, which positively impacts student learning.

In Section 4, I analyzed the project's strengths and limitations. Although the participants could gain the knowledge and skills to develop helpful strategies for supporting teacher retention, a lack of time, a limited knowledge base related to teaching and learning, and participants' traits could hinder the project resulting in successful outcomes. Alternative approaches were also recommended to solve the local problem. For instance, a different approach, such as the quantitative method, could be used to examine the relationship between the principals' perceived leadership practices and teacher retention intentions. Furthermore, I reflected on my learning and growth during the research process, the development of the project, and the importance of the work. The findings of this study could benefit school leaders, teachers, students, and human

resource specialists. Lastly, I described the implications, applications, and directions for future research. By exploring the effective practices of principals to retain teachers, I feel that I contributed to relieving the challenge of teacher shortages and that the impact and corresponding change could extend far beyond the just the schools affected.

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Appendix A: The Project

Principal Leadership Strategy Training Program	
Purpose	This project was created as a professional development program to train bilingual kindergarten principals to use specific leadership strategies to support teacher retention. The participants will learn how to use the leadership strategies, including instructional support, creating shared visions, and building trusting relationships to promote teacher retention.
Target Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bilingual kindergarten principals; ● Bilingual kindergarten vice principals, administrators, and directors; ● Principals and directors from other types of private kindergartens; ● Human resource department staff from organizations that operate the private kindergartens;
Guiding Questions	<p>Day 1</p> <p>What is your understanding of leadership? What were your practices to create a positive school climate? How did you support teachers' professional development at your school?</p> <p>Day 2</p> <p>What is your leadership style? How did you motivate your staff at school? How did you improve your staff's job satisfaction at school?</p> <p>Day 3</p> <p>What have you done to support teachers' instruction? Did you have a shared vision at your school? How do you feel about your relationship with teachers?</p>
Learning Outcomes	Participants may be better prepared to <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) build a positive school climate within the school, (b) support teachers' development, (c) improve teachers' instruction, (d) create a shared vision for the school, (e) build a trustful relationship with teachers, (f) enhance teacher retention.

Evaluation	Both formative assessment and summative evaluation will be conducted for this training. Participants will write down their thoughts and answers to the proposed questions in the first two days. A professional envelopment worksheet with various questions will be completed on the final day.
Resources/Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Laptop● Internet connection● PowerPoint● Projector● A4 bank paper● Sticky notes● Markers/pens/pencils● Professional evaluation worksheet● PPT copies

Summative Evaluation of the Workshop

Thank you for participating in this professional development workshop focusing on principal leadership strategies to support teacher retention.

Instructions: Please rate the following statements.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am satisfied with the workshop sessions.					
I learned the strategies to create a positive school climate.					
I learned the strategies to support teachers' professional development.					
I understand the general characteristics of three leadership styles (Instructional Leadership/Transformational Leadership/Distributed Leadership).					
I learned the strategies to support teachers' instruction.					
I learned the strategies to create a shared vision for my school.					
I learned how to build a trusting relationship with teachers.					

1. How helpful was the training content supporting your knowledge of principal leadership styles?
2. What additional support might you need when you use leadership strategies to support teacher retention?

Do you have any suggestions for this training when presented to others in the future?

Appendix B: Sample Transcripts

那么第一个问题是你认为教师选择离开双语幼儿园的主要原因是什么呢？What do you think are the main reasons if a teacher chooses to leave a bilingual kindergarten?

从我自己角度出发，一方面可能是有家庭的原因，然后另一方面的话就是自身的原因，自身的话可能我自己觉得在这个幼儿园没有自己的发展的路径，或者是没有得到我想要的成长，或者是还有原因的话，可能是不太喜欢这个人的那种领导风格，或者是整个学校的那一体系的东西。或者是想换一个全新的环境，就换一个全新的那种教育理念的环境的幼儿园。

family reasons;
personal reasons;
career development path; professional growth;
Leadership styles;
Working environment;

好的，那么你认为选择继续留在双语幼儿园工作的这些老师们，他们选择留下来工作的原因是什么？What do you think makes them stay in a bilingual kindergarten?

有可能是因为家庭原因，就是离家近方便，然后接送孩子方便什么之类的，然后还有的话觉得说幼儿园是有我图的地方，比如说可以给带给我专业上的成长，或者是工作上的晋升，然后还有可能是教育理念唉，幼儿园的这种理念是我喜欢的，我也想一直去做下去，然后或者是还有这个幼儿园的就是领导的风格，或者是领导的为人处事，觉得自己蛮欣赏的，会觉得契合度蛮大的，觉得值得继续留在幼儿园。

family reasons;
close to home;
professional growth;
work promotion;
school educational physiology;
Leadership style;
Leaders' behaviors;

那么接下来的第一个问题是你对于校长的领导风格的总体看法是什么？What are your overall perceptions of the principal's leadership style?

我自己看看一个就是领导的话，我首先会看他的那种穿着，或者是他的那种衣品的，然后让我觉得很舒服，然后我觉得看起来很自然很重要，我就觉得然后我觉得我喜欢的一个点，然后觉得我可以，然后另外一方面的话他的一个专业性，一个方面可能是在学历上，另外一个方面可能在一线的工作经验上看他是不是足够专业，然后而且会不会真的知道一线老师的，如果他是那种从一线做上来的那种园长的话，我心里面会很佩服，就觉得他都可能更了解知道

Professionalism;
Experiences in teaching;
Instructional skills;
Awareness of teachers' needs;

我们一线老师的一些工作的实际情况，然后当出现一些问题或者是在做一些决策，然后的时候会倾向于考虑到我们站在我们老师的角度会考虑多一点。

明白老师，一个是一个是外在的，然后还有一个是专业性，还有一个他就自身的人格魅力。

还有一个就是他对于他自己这份工作或是事业的未来的规划，你看值不值得就是我们去追随他。

你认为校长他采用了哪些领导力的实践的方法，对于创建学校的一个共同的愿景来说是至关重要的？What leadership practices are employed by the principal that you believe to be essential in creating the school's shared vision?

我首先想到的可能是对于幼儿园的一个未来3年或者是5年，他的一个发展规划是他会把这个蓝图会给到我们，这算是他领导力的一部分，是应该知道对这是他的蓝图。然后。

目前自己嗯还有他自己对于自己教师队伍建设的一个规划

还有我想一想招生算吗？他自己要为了拓宽自己的生源，然后他会去做一些招生方面的工作，然后还有在遇到什么我们老师不能解决的问题的时候，需要园方出面的时候，领导园长他可以给到老师支持。

还有他对幼儿园日常的教学管理事务的一些安排，日常活动安排上活动的那些组织，还有他对老师对于老师教师队伍的一些基本的要求，比如说制度的要求或者是专业上的要求，这是他领导力的一个方面。

校长他采用了什么样的沟通方式来和老师们进行交流？What methods of communication does the principal employ?

感觉像在公司里面领导对下属的那种沟通方式，因为我自己的理解是可能幼儿园学校可能会跟其他的那种工作的内容和形式会有一点点差别，因为我们都是对人对小朋友，然后会更付出于那种情感或者是感情的会更多一些

Instructional knowledge;
leader' charisma;

Plans for future;
Influence on followers;

Strategic plan for 3-5 years;
School blueprint;

Teacher development plan;

Support teacher in student enrollment;

Requirements for teacher development;
expectations on teachers' instruction;

Leader-subordinate communication ways;
with personal affection;

Appendix C: Teacher Interview Protocol

Script:

Hello, my name is Feng Yang. I am a doctoral student in Walden University's educational leadership program. I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in the study on the principal leadership style and teacher retention in China's bilingual kindergartens. Through the interview process of teachers, I hope to capture your attitudes and opinions regarding how principal leadership styles influence your retention or turnover.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you will not have to answer each question. You have my assurance that your responses will remain anonymous, and that confidentiality will be maintained throughout the data collection and reporting processes. My goal is to investigate how teachers perceive the influence of their principals' leadership styles on their decisions to keep working in or to leave China's bilingual kindergartens. You will be asked a series of interview questions intended to receive your perceptions of your principals' leadership styles that influence you to decide to keep working in or leave school. I may also contact you at a later date if questions arise about this interview. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or additional thoughts.

Do I have your permission to record this interview and take notes to ensure the accuracy of your responses?

yes no

Do you have any questions before we begin?

__ yes __ no

Teacher Interview Questions

(Please note that the questions under the part of “reasons to stay or leave a bilingual kindergarten” pertain to RQ1: What are the teachers' reasons to keep working in or leave China's bilingual kindergarten?)

The questions under the part of “principal leadership styles and teacher retention” pertain to RQ2: How do teachers perceive the influence of their principal's leadership strategies on their decisions to keep working in or to leave China's bilingual kindergarten?”)

Background Information

1. Why did you become a teacher?
2. How long have you been a teacher? How long have you been teaching in this district?
In this school?
3. How did you decide to teach here?

Reasons to stay or leave a bilingual kindergarten

1. What do you think are the main reasons if a teacher chooses to leave a bilingual kindergarten?
2. What do you think makes them stay in a bilingual kindergarten?
3. Do you know the local attrition statistics in your district? What do you believe are the main factors behind this statistic?

4. Do you know what the attrition statistics in your school are? What do you believe are the main factors behind this statistic?

Principal leadership styles and teacher retention

1. What are your overall perceptions of the principal's leadership style?
2. What leadership practices are employed by the principal that you believe to be essential in creating the school's shared vision?
3. What methods of communication does the principal employ?
4. What do you notice about the principal's role in the teachers' retention?
5. What instructional strategies do the principal encourage teachers to use in their classes?
6. In what ways have you been able to participate in school-based decisions and activities?
7. What are the methods used by the principal to gather input from the faculty?
8. What types of leadership strategies are employed by the principal that makes you want to stay at this school or cause you to intend to leave the school?
9. What types of activities do you participate in that make you feel like an integral part of the school?
10. What types of interactions occur between the principal and faculty members you believe are essential to make teachers want to stay at this school?
11. What principal leadership style makes you want to stay at this school or leave this school?

12. Can you share with me the events when you feel the principal's leadership practices may have directly influenced your retention in your school or intention to leave the school?

Closing

We've talked about the principal leadership style and teacher retention in China's bilingual kindergartens. Are there other aspects within the school that you would like to discuss regarding principal leadership styles related to teacher retention or attrition?