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Exploring the Role of Intrinsic Motivation in Elementary Public-School Educators' Willingness to Remain in Teaching

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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Lynnette Steinhoff

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

Exploring the Role of Intrinsic Motivation in Elementary Public-School Educators'

Willingness to Remain in Teaching

by

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MA, University of Colorado—Colorado Springs, 2009

MA, University of Colorado—Colorado Springs, 2002

BS, University of Wisconsin—La Crosse, 1999

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education—Leadership, Policy, Change

Walden University

May 2024

Abstract

The experiences and perceptions of novice educators' willingness to remain in teaching have been without clear research. The problem addressed by this study was the need to understand why novice educators remain in the field in order to support districts and legislators in updating policies and funding measures. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how the intrinsic motivation of novice elementary educators within a K–12 public school influences their willingness to remain in teaching. Self-determination theory (SDT), with its psychological principles of autonomy, competency, and relatedness, was selected as the conceptual framework. Two research questions addressed intrinsic motivation influences; perceptions of autonomy, competency, and relatedness; and reasons for choosing to remain in the field of education. Nine novice educators met the study's inclusion criteria, which included not having more than 5 years' experience in elementary Grades 3 through 5. A basic narrative design was used to explore intrinsic motivation through virtual interviews using semistructured questions and secondary sources to increase validity. Results derived from a coding process and were analyzed using an SDT lens. Two themes yielded the highest findings: Theme 1. Strong Induction Programs with an Emphasis on Mentoring, and 2. Strong Experiential Training Accompanied with Continued Professional Development. Findings support positive social change through recommended policy change at the local and state level with increased funding support. Local and state agencies may benefit from a greater understanding of why novice educators remain in the field.

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Dedication

I am dedicating this study to my children, Jacob and Tremayne. My children have stood by me with support through this journey with hugs, laughter, and just the right amount of pressure. As a single mother, I knew that my children had to suffer the sacrifices just as equally as I. One thing that my children bore witness to in their upbringing was hard work and dedication to scholarly studies. I would not be where I am today without the love and support of my children. Thank you for loving me enough to help me be the best version of myself.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In Chapter 1 of this research study, I provide the background, problem statement, purpose, and research questions. Additionally, I describe the nature of study and present operational definitions, assumptions, the scope and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study. A critical factor of consideration pertaining to any potential impact of COVID-19 on this research is further explained in the operational definitions as well as limitations. The study explored novice educators' experiences, and the findings can aid district and state leaders who focus on legislation and policy on teacher retention rates. Additionally, the findings may provide district leaders insight on induction programs and hiring practices.

As the United States is scrutinized for poorly funded education systems, teacher retention rates continue to show deficits within school districts across multiple settings (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023a; Papay & Kraft, 2017). Researchers have identified several factors influencing retention, such as evaluation, salary compensation, and lack of administrative support (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023a; Papay & Kraft, 2017). Retention rates among novice educators indicate significant struggles across the nation's education systems. Several studies have indicated that between 46% and 50% of novice educators leave their employment setting within the first 5 years in public school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023a; Papay & Kraft, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2017). The National Center for Education Statistics (2023b) published data from all states and territories of the United States

regarding perceptions of staff shortages, percentage of public schools that have challenges filling vacant positions, percentage of difficulties filling nonteaching positions, and some of the reasons why challenges continue to exist. The survey consisted of 115 responses from the considered eligible schools. Results were provided for individual states as well as regionally. Public schools reported that 45% perceived that they were understaffed going into the 2023–2024 school year. This was a slight decrease from the reported 53% in 2022.

The Midwest and the South had very little decrease, with only 3–5% below their 2022 report. The Northeast and the West showed the most decrease with at least a 10% drop. While this statistic is considered noteworthy, the findings of the perception of challenges of hiring teachers showed only one 1-point drop from all public schools. The Midwest reported a 2-point increase from 81% to 83% in difficulties filling teaching positions with fully certified teachers. The South maintained at 82% from the years 2022 to 2023. The three contributing factors to districts' challenges were too few candidates applying, lack of qualified staff for open positions, and inability to secure hires based on compensation, including benefits (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023b).

The National Center for Education Statistics data from the 2022–2023 school year also indicated that of all of the reporting schools and school districts, 53% believed that they were short-staffed entering the school year. Regionally, the West reported having the highest perception rate of believing they were understaffed at 60% of respondents indicating “yes” on their survey. The Midwest and the South were within one percentage point from one another, at 52% and 51%, respectively, reporting the perception of being

understaffed. Trailing the four regions was the Northeast with 49% of respondents reporting that they perceived their schools or districts as being short-staffed. Similar to the previous year, public schools in all of the regions, with the Midwest being the highest at 75%, indicated that there were too few candidates applying for the open staff positions, with the next factor being the lack of qualified candidates who were applying for open positions. The National Center for Education Statistics does not have any years before the 2022–2023 findings published on its site. However, there was an additional study that was specific to principals, which was called *Teacher Attrition in Mobility* and had results for the 2021–2022 teacher follow-up survey to the national teacher and principal survey. Similar to the results in the prior paragraph, novice educators with 3 years or fewer were also reported as being in categories of stayers, movers, and leavers. This report, published in the 2020–2021 school year, indicated that among teachers with experience of 3 years or less, 78.5% were stayers, 8.6% were movers, and 12.9% were leavers.

According to the most recent publication of the U.S. Department of Education (2017a), 48 states reported teacher shortages in math, 46 states reported teacher shortages in special education, 42 states reported teacher shortages in science, and 41 states reported teacher shortages in foreign language in the school year 2017–2018. Retention creates significant concerns for school districts concerning resource allocations and increased funding for recruitment, hiring, and training for new hires (Amorim Neto et al., 2018). Similarly, Papay et al. (2017) argued that district transfers and value-added initiatives impacted teacher retention rates in low-performing and high-performing districts. Educators transfer within districts and outside districts for unknown reasons.

Districts are faced with excess costs in securing new hires and potential shortages in the applicant pools.

Researchers considering the reasons why educators leave the field within the first 5 years have questioned what level of influence intrinsic motivation has on educators. Current research has been isolated to preparedness, competency, administrative support, and school culture (Fradkin-Hayslip, 2021; Whipp & Geronime, 2017; Wronowski, 2017). Research on intrinsic motivation in K–12 public school settings was limited to quantitative methods, with more focused attention on extrinsic factors. There were few qualitative studies that explored intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The research that was reviewed recommended further exploration using qualitative methodology. The lack of qualitative research on understanding intrinsic motivation and retention rates has prompted the need for future studies to assist district administrators and state leaders in determining key components of failing systems. Most articles found were quantitative research studies that recommended that qualitative research studies be designed to understand the phenomenon of intrinsic motivation in K–12 public school settings (Kaplan, 2021). The studies noted the lack of understanding of individual intrinsic motivation as a recommended area of study to assist policymakers in developing induction programs and systems within their school districts to attract and retain high-quality educators. Currently, there is limited qualitative research that shows how intrinsic motivation influences the retention rates of novice educators. This gap in the literature prompted the need for this study.

Background

Public school K–12 teaching is one of the largest employee groups across the United States. It continues to expand to match the demands of the elementary and secondary student enrollment percentages that have increased rapidly across the United States. According to an Institute of Education Sciences publication, multiple states have reported shortages of elementary education, language arts, special education, and mathematics teachers (U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education, 2017b).

Additionally, there has been an increase in the need for bilingual and English as a second language teachers. In 2012–2013, teachers in the stayers, movers, and leavers categories were at 84.3%, 8.1%, and 7.7%, respectively. Reports for 2021–2022 show similar results of 84.1%, 7.9%, and 7.9% in the respective categories of stayers, movers, and leavers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023a). Over the past two to three decades, state leaders have sought to understand how to attract teachers to become professionals in the field and how to retain the quality teachers who exist in the field. According to a recent analysis of teacher retention rates, the overall turnover rate is approximately 16%, with 8% of teachers leaving the profession and 8% shifting schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). The 2023 Teacher Attrition and Mobility report supports the previous research and shows that teachers with 3 years or less have an 8.7% rate as movers and 12.9% rate as leavers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023a).

The percentage of teachers leaving the field in conjunction with the school-to-school movement can result in significant costs for districts, which must recruit and retain additional qualified staff. Additionally, there continue to be variances between state-by-state trends and regional trends. While the Northeast region averages the lowest turnover rates, southern and Midwestern cities present the highest rates, ranging from 13% to 16.7% (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Trends over the past two decades indicate that teacher shortages have a national impact on the demographics of the educational field. Stemming back to the most recent overall national statistics published in 2017 to current national results based on different pulse surveys from principals and teachers, the shortages in education continue to impact students in various ways (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023a). Information relayed to state agencies, legislators, and districts has been used to work together to increase the human capital of educators and improve teacher recruitment practices, preservice training, mentoring and induction, and professional development practices (Berry & Shields, 2017). While these interventions worked for a short duration, in the 2015–2016 school year the District of Columbia and 48 other states continued to report shortages of teachers and the areas of special education, math, science, and bilingual education or ESL teachers. The field is yet again faced with demands related to increased student enrollment, which is expected to grow by 3 million in the next 10 years; restored teacher positions and course offerings that were eliminated during the Great Recession; 2008 low enrollment numbers in teacher preparation programs; and attrition rates of about an 8% annually in the United States (Berry & Shields, 2017). In many respects,

researchers have indicated that districts' abilities to retain high-quality educators have plummeted to the rates that were experienced in the late 1990s (Berry & Shields, 2017).

Problem Statement

According to The Graide Network (2020), teacher shortages across the United States continue to have a significant impact on student achievement and districts' ability to provide students with quality instruction. The Learning Policy Institute (as cited in The Graide Network, 2020) reported that approximately 8% of educators leave the field for various reasons. Among the regions in the United States, the southern region is reported to have the highest teacher turnover rate, at 17% annually. New Mexico and Arizona were reported as having the highest turnover rates at just below 23% and 24%, respectively. Utah was reported to have the lowest turnover rate at 10% (The Graide Network, 2020). Novice educators' departure from the field of education impacts school districts' ability to serve students with high-quality instruction. Leaders in several states have sought to understand the reasons why educators are leaving the field and the impact on school systems (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Colorado Department of Education [CDE], 2020b; The Graide Network, 2020; Wilder Research, 2019).

The National Center for Educational Statistics (2023b) indicated that teacher retention rates continue to be a prevalent issue in many states. The percentage of public-school educators leaving the field has steadily risen and has been highest among veteran teachers with 25 or more years of experience. Additional noteworthy reports indicated that teachers with only 2 years of experience had higher rates of mobility than teachers with 11 or more years of experience.

National retention rate statistics are outdated, as the last reporting period was given for the 2012–2013 school year (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2023a). However, there are several states that are producing their own reports and providing individual state information on retention rates of teachers and administrators. States are reporting continued significant exit rates of novice teachers and rates of unfilled positions at the beginning of the school year (CDE, 2019, 2020b; Wilder Research, 2019). In support of the most recent national statistics, Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) indicated the teaching profession has an 8% attrition rate, and the number of teachers exiting either the field or district represents nearly 90% of the annual educational demands.

According to the CDE (2019), survey results for the 2018–2019 school year for districts across the state indicated that there were close to 8,000 teaching positions for hire, representing approximately 13.79% of all teaching positions in the state. Of those reported teaching positions to hire, over 250 remained unfilled for the entire school year, and over 900 were filled through a shortage mechanism, which included hiring substitutes and alternatively licensed teachers. For the subsequent year of 2019–2020, Colorado's education shortage survey indicated a similar percentage of 13.25% of open teaching positions across the state. Of those total teaching positions to hire, 147 were unfilled for the beginning of the school year, and 985 were filled through a shortage mechanism.

Similarly, the 2019 biennial Minnesota Teacher Supply and Demand report indicated that districts reported that teacher shortages continued to be a problem, as

indicated by evidence that 42% of districts reported it as a major problem and approximately 52% of the districts indicated that it was a minor problem (Wilder Research, 2019). In comparison with 5 years earlier, more than half of the districts reported fewer applicants to become teachers. Additional reports indicated that approximately 10 school districts had to cancel classes or programs due to the teacher shortage. Some districts were forced to offer online instruction or combined classrooms due to that shortage reported in the 2019 biennial report (Wilder Research, 2019).

New Mexico has joined several states in an effort to understand teacher retention rates better. New Mexico reported a significant increase in teacher vacancies from 2015 to 2018 (Legislative Education Study Committee [LESC], 2018). Additionally, universities reported lower levels of enrollment in teaching programs. Among recent graduates, approximately 50% of educators elected to leave the field of education within the first 5 years (LESC, 2018). Between the years of 2017 to 2019, there was an increase of over 300 reported vacancies across New Mexico, with a total of 740 vacancies in fiscal year (FY) 2019 (LESC, 2018).

Several states, along with state legislators, have sought to determine the underlying factors in retaining high-quality teachers on a more individual basis, as the national reports are limited to the years 2012–2013 (CDE, 2019, 2020b; Garcia & Weiss, 2019; LESC, 2018; Wilder Research, 2019). Novice educators with less than 5 years of experience are rapidly leaving the field of education and/or transferring from one district to another. Several factors have been studied in isolation, such as working conditions, compensation, connectivity or relatedness, administrative support, and competency. The

research that has been analyzed leads the field to research further. There has yet to be one factor that has shown significant results that can assist policymakers and legislators in making lasting changes to the educational system. Therefore, the problem that was focused on for this study was the limited understanding of how intrinsic motivation influences the retention rates of novice educators.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how the intrinsic motivation of novice elementary educators within a K–12 public school influences their willingness to remain in teaching. I proposed that using self-determination theory (SDT) to analyze the combined effect of autonomy, competency, and relatedness might provide the answers to make the social changes the field needs to tackle the continued failure to retain high-quality teachers (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT was first established in 1985 and reexamined in 2017 (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The study targeted novice educators within elementary grades in public K–12 schools.

The main focal point of this research was how the intrinsic motivation of novice elementary educators within a K–12 public school influences their willingness to remain in teaching. Research on intrinsic motivation and understanding self-determination through the lens of the psychological supports of autonomy, competency, and relatedness involves questions that can be addressed through quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Motivation has traditionally been studied using quantitative methods with recommendations and implications for qualitative approaches and further research to provide generalizations to support the field (Onyefulu et al., 2022; Shibiti, 2020). While

there are significant findings in quantitative studies, all the recommendations of those studies have included a desire for further research using a qualitative approach to provide a deeper understanding of the influence of motivation on retention rates in education.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to provide data to explore the intrinsic motivation of novice elementary educators in K–12 public school settings. Two questions were designed to use a basic qualitative approach:

- RQ1. How does intrinsic motivation influence novice elementary educators' willingness to remain in teaching?
- RQ2. What are the reasons novice educators give for choosing to stay in the field of education?

Theoretical and/or Conceptual Framework for the Study

The conceptual framework for the study was Ryan and Deci's (2017) SDT. First established in 1985, SDT addresses social and psychological conditions that directly influence growth and development. Ryan and Deci's work has been used to understand extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in multiple disciplines. Within SDT, there are examples of both extrinsic and intrinsic factors; however, the approach of this study focused on the intrinsic psychological factors of autonomy, competency, and relatedness. The SDT framework guided this research to provide details and understanding of motivation. Applying the SDT lens provided structure and design to maximize the expected outcomes of the study.

In the recent past, researchers have studied motivation and motivational practices using both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Fradkin-Hayslip, 2021; Onyefulu et al., 2022; Shibiti, 2020). Based on the findings and methods analyzed, I supported the need to understand intrinsic motivation using the SDT framework to explore the influence of intrinsic motivation and teacher retention rates in elementary grades in K-12 public school districts. Onyefulu et al. (2022) posited that future research regarding retention and turnover should be expanded to allow for generalizing the findings across public schools. A teacher's conceptual understanding of intrinsic motivation and the ability to engage students may provide insight on retention, student outcomes, and satisfaction of their employment. Shibiti (2020) used an empirical investigation approach to help broaden the understanding of retention factors and work engagement.

Nature of the Study

In determining the research paradigm most appropriate for this study, I considered various theories that offer insight into why educators remain in the field within the first years. Statistical data such as retention rates, the number of educators in the field, and retirement rates are available through national and state offices. However, the data portray the statistical aspects and leave out the perspective and perceptions of the actual educators who select to stay or leave. The use of a qualitative study approach for this study was an approach that provided individual insight into novice elementary educators' willingness to remain in the field.

The nature of this study was a basic qualitative design to provide credibility to the collection of personal interviews (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). Personal interviews included

targeted questions aligned to the study that provided data on how intrinsic motivation influences retention rates. A sequential exploratory strategy was engaged to collect and analyze the qualitative data in the primary phase through recorded interviews of novice teachers in the elementary grades. A qualitative approach for this study used interviews to explore intrinsic motivation using SDT and the likelihood of participants' willingness to remain in public school settings. Emerging themes were drawn from the qualitative data and analysis of those data and are described in Chapters 4 and 5 (Ravitch & Carl, 2015).

Definitions

Autonomy: Autonomy can be defined as practicing from one's own individual interests, values, and experience as an expression of self. Autonomy is not to be confused with the concept of independence; instead, SDT indicates an anti-antagonistic relationship between autonomy and dependence (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Competency: Competency is defined as having direct foundational knowledge of instructional practices, content, student behaviors, and the ability to manage and navigate a classroom with varied learners that influence efficacy and efficiency in daily practices (Deci & Flaste, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Intrinsic motivation: Intrinsic motivation is defined as inherent sense of belonging and deeply rooted personal values in which the individual's behaviors and actions are a sole result of their inner sense of self (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Characteristics of intrinsic motivation are described as behaving with authenticity, self-regulating, being one's true self, and/or accepting responsibility.

Novice educator: A novice educator is defined as an educator who has less than 5 years' experience as a licensed professional in the field of teaching. Novice educators may include teachers who are in the process of obtaining their professional license while holding an initial license. Novice educators have a minimum of 4 years of college preparation at an accredited university. For the purposes of this study and COVID-19 implications, novice educators selected for this study did not have their first years of employment in the 2019–2020 or 2020–2021 school year.

Relatedness: Relatedness is defined as how an individual is trained and educated with a sense of their ability to thrive, adapt, explore, and experience the external factors that impact their sense of self. Those external factors include, but are not limited to, administrative support, collegial respect and camaraderie, school culture and climate, and mentoring and induction programs (Deci & Flaste, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Assumptions

There were several assumptions made about this qualitative study to explore intrinsic motivation in novice elementary educators in Grades 3 through 5 in a public K–12 setting. The first was that novice educators in K–12 public school wanted to share their experiences and stories through the interview process. Second, novice educators understood and were able to articulate their experiences with autonomy, competency, and relatedness and their school setting as well as challenges they may have experienced within their first years of teaching in a public-school setting. Third, there was a willingness to participate in an interview during pandemic and social distancing requirements that were in place during the period of data collection.

Scope and Delimitations

This qualitative study's scope and delimitations included the proposed population and conceptual framework not considered for this study. For instance, through purposeful sampling (Patton, 2015), 10 novice educators in Grades 3 through 5 identified as key informants were selected to participate. The purpose outlined in this qualitative research study was to understand intrinsic motivation among elementary educators in Grades 3 through 5 in the public K–12 setting. The challenges and barriers encountered may have impacted or influenced the novice educators' willingness to remain in the field after 5 years. Excluded from this study were educators not in an elementary Grade 3 through 5 setting as well as educators who had 5 or more years' experience in either their current setting or multiple settings in public education. Additional exclusions from this study applied to those novice educators who began their career in the school year 2019–2020 or 2020–2021 due to COVID-19. The transferability of this study is not without limits based on the individual experiences and retention rates of novice educators.

Limitations

Limitations of the study were the low number of participants and the targeted pool of novice elementary educators. Researchers additionally suggest that cultural and financial resources may impact participation. Researchers understand the unique limitation of potential conflict of interest if participants are educators of special education students due to district position. However, this was avoided as I was not the primary evaluator of teachers in any district. An additional limitation was the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the availability of teachers to participate.

The access to novice elementary educators in Grades 3 through 5 in a public K–12 setting posed challenges for scheduling interviews, meeting face to face, and making phone contacts. Participants were from several sources, which included approving districts and the Walden Pool. The restrictions on meeting face to face with research participants due to the COVID-19 pandemic social distancing guidelines (Laureate International Universities, 2021) posed several challenges in observations. Observations were limited with a clearer intent on using voice inflection and pauses in conversation. Alternative technology strategies were needed due to the limitations to using electronic procedures (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). Professional databases such as LinkedIn as well as other social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram were used as additional tools to contact novice educators who might fit the criteria as participants in this qualitative study. The recruitment of targeted interview participants of novice educators in Grades 3 through 5 may also be a challenge for this study. There were limited amounts of contact opportunities as an external research partner to the district were based on approvals to draw participants.

Additional considerations were taken due to COVID-19's impact on educators. COVID-19 presented a unique perspective on the role of an educator and was considered during the interviews. If a participant expressed that COVID-19 was the primary influencing factor, another participant was selected, as the purpose of the study was to explore intrinsic motivation and the influence on novice educators.

Qualitative research studies' transferability was impacted by the understanding of the purposes, contextual frameworks, and interview methods that are unique to the

participant experience and perspective (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). A combined purposeful sampling strategy to recruit novice elementary educators as informants presented limitations. The educators participating in the study were knowledgeable in their respective fields and were able to share personal experiences towards understanding the intrinsic motivation of novice educators. Reflection on the interview methodology to ensure dependability to track progress on the research was a critical step in the research process (Patton, 2015). Face-to-face interviews were not allowed due to COVID-19 restrictions; the nuances and the interview process were limited because I was not able to observe the participants in a natural setting and had to rely on voice inflection and conversation pace. I used an interview protocol that reduced bias in addition to note taking during the interview process.

Significance

Change agents in education seek to challenge the status quo with innovative, positive-solution approaches to social issues that have potential global implications (Hall & Hord, 2015). The study provided new information that may help to foster social change within states that experience retention issues among novice educators. This study focused on applying self-determination theory's psychological principles of autonomy, competency, and relatedness to explore the dynamic relationship that educators have with their students and the way that intrinsic motivation influences their desire to remain in or leave the field of education (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The study explored this grounded theory within urban school districts in a Midwestern state in the United States. The data collected provided a sampling of perceptions of novice educators in elementary grades.

Novice educators were described as educators with less than 5 years' experience in the field. This problem is relevant in the changing world of education and supports efforts to resolve teacher retention issues in the field of education. Qualitative analysis allowed for fine distinctions to be drawn, which may provide benefits to the district from which participants were pulled.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the problem statement, the purpose of the research, and the background that supports additional information to assist legislators and school officials in formulating policies and guidance to address teacher retention issues. Also discussed were the historical studies that have been conducted using quantitative methods with recommendations to use a qualitative approach that broadens the scope of the problem to include multiple variables. SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2004) provided three psychological principles—autonomy, competency, and relatedness—to strengthen the validity and trustworthiness of the research. In the following chapter, the theory and literature review are presented to demonstrate the foundational knowledge of the psychological principles and support the three research questions. The literature is organized using autonomy, competency, and relatedness as a primary guide.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In Chapter 2 of this research study, I restate the problem and purpose and provide a brief synopsis of relevant literature that pertains to the problem. I provide a description of the literature research strategies and conceptual frameworks. Additionally, this chapter includes the literature review related to the key variables based on the defined literature search strategy. I also include a summary and conclusion of the literature review and conceptual framework leading to the methodology.

A critical misunderstood crisis continues to be the K–12 teacher shortages across the nation (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Amidst the revolving door of the United States' education system, district leaders face economic and human capital challenges in meeting the educational needs of students. Teacher retention rates in public school settings have challenged district leaders and researchers in determining causation and influential factors. For over 60 years, teacher shortages have impacted multiple public educational settings across various geographical settings. Researchers continue to seek to understand the rationale for novice teachers to leave the field of education within the first 5 years of public school.

The most recent national statistics indicate that between 46% and 50% of novice educators leave their employment setting or the education field before the end of their 5th year (Papay & Kraft, 2017). While there has been a lack of comparable national statistics, the National Center for Education Statistics (2023) began a Pulse Survey showing a sample representation of teacher shortages and school readiness perceptions. The

landscape of education has shifted over the past 40 years, with an increase in the need for educators due to a reduction in class sizes and an increased demand for specialized instruction. Additionally, the landscape of educators has involved a reduction in novice teachers and an overwhelmingly high rate of veteran teachers. There are fewer new teacher applicants and consistent retirements, leaving many districts to find creative measures to fill schools' positions (Wilder Research, 2019). In efforts to understand teacher retention rates, districts have implemented multiple strategies to support novice educators, such as implementing comprehensive induction programs, increased efforts to secure traditionally trained educators, enhanced strategies to provide administrative support to novice educators, and continued professional development to strengthen competency skills (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Papay et al., 2017; Shockley et al., 2013).

According to a publication from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education (2017), teacher shortages have remained consistent over the last two decades. Individual states report teacher shortages voluntarily, and the information is compiled in a national report. For the purposes of this study, the focus was on a Midwestern state in the United States and reports from 1990 through 2022. Over the past 25 years, teacher shortages have been reported in the areas of art, music, drama, as well as foreign languages. It is important to note that in the 2015–2016 academic year, the Teacher Shortage Area (TSA) report began to delineate grade levels in their TSA reporting. In the 2017–2018 academic year, there were K–12 shortages in art, music, and drama; early childhood special education reported shortages for ages 0 through 8; special education had shortages for ages 5 through 21 or K through 12 into Transitions ages to 21

years old; foreign languages had shortages in K through 12; mathematics had shortages for Grades 7 through 12; and natural sciences had shortages for Grades 7 through 12. The TSA (2017) report indicated that the nation had teacher shortages in bilingual education and foreign languages.

See et al. (2020) analyzed journal articles, electronic databases, Google/Google Scholar, and various resources to provide an in-depth investigation of practices from an international perspective on teacher retention rates. Researchers indicated that recruiting and retaining qualified teachers is a persistent international problem similar to the United States' teacher shortages, which can impact the stability of schools as well as student success. According to an analysis of over 120 articles and 13 information databases selected for the study, the common factors include compensation, alternative training, induction and mentoring, professional development, and leader or administrative support.

Ryan and Deci 's (2017) SDT theory to understand human behavior as it relates to three psychological factors within intrinsic motivation was chosen as the conceptual framework to understand retention rates among public school educators in this study. Autonomy, competency, and relatedness are found in research as isolated focus areas. In this literature review, I selected focus areas that directly correlate with the SDT's three basic psychological factors. I examined the current research on teacher induction and mentor programs, teachers and administrative supports, traditional and nontraditional preparation programs, and ongoing professional development to support various levels of educators. Furthermore, I examined additional motivational factors that influence a teacher's willingness to remain in the field of education.

Literature Search Strategy

Efforts to search for national statistics and references to retention rates in public school settings yielded published figures from the 2012 and 2015–2016 school years. There have been no additional national statistics reported; however, reports from individual states were updated in the years 2017–2018. While there have been no updated national statistics using the same parameters as those published in 2017–2018, the National Center for Education Statistics (2023b) has created a report to a new set of data using a Pulse Survey sent to principals from a targeted set of schools to provide perceptions of how well their schools are staffed and other areas of consideration for school organizations.

To provide a comprehensive analysis of the current research evidence on novice teacher retention rates in public school settings, I searched the following databases: Education Research Complete, Sage Premier, ERIC, Taylor and Francis, Google Scholar, and U.S. Department of Education, Post Secondary, and the National Center for Education Statistics. To find related research, the following keywords were included: *teacher retention, autonomy, relatedness, teacher preparation, induction programs, administrative support, motivation, teacher perception, teacher mentoring, compensation, teacher competency, and causes of teacher turnover*. After an initial search, I found an absence of literature to review and consulted a librarian for assistance in determining additional search engines, which assisted in generating ideas regarding the appropriate keywords and phrases. I selected peer-reviewed and journal article function to ensure that all the produced literature would fit within the parameters of the study. A

strong base of articles assisted me in including articles that provided historical frameworks as well as information relevant to the current field of study. Articles for the literature review ranged from as early as 2002 to as recent as 2023. I met several times with the Walden librarians to ensure that all resources were exhausted, as well as had the most recent statistics from any national reporting center. After consultation, my committee chair approved my literature range to cover from 2002–2022 to allow for as much topical breadth as possible, while noting that the absence of literature made the necessity of this research even more relevant. The older articles allowed for a broader discussion of SDT as it relates to the dynamic factors contributing to the understanding of retention rates among novice teachers. According to Thibault Landry et al. (2019), SDT has been used to assess the value of life and is increasingly being employed to assess work settings and the influence of internal and external motivation. SDT studies reviewed were found more prevalent in the most recent years.

Conceptual Framework

Deci and Ryan's (2002) SDT begins with the basis that there is a coherent sense of self to include wholeness, vitality, and integrity. This means that individuals start with an innate inclination to demonstrate and highlight their interest to overcome challenges, view new perspectives, and utilize a transformational approach to internalized cultural practices. Deci and Ryan (2002) cautioned that this growth in integration is not only significant from a theoretical standpoint, but also at the practitioner level, as they maintained that practitioners have a natural tendency towards maximizing their potential while simultaneously sharing their integrity across a variety of settings. Thus, there is an

understanding that practitioners make no assumptions that external means of shaping and controlling behaviors are any less or more valuable variables that impact sense of self. SDT serves as a primary purpose to account for the human tendencies towards engagement and development as well as the human propensity to form connections with individuals and groups; however, SDT also includes a criterion that there are social-contextual factors that support or hinder tendencies. Within SDT, there is a transparent organization with basic or fundamental psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy.

Social environments that promote these three basic needs are the basis for supporting healthy functioning, whereas conflict and dissatisfaction are at a minimum. Competences refer to the feeling of efficacy in ongoing interactions with the social environment and experiencing opportunities to exercise and express one's capacities (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 7). Competence is not entirely a skill or trait but is more of a sense of confidence and advocacy in practice. Relatedness is the feeling connected to others, to care for and be cared for by those others; they have a sense of belongingness both individually and within community. Finally, autonomy refers to being perceived as the origin or source of one's own behaviors.

Autonomy

Autonomy invokes creativity in how individuals approach their work with limited controls in place. Individuals do better with a sense of autonomy rather than having the imposition of timelines and restrictions to the activities they are tasked to complete (Deci & Flaste, 1996). People have a need to have personal autonomy to sustain an intrinsic

value within their work that shares their personal belief system and allows the individual the ability to instill a sense a self rather than feeling that their work is controlled solely by external factors and/or other people. Individuals experience control in their daily lives with the simple things like alarm clocks and work schedules; however, when there is opportunity for choices, individuals thrive with the ability to have a voice in how and what is occurring (Deci & Flaste, 1996). Deci and Ryan (2002) posited that when teachers act in an autonomously supported manner, students benefit from being given the opportunity to be listened to and have value-added input in their day-to-day activities.

Competency

Competency in the work that teachers do is a vital part of the motivation that drives them to continue to challenge and take risks in the classroom. Competency is tied directly to the foundational knowledge base that the teacher has to offer their students. Professional knowledge of curriculum, behavior, and instructional practices provides teachers with a sense of efficacy and efficiency in their daily practices (Deci & Flaste, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Ryan and Deci (2017) posited that the greatest accomplishment in competency is the ability to “exercise and enhance skills” (p. 153). Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) argued that teachers provided with professional development to further their skills are more likely to remain in the field. Skillsets and opportunities for growth expand the consideration that competency has a unique role in the motivation of educators.

Relatedness

Understanding the individual in terms of both motivation and emotional dynamic presents challenges in the ability to be aware of multiple factors that influence an individual's ability to connect with their environment in the initial stages of entering the setting, as well as maintaining the connection to sustain productivity and a sense of accomplishment. Exploring relatedness relies on the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci & Flaste, 1996). Researchers have been challenged to understand how relatedness is perceived in the educational setting; however, one may consider relatedness as the relationships among groups such as peers, administrators, and students (Fradkin-Hayslip, 2021). Connecting and relating to one's environment has a lasting effect on the psyche. Deci and Flaste (1996) posited that the interaction between individuals seeking clarity and autonomy and their environment provides a greater sense of intrinsic motivation and, in general, impacts the individual's overall sense of competency.

Psychological Principles

These psychological needs provided the basis for describing the environment's characteristics that support versus undermine the organism's attempt to master and engage in the new situation. This means that educators who have a complete sense of self, which includes the three psychological factors of autonomy, competency, and relatedness, act in such a way that their integrity and internal value system are minimally diminished when presented with conflict and challenges. Researchers have indicated that there is reason to consider that autonomy may have some correlations with an implied

relationship with retention (Worth & Van Den Brande, 2020). Similarly, Fradkin-Hayslip (2021) posited that competency and relatedness correlate significantly with retention, while autonomy shows an implied causal relationship with retention.

To understand the departure of educators, researchers recommend exploring educators' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors with regard to why educators choose to exit the field. Continued research is supported using SDT as the framework to depict the relationship between motivation and retention rates (Fradkin-Hayslip, 2021; Onyefulu et al., 2022). Efforts to understand the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have primarily been made in isolation. This has yielded results that indicate that intrinsic motivation places much more emphasis on perceptions of self- versus extrinsic motivation, which primarily focuses on outcomes and often is only present during periods of control and satisfaction.

Ryan and Deci's (2017) SDT, which may be used to understand human behavior as it relates to three psychological factors within intrinsic motivation, was the conceptual framework that was used in this study to understand retention rates among public school educators and intrinsic motivation factors that influence decisions to remain in the field of education. Autonomy, competency, and relatedness are found in research as isolated focus areas. In this literature review, I selected focus areas that directly correlate with the SDT's three fundamental psychological factors. I examined the current research on teacher induction and mentor programs, teachers and administrative supports, traditional and nontraditional preparation programs, and ongoing professional development to

support various levels of educators. Furthermore, I examined additional motivational factors that influence a teacher's willingness to remain in the field of education.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

Working Conditions

According to Geiger and Pivovarova (2018), over 1 million educators enter, exit, or transition between public K–12 schools and districts. Whether it be educators leaving the field or leaving their current setting, researchers are increasingly determined to provide policymakers with statistically supported influential factors and potential solutions that focus on retaining high-quality educators. Researchers posit that neither low-poverty nor high-poverty schools are a significant factor in retention rates; however, working conditions and school characteristics may influence educator retention rates. Working conditions and school characteristics may affect education attrition and retention rates in various settings (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Rosenberg & Anderson, 2021).

Rosenberg and Anderson (2021) posited that there was a reduction in turnover rates among six districts they studied over a period of 3 years. Over the period of 4 years, the study provided turnover rates with a range of decline and an increase in the years 2018–2019. There was a significant decline in the average rates in the final reporting year of 2019–2020, with an average of just over 10%. The researchers noted decreases in four of the six districts, with the remaining two districts having smaller declines (Rosenberg & Anderson, 2021). One of the key findings indicated that novice teachers were more likely to exit the district with potential contributing factors such as burnout and lack of fit.

Additional findings indicated that novice teachers were staying in schools identified as high poverty versus the more veteran teachers. Rosenberg and Anderson (2021) also indicated that “in 2020, these schools disproportionately benefited from the decreased turnover among rookie teachers” (p. 8). The researchers indicated that it is atypical to have novice teachers remaining in these schools; however, the year 2020 showed the decreasing number of turnovers among this demographic. While this year had shown a decline in turnover rates, the overall findings indicate that turnover remained significant, with the higher poverty schools being heavily impacted. Additionally, working conditions remained a contributing factor to teacher turnover (Rosenberg & Anderson, 2021).

Working conditions include administrative support, preservice professional development, induction, school characteristics, induction/mentoring programs, and evaluation systems (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Rosenberg & Anderson, 2021). Researchers have studied the working conditions in isolation and, some combination using varied methods to understand why educators decide to leave the field of education and at what point in the educator's career do they exit the field. This dynamic was explored by providing an in-depth analysis of each of the conditions and the method utilized to study them.

Administrative Support

Administrative support is described as the connectivity that the school and district administrator have with the educator and what levels of personal and professional assistance was in place to ensure the educator was successful in their assignment. Additionally, administrative support extends from the principal, assistant principal,

deans, and district directors. Urick (2020) posited there were four types of leaders: integrated, transitioned, balkanized, and limited. Integrated and transitioned leadership possess similar skills in which there is shared leadership and some level of instructional practice. Balkanized was described as a leader who conveys authority with little to no centralized decisions. Finally, limited is described as a lack of leadership skill and knowledge. Urick (2020) sought to understand the aforementioned leadership styles and perceptions of teachers in their decision-making to remain in that setting. Leaders who had a more integrated style of managing schools had higher perceptions among the teaching staff, and teachers were more likely to stay in their current setting. Similarly, teachers with a transitioned leader also showed higher rates of teacher retention than those in the balkanized and limited leadership style schools (Urick, 2020).

Baker et al. (2022) provided clarity on a case study where the administrator recognized that strategies must shift to meet the needs of a particular school. One elementary principal recognized for their ability to recruit and retain staff was moved to a low retaining school and deployed similar strategies. The administrator altered their approach to assume all administrative tasks to alleviate additional work from their teachers. The administrator progressively added more initiatives which led to an increase in the number of meetings as well as extending the workday for many of their teachers. These actions led to an increase in exiting teaching staff at a considerably higher rate than previously reported. Exiting teachers reported that the increased workload and extended workday led to frustration and was a direct cause of their decision to leave. In addition, by removing teachers from some of the administrative tasks, the perception was that the

teacher voice was not appreciated nor valued. This administrator reflected on the feedback and solicited input from teacher leaders in each grade level thereby leading to shifting their leadership approach to match what the school needs were (Baker et al., 2022).

Administrative support can also be described with three specific themes: enforcement of consequences for student misconduct, building a culture of respect and appreciation and developing collegial relationships among teaching staff (Conley & You, 2017). Conley and You (2017) posit that school leaders must possess the necessary skills to support their staff. Administrative support may influence teacher's joining the field of education. As many novice educators indicate, administrative support during their first years of teaching may lessen the anxiety and tension that often accompanies entering a new teaching environment (Conley & You, 2017; Grissom & Bartanen, 2018).

Administrators are in unique positions to navigate an organization's ability to retain high-quality educators develop a positive school culture and climate, and influence educators' experiences in education settings. Administrators are considered the instructional leaders and discipline enforcers in the school system and provide critical feedback to educators (Conley & You, 2017). Educators lean on their administrators for basic support in guiding them to the appropriate professional development and partners in understanding behavioral challenges in their individual classrooms (Olsen & Huang, 2019). Additionally, administrators that provide consistent support to educators build strong relationships and foster a welcoming, safe environment. Olsen and Huang (2019) argued that additional factors, such as the race and gender of the administrator, may

influence the relationship between the educator and the administrator. According to researchers, administrators have more control over teacher retention rates than previously discovered, thereby impacting a teacher's willingness to remain in the field. Districts have the responsibility to have an emphasis on the guidance and support of administrators, thus building positive working relationships, increasing autonomy among the education staff, targeting specific training opportunities, and consistently supporting discipline within their building (Baker et al., 2022; Conely & You, 2017; Mireles-Rios & Becchio, 2018; Urick, 2020).

Additionally, positive school climate, teacher self-efficacy, and behavior management increase the likelihood to remain in the building for the following year (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Educators' behavior management skills alone were not the predictor for retention rate. Educators receive ongoing training, participate in courses, and are included in induction programs in their school district. Alternative programs have been increasingly used in high-poverty urban areas as well as teacher placements in difficult to staff settings in which there are significant shortages in highly specialized fields (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2107).

The field provides advantages and disadvantages to individuals using the alternative education program as it relates to continuing shortages and increased rates of teachers exiting the field. Several factors could be considered as contributing to the attrition rates, such as insufficient training opportunities and unrealistic expectations from those entering an alternative approach to becoming a teacher. Additionally, researchers

are unable to draw comparisons due to the varying differences among alternative education programs (Onyefulu et al., 2022; Shibiti, 2020).

School Characteristics

School characteristics focus on the size, location, student demographics, type of school, age of the school, culture, and climate, and poverty level (Whipp & Geronime, 2017). School characteristics can be described as the social, economic status of the school, student demographics, geographical location, and access to resources such as local businesses, professional development, and urban advantages. Researchers indicate that there is a lack of highly qualified educators willing to teach in isolated areas or schools that have less than favorable school characteristics (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Whipp & Geronime, 2017). Similarly, research indicates student demographics often mirror the demographics of the educators. Schools with a significant minority population report teacher attrition rates three times greater than predominantly white schools (Hughes, 2012). Garcia and Weiss (2019) posit that high poverty schools have more vacant positions that are unable to be filled with qualified educators. School characteristics are not considered to be primary factors of teacher retention rates; however, it is worthy to note much of the research include school characteristics as a potential variable.

Williams et al. (2022) sought to understand the perceptions of educational stakeholders in the rural Western United States regarding the retention of teachers and rural communities. This mixed-method study had a survey instrument that included open-ended questions with a sample size of 806 respondents. The study was conducted over a

period of 4 months from late 2017 to early 2018. Not only did the study examine similar research that had reported teacher retention as one of the greatest challenges, but also the struggles that rural communities have in attracting and retaining quality teachers. Two significant findings from the study were in the area or responses from the school administrators and their perception about teacher shortages. The results of the completing surveys included that 76% of school administrators found that certified teachers are more qualified than their counterparts who have an alternative or a nontraditional educational background. Additionally, they stated are they found that only 6% believed that hiring provisional teachers was an effective way to support Student outcomes. Another significant finding were the influential factors impacting teacher retention rates: lack of academic support, low pay and high responsibilities, and competitive neighboring districts. The study supported earlier research describing that novice teachers require support through orientation, professional development, mentoring, supportive administrators, and workload adjustments (Williams et al., 2022).

Motivation

Prospective teachers have a passion for teaching as they were inspired by former teachers or mentors in which they wanted to continue the path of helping and supporting youth in various settings. Additionally, there is a shared belief that education was an essential function of society and was a well-respected profession that, with supports, promotes acceptance of varied beliefs and differences (Olsen & Huang, 2017). However, the combination of motivation and beliefs is individual dependent, yet remains a consistent factor in prospective teachers choosing the field of education and the

approaches to teaching and learning. Prospective teachers entering the field with an altruistic view on servitude and an innate desire to work with children presented with a greater understanding of the complexities of teaching and learning. However, research also indicates that extrinsic motivation within the prospective teachers that held an altruistic belief was present and may impact the statistical significance of the study outcomes (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Conley & You, 2017).

Similarly, Amorim Neto et al. (2018) found that motivation or lack thereof leads to teacher burnout. In a survey sample of 322 Public Schools teachers, Amorim Neto et al. (2018) determined that there was more considerable impact on retention rates schools that had a demographic of K through 8th grade. Researchers found this to be surprising information due to a typical finding that elementary teachers were much more connected with their students and school; therefore, they were usually found in the group that maintained their employment within their school district and individual schools. In their study, they included teamwork as a contributing factor as well as motivation. Amorim Neto et al. (2018) posit that partnership can add benefits to the working relationships and coteaching to the teacher's job satisfaction. With regards to job satisfaction, United States teachers were more receptive to visiting other classrooms and having collaborative conversations about the same practices and ways to implement interventions.

Goe et al. (2020) sought to provide insights into teachers' experiences engaged in conversations on how to support teacher development and retention. The study used focus groups that were solely voluntary and had defined constructs that posed questions like "Why they became teachers" and "Things the teacher would like to change" (Goe et

al., 2020, p. 6). Goe et al. (2020) posited that teacher motivation was influenced by interpersonal support and a supportive environment. Additionally, it was posited that teachers want to be recognized for their work and want additional opportunities to learn and grow as professionals. Furthermore, it was recommended to explore how duties of responsibilities are divided between school systems and policymakers, especially in teacher retention, evaluation of teachers, and how teachers gain access to professional development.

Bastian et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative study to understand the relationship between personality traits and teacher performance and retention rates among novice educators. Bastian et al. (2017) posit that personality traits alone are not the primary factor in determining teacher performance. The study also states that personality traits influence decision making skills, behaviors, and professional growth. The study used the Five-Factor Model of Personality (FFM) to analyze the relationship between personality traits and beginning teacher outcomes (Bastian et al., 2017). In addition to the FFM, the researchers included teacher value-added scores, evaluation ratings, and retention rates. Using a multivariate and a univariate analysis to analyze their results, the researchers determined that a positive correlation between the personality trait of cautiousness and retention of first-year teachers. Additionally, there was a negative correlation between the teacher evaluation results and the personality traits of adventurousness and imagination. The results of the study indicate that personality traits positively influence retention rates. Additionally, the results of this study could impact policy makers decisions on

developing strong in-service programs. Bastian et al. (2017) posit that the study contributed to the field by providing insight for policy makers among first-year teachers.

Compensation Review

An additional consideration to address teacher retention rates involves the compensation of public-school employees. There are multiple ways educators are paid; some districts use a traditional salary schedule, merit pay, salary bands, and annual increases based on effectiveness ratings. Conventional salary schedules place teachers on a scale based on education level and years of experience. Merit pay provides educators an increase that depends upon student outcomes on state assessments and district assessment growth. Annual increases based on effectiveness ratings include educator ratings of highly effective, effective, partially effective, and not effective on a professional practice rubric and a portion that is based on student achievement.

Researchers indicated that the financial awards of merit pay, or performance pay stifle the ability of teachers' effectiveness, thereby impacting their motivation in student outcomes and their willingness to remain in their school environment (Morrell & Abston, 2019; Shifrer et al., 2017). According to Shifrer et al. (2017), education systems are vastly different than business systems and educators are not extrinsically motivated by means of rewards and punishment. Additionally, researchers indicated that the financial awards of merit pay, or performance pay stifle the ability of teachers' effectiveness; thereby, impacting their motivation in student outcomes as well as willingness to remain in their school environment.

While salary rates vary within states in across the nation, states and districts continue to explore compensation packages that are competitive and are designed with the intent to mitigate the teacher retention issues that many districts and states face. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) posit that teacher salaries have declined since the 1990s with an example a very experienced teacher with a family would qualify for various forms of government assistance. Both the federal and state government also explore various ways to provide compensation to beginning teachers and those with employment in underperforming and impoverished schools. Thibault Landry et al. (2019) posit that compensation rewards based on an informative measure, staff experience increase satisfaction and lowered negative connotations. Additionally, there was perceived negative influence by employees when a compensation reward was controlled in fashion for example tied to specific outcomes or a relationship between the cash reward and the employees job performance. Thibault Landry et al. (2019) concluded that employees in a controlled cash or compensation environment we're more likely to focus on external means or rewards rather than the benefit of the actual job.

Shifrer et al. (2017) detailed a vital consideration is the age and generation are the current teaching population. Among the current education demographics, we have more millennial workers than Generation X or baby boomers that make up the current teaching ranks. Morrell and Abston (2019) found that only 29% of millennial workers report they are engaged at work while 55% report not being engaged. Engagement is defined as the extent that employees have a connection with their environment, and performance is conveyed through high-quality practices or positive behaviors (Morrell & Abston, 2019).

Compensation was not highly ranked as an important factor in remaining in their position; this is in contradiction to the proposed impact that compensation packages have towards teachers remaining in the field (Shifrer et al., 2017). Despite mixed findings on whether compensation significantly impacts teachers' willingness to stay in the field of education, several studies indicate that a combination of compensation autonomy and intrinsic motivation is more likely to affect retention rate.

Prieto (2023) posits that the current compensation approach is outdated and has a misaligned theoretical framework. As cited in Prieto (2023), the current salary structure is significantly outdated and has not continued to be a factor in recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers. Prieto recommends that in using the equity theory as a framework, researchers can explore alternative compensation models. The study used the initiatives in Texas, Minnesota, and the District of Columbia (D.C.) as they provided formal evaluations of teacher pay programs. Prieto says that the standard practice of calculating teacher salaries is insufficient to recruit new teachers into the profession.

Additionally, it is stated that many teachers can have a higher earning potential outside the education setting. It is recommended that organizations consider alternate ways to compensate teachers. One of the recommendations is to consider performance as a factor in how teacher salaries are calculated individually. Organizations should be looking at how their salary structures are currently designed to meet the growing needs of our existing education system.

Agboola and Offong (2018) investigated teacher retention rates in the private sector of education. The researchers surveyed 784 teachers in the private school sector

regarding incentives and teacher retention. The researchers sought to understand the relationship between the variables of job security, remuneration, promotion, and welfare, and retention rates.

The key findings from the research indicated a significant relationship between job security, teacher removal remuneration, promotion, and welfare and teacher retention. The findings indicated that the financial consideration of salaries sufficient promotions when a teacher is worthy of them contributes to teachers' willingness to stay in their current positions; the researchers posited that the basic needs of individuals are not currently being met in the salary structures and promotion processes also indicated that staff welfare as an additional package on top of teacher salaries also contributed to teacher retention. At one particular school, not only were teachers not granted sick leave they also didn't support teachers being able to take care of themselves physically. Some of the recommendations from this study were that school leadership should consider the factors of job security remuneration, promotions, and the welfare packages be considered as they move forward in retaining their current staff. One additional recommendation was that leadership consider soft loans, free medical care, and free accommodation, which could all lend to and enhance motivation (Agboola & Offong, 2018).

Teacher Induction Programs and Mentoring

Researchers continue to provide a strong correlation with teacher retention and induction programs; however there continued to be discrepancies in the variations of induction programs influence on retention rates. State leaders, district leaders, and policy makers have the ability to strategically plan and implement strong induction programs to

combat teacher shortages. One district in Colorado targeted special education teachers in an effort to retain quality teachers. Curton and Hess (2023) provided insight on St. Vrain Valley Schools special education teacher candidate pool and how they were able to develop an induction program tailored to provide new teacher with professional development, mentorship, and placement in cohorts to provide continuity. The induction program was a two-year commitment between new teachers and district leaders. Along with the cohort classes, novice teachers also received 24 hours of instructional support with a coach within the first year of teaching (Curton & Hess, 2023).

One of the additional key elements in this pilot project was that special education teachers complete their first Individualized Education Plans (IEP's) with the support of their instructional coach mentor. The instructional coach mentor provided the special education teachers with an example of an IEP as well the provision of reflective practices. Special education case management is gradually released to novice special education teachers in a manner that allows the novice teacher to build confidence in not only completing IEPs but also having one specific individual to field questions or concerns. Findings from the study revealed that the retention rates of cohort teachers were higher than the state average at 85% of teachers returning to the same school after the first year. Further findings indicate that an additional essential component of success was the connections with district and building leaders (Curton & Hess, 2023).

Induction programs were relatively new around the turn of the century; therefore, much of the research with a focus on comprehensive induction programs yielded conflicting results with regards to teacher retention rates. Similarly, there were concerns

with the research being limited by the timing of the implementation of induction programs at multiple grade levels. Researchers built upon the work of Ingersoll and Strong with an expanded analysis of comprehensive induction programs versus prevailing induction programs with a focus on a longitudinal analysis of the Schools and Staffing and Teacher Follow-Up Surveys (SASS/TFS), Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Survey (BTLS), and a longitudinal survey of early career teachers (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). One critical aspect of the research was determining if the induction programs were stand-alone or had additional support to assist novice teachers. Additionally, the type of classroom novice teachers were instructing was considered. Researchers found that specialized areas such as special education had higher turnover rates than typical classrooms, including all grade levels (Curton & Hess, 2023; Hong & Matsko, 2019).

Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) found that in-school and in-district retention appears to be unrelated to induction programs in isolation or combination with other factors. However, it is conjectured that teachers who have minimal induction support struggle within their first few years, thereby increasing their willingness to leave the district for multiple reasons to include familial support or job relocation. One missing characteristic, such as teacher preparation or administrative support, could be reported to have some significance in retention rate. Some researchers may say the financial health of the organization is an additional factor of consideration of educator retention rate.

As many other researchers have indicated, the duration and intensity of the program place an intricate role in determining the efficacy among novice educators. Within the induction program, two critical factors came to light: (1) trust of their mentor

and (2) feelings of supportiveness by their mentors. The participants indicated that with the support from their mentors assigned to them in the induction programs, there was an increase in perceptions of value and reduction in stress as it related to their day-to-day activities (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). The researchers further argued the duration of induction programs yielded higher rates of retention than those that received little to no induction programming. Additionally, induction programs that included high-quality professional development offerings, adequate resources, and state-of-the-art facilities for much more favorable than induction programs that were not able to afford their teachers extended opportunities or advanced opportunities.

Professional development has a significant impact on teacher practice. Student outcomes are critically important for sustainability within ongoing professional learning communities where novice teachers can problem-solve their needs for content expertise with their mentors. University teacher education programs can support their graduates with common knowledge beliefs and practices that induction programs can use as foundations for growth and development in novice teachers (Rondfeldt & McQueen, 2017).

Walker and Kutsyuruba (2019) examined the impact of teacher induction and mentoring was not consistently documented throughout the available data that was used in the study program. The study indicated the administrator's role; there was a lack of consistency. The results indicated approximately 40 to 45% of respondents were encouraged to discuss their role as an educator within the school system. Overall, it was elaborated that the administrator did, in fact, play a significant supportive role in

beginning teachers' experience thereby increasing their willingness to remain in the teaching field.

Hong and Matsko (2019) examined the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) initiative of a two-year induction program for novice educators in their first two years of teaching. The researchers used the survey results of over 1,000 CPS elementary novice educators previously collected. CPS used various features such as frequency of mentee/mentor, building level supports, working conditions, and resources. The study participants were all in elementary schools and entering either their first or second year of teaching (Hong & Matsko, 2019).

Billingsley et al. (2019) explored how induction programs with novice special education teachers impacted their preparedness. The study used the sensemaking theory to provide insights on how novice special education teachers in induction programs that are supported with high-leverage practices are influenced in their instructional practices and understanding their role. The study defined induction “as a program of support and guidance for new teachers, aimed at supporting growth, effectiveness, and retention” (Billingsley et al., 2019, p. 367). Additionally, the study included preservice preparation as a potential contributing factor in how special education teachers interpret and implement effective instructional strategies. Billingsley et al. (2019) concluded that induction programs using high-leverage practices may impact special education teachers’ knowledge of their roles, as well as, how to effectively implement instructional strategies. In addition, leaders and mentors have a multitude of chances to embed high-leverage

practices in situations such as: mentoring, professional development, and teacher orientation.

Traditional and Nontraditional Teacher Training

Educators enter the educational field employing traditional coursework and certification and nontraditional or alternative methods to become teachers. As teacher attrition rates became increasingly high, the need for alternative or nontraditional training methods subsequently have increased as well. Guthery and Bailes (2019) further explain the likelihood of educators remaining in the field may be influenced by the path in which entry to education was taken.

Brownell et al. (2018) reviewed practices that many rural districts incorporate to meet the demands of attracting quality teachers. Such methods include developing programs within the district to “grow your own” through recruiting adults within the community and designing programs in secondary schools that provide courses and support for high school students who have an interest in teaching (Brownell et al., 2018). Teach for America (TFA) and Troops to Teachers are two organizations that support educator shortages across the country (CDE, 2021; Teach for America, 2020). TFA places college graduates within economically challenged educational settings for a minimum of a two-year commitment from graduates who engage in this alternative pathway (Teach for America, 2020). Similarly, Troops to Teachers pairs veterans with specific teaching areas that are in shortage and match the individuals' skillset. Veterans and employers are provided with extensive resources to meet the demands of additional education and/or job placement (CDE, 2021).

Teachers receive ongoing training, participate in courses, and are included in their school district's induction programs while enrolled in alternative programs. Teachers enrolled in alternative programs can teach under an emergency annual teaching license, which can be reissued for up to three years. The Colorado Department of Education requires a signature from a district director or executive director for agreement to employ while the teacher is enrolled in the alternative program (CDE, 2020a).

Alternative programs have been increasingly used in high-poverty urban areas and rural settings in which there are significant shortages in highly specialized fields. The field provides advantages and disadvantages to individuals using the alternative education program related to continuing shortages and increased rates of teachers exiting the field. Several factors could contribute to the attrition rates, such as insufficient training opportunities and unrealistic expectations from those entering an alternative approach to becoming a teacher.

A study focused on college of education in Ghana (Adu-Yeboah & Kwaah, 2018) provides insight into teacher preparation in three purposefully sampled colleges of Education in the central region of Ghana. Over 200 teacher trainees were given a questionnaire to discover their experiences and perceptions of the practicum experiences. This study was done after a recent restructuring of the initial teacher education programs. Teacher training cadets reported that they believed they understood or knew the processes involved in preparing for classroom experiences yet, were not fully invested in the study as they were teaching their peers, and none of the activities counted towards their grades. Adu-Yeboah and Kwaah (2018) report that while the students adhered to the lesson

presentation, they needed to demonstrate knowledge of the application. One of the study's main recommendations was to have the universities think critically about their preservice programs within the first two years of their colleges of education.

Viviana et al. (2023) conducted a quantitative study regarding teacher preparedness and its influence on teacher retention rates specifically in New York City. The participants in this study were math teachers in their first year of employment. The participants in the study appeared to have degrees in other fields and thereby were in an Alternative Program to receive their teaching certification. The participants were to receive their master's certification after the first two years a full-time teaching. The study compared like for like demographics as to minimize limitations of the study. The researchers posited that the findings using four of the six models that looked at significant levels significance levels of retention rates showed student preparedness had a positive relationship with teacher retention.

Ongoing Professional Development

Professional development is primarily focused on growing educators' ability to maximize their teaching efforts in their classrooms to improve student outcomes. Professional development is believed to positively impact self-efficacy as educators internalize the knowledge and their ability to organize and execute within their discipline. Researchers also indicate that professional development can contribute to the retention of teachers, however self-efficacy plays a critical role. While several studies show positive effects of professional development, it remains that if there is a lack of consistency or follow-up interventions, educators may continue to leave the teaching field despite

professional development opportunities within their first two years. There's also evidence that professional development without administrative support does not yield the same results (Billingsley et al., 2019; Conley & You, 2017).

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Beginning teachers require a strong understanding of instructional practices and supported professional development to hone their skills in newly learned instructional strategies. The implementation of instructional strategies plays an intricate role in the efficacy of the program as well as the efficacy of the teacher. Novice teachers are up against challenges of being new to a school system as well as being new to the field of

education. Conley and You (2017) posit workplace variables, administrative support and teacher team efficacy directly influence special educators' willingness to remain in the field. Administrative supervision included individual recognition, clear vision, and supportive nature. Additionally, it was suggested that administrative support could outweigh various negative factors that influence new teachers. Anthony et al. (2019) sought to understand the distribution of novice teacher induction tasks among administrators, mentor teachers, and teacher leaders. In their findings mentor teachers had fewer tasks than teacher leaders. Teacher leaders were reported to have been the primary supporters of novice educators in the areas of professional development, curricular planning, orientation to the district/school, and collaboration among school professionals. However, pedagogical supports, to include socialization tasks, were evenly distributed among mentors, teacher leaders, and administrators; thereby, sharing in the responsibility of influences, satisfaction, and preparedness (Anthony et al., 2019).

Shibiti (2020) investigated teacher retention rates with relation to work engagement using quantitative measures. Shibiti (2020) collected 278 questionnaires from one public school district to analyze the dynamic that work engagement has on retention rates. The researcher indicated the limitation of the study being centralized and not able to make generalizations. Despite the limitations, Shibiti (2020) posited that retention rates of educators are tied with factors such as compensation, professional development, and progressive advancements. The recommendations for future studies including a wider range of participants in different educational organizations to provide more generalized findings. Further recommendations suggested changes in methodology

to include both quantitative and qualitative studies to determine factors that influence/impact retention rates.

Kaplan's (2021) research was grounded in SDT to examine new teachers were supported in the three psychological principles: autonomy, competency, and relatedness. Kaplan (2021) posits that while research has been done to study motivation among teachers, there is limited knowledge of how novice educators are supported through the psychological perspective of SDT. Participants for the study were first year teachers with a sample size of 261. Of the participants, 189 were female and 72 were male. Participants completing this study were enrolled in a workshop at their university level. The workshops were designed specifically for the three psychological principles. Results from the study posit that there is positive correlations between the workshops and autonomy, competency, and relatedness (Kaplan, 2021). The findings promote the need for a supportive environment for novice educators. Kaplan (2021) posits that the results support previous literature by offering a unique perspective on novice educators and retention.

COVID-19 Implications

COVID-19 has been unlike any other major disruption to the learning environment forcing schools and districts to move to a virtual platform of instruction. Many districts across the nation made this decision based on the national health news and local county health departments. Kraft, Simon, and Lyon (2021) sought to understand the impact of COVID-19 on teacher working conditions shift to the home environment. Teachers, at all career points, reported feeling inadequate and that they found difficulty in

engaging students in online learning. Additionally, positive school support for teachers made an impact on the teachers “sense of success” (Kraft et al., 2021, p. 4). Sartain and El-Haj (2021) indicated that COVID-19 pandemic was not only unprecedented but, mirrored states and cities’ political stance on mental health. This phenomenon was not isolated to public education as evidenced by the rise of COVID-19 cases and unemployment rates from March 2020 to August 2020 (Sartain & El-Haj, 2021).

Another study in one Canadian province, (Gunn et al., 2023), explored retention rates of teachers who began their careers during COVID-19. This study was part of an original longitudinal study that was focused on analyzing trends of novice teachers. The study had over 800 participants who completed a survey that had a Likert scale and open-ended questions. Only 26 participants selected to further participate in a focus group. The focus group had teachers with a range of experience and included representatives from K-12 classrooms. Gunn et al. (2023) reported that there varied stories that shared in the similarity of some lack of knowledge around what “normal” means. Results of the study indicated that despite continued hardships during COVID-19, personal factors remained the same especially those regarding resiliency. One unique interpretation was the difficulty in understanding why novice educators showed resiliency (Gunn et al., 2023).

Mental health or mental well-being continues to be a major consideration in organizations ability to retain staff. Teacher shortages, including resignations, retirement, and lack of available applicants, are predominant throughout the state of California (Carver-Thomas, Lueng, Burns, & Ondrasek, 2021). In addition to the shortage of applicants, districts remain concerned about the competency of incoming staff. Teachers

entering the field on a substitute license or alternative licensure process are one of the ways that districts are dealing with shortages. Stress and burn-out are often characteristics used to describe teacher well-being (Walter & Fox, 2021). Walter and Fox (2021) focused on indicators of teacher well-being including stress, burn-out, isolation, challenging student behaviors, lack of administrative support, and inadequate compensation for their qualitative study which included 49 teachers for two cycles of data collection. Twenty-five of the 49 teachers participated in the second cycle of data collection to include additional interviews. Three main themes emerged: well-being strategies did not address the stress during the pandemic; leadership continues to be a significant factor; and feelings of being heard, safe, and valued impact overall teacher well-being (Walter & Fox, 2021).

Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021) provided insights into how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the educational setting from an in-person to an online environment from several articles published during this timeframe. One of the most significant findings from this study was the need for developing countries to find a suitable pedagogy and for different class levels in all of the across educational settings. Educational organizations are recommended to allocate resources for professional development of teachers in a variety of areas that have a positive impact to online teaching. This includes creativity innovation an interactive friendly tools for teachers and students. COVID- 19 caused many educational organizations to flip how instructional practices were delivered in a remote platform.

Summary

The literature reviewed provides a basis of what is required for this study to be able to identify the influencing factors of educators' willingness to remain in the field. The analysis covered various aspects of key factors that may have an integral part on whether teacher stay in the field such factors include working conditions, administrative support, school characteristics, compensation, motivation, and teacher induction programs to include mentoring. Teacher retention rates vary between urban settings with high poverty and low poverty. School characteristics such as poverty is outside the locus of control of district and building leaders; however, policymakers and legislators have the power and knowledge to improve systems there by having a direct relationship on whether educators experience good working conditions and if the system has a strong financial help (Adnot et al., 2017).

Increasing retention rates of effective teachers is a key factor in decisions both local and state level, and studies would indicate there is no one method for improvements in our educational system. Additionally, the literature review explored possibilities such as compensation and traditional and nontraditional routes in entering the field of education. The staggering number of teachers leaving the field of education within the first 5 years continues to plague districts and states. Turnover rates are higher in the Southern region of the United States while significantly lower in the Northeastern sections (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll, 2012; Munoz and Rameriz, 2015).

Wilder Research (2019) provided substantial evidence that supports the educator shortages with specific reference to educators of color and those in high impoverished areas. As mentioned earlier, The National Center for Educational Statistics Department (2015) show supportive evidence that teacher turnover rates continue to be on the rise between the years 2007 and 2013. This revelation was identified in an earlier article by Ingersoll (2002) in which the depiction that the revolving door of education is as worrisome today as it was 20 years ago. Subsequent individual state results remain consistent with the statistics provided in the most recent national statistics. Individual states such as Colorado and Minnesota indicated that the educator shortages continue to impact district's ability to hire and retain quality teachers (CDE, 2019, 2020; Wilder Research, 2019).

Novice educators with less than 5 years' experience are rapidly leaving the field of education and are transferring from one district to another. Several factors were studied in isolation such as those mentioned earlier: working conditions compensation connectivity or relatedness administrative support and competency. The research that has been analyzed leads to the need to further research additional influences, as there had not been one factor that shows significant results that would support policymakers and legislation in making changes to educational systems. The literature review exposes a substantial gap in the literature that shows the combined effect of autonomy, competency, and relatedness.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed SDT as the grounded theory for this qualitative study. Three psychological principles were identified and addressed at length to provide the reader with a clear understanding of how each principle relates to the research questions, literature review, and purpose of the study. The literature review provided foundational knowledge of the previous varied research addressing teacher retention across grade levels and discipline. Based on the literature reviewed and recommended studies outlined in this chapter, the qualitative design will be explained in the next chapter. Chapter 3 provided an in-depth overview of how the design for the qualitative study includes the considerations for limitations, strengths, validity, ethical considerations, and how participants will be selected using key stakeholders and random sampling. Additionally, Chapter 3 provided the reader with a detailed explanation of how the data will be collected and analyzed for the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how intrinsic motivation of novice elementary educators within a K–12 public school influences their willingness to remain in teaching. This study explored urban elementary schools in a Midwestern state. Within this section, I outline and describe the methods that were used to frame the research and describe the protocols by which data were collected using a qualitative approach that specifically addresses understanding intrinsic motivation within elementary Grades 3–5 public school teachers and their willingness to remain in the field of education. I restate the research questions and include details of the rationale for the research design, the researcher's role, the methodology, instrumentation, and the procedures for recruitment, participation, data collection, limitations, and data analysis plan. I conclude with a summary and transition to Chapter 4.

Research Design and Rationale

The two research questions that guided this qualitative study were the following:

- RQ1. How does intrinsic motivation influence novice elementary educators' willingness to remain in teaching?
- RQ2. What are the reasons novice educators give for choosing to stay in the field of education?

In determining the research paradigm most appropriate for this study, I considered various approaches that offer insight into why educators remain in the field within the first years. Statistical data such as retention rates, the number of educators in the field,

and retirement rates are available through national and state offices. However, the data portray the statistical aspects and leave out the perspective and perceptions of the actual educators who select to stay or leave. The use of a qualitative study approach for this study provided individual insight into novice elementary educators' willingness to remain in the field. Ravitch and Carl (2106) indicated that qualitative studies have a balanced approach between structure and flexibility that allows researchers to show validity in data collection as well as data analysis. This balanced approach allows for stronger connections in the purpose, problem, and described methods for collecting and analyzing data.

There are various types of approaches within qualitative research design such as field research, basic narrative inquiry, ethnography, phenomenology, systems theory, and grounded theory (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015; Patton, 2015). Possible considerations for this study were phenomenon, grounded theory, basic narrative inquiry, and system theory. Patton (2015) defined phenomenon as a means to “capture the experiences” of individuals with regard to how they feel about, judge, remember, make sense of, and talk about their experiences and find emerging themes within a group’s individual results. One of the core questions involves the meaning, structure, and essence of the people who are experiencing the phenomenon (Patton, 2015).

Ravitch and Carl (2015) posited that narrative research is a study of that which analysis of stories of life experiences (personal and professional), interviews, journals, as means to investigate the phenomenon. Ravitch and Carl used narrative research and narrative inquiry interchangeably, whereas Patton (2015) defined narrative inquiry as a

focus on the complete story to include the beginning, middle, and end. The approach to use personal interviews with specific questions that are designed to answer the overarching research questions is what sets Patton's definition of narrative inquiry apart from Ravitch and Carl's. Patton and Ravitch and Carl presented shared definitions of grounded theory being "an approach to qualitative research that attempts to develop theory that comes from data or the field" (Ravitch & Carl, 2015, p. 23). On the opposite spectrum, systems theory can describe how the data and/or results can guide the researcher to explore the study from almost a "balcony" view. Systems theory goes beyond what is in front of the researcher and allows for the larger conversation of how and why things have an interrelationship (Patton, 2015).

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, I used a basic narrative inquiry to provide the field with some understanding of why novice educators remain in the field of education. I used basic narrative inquiry within the conceptual framework. The SDT framework was selected because it has three psychological principles that allow for open-ended questions in a structured interview. Basic psychological principles of SDT are autonomy, competency, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2004). While each of these principles has been studied in isolation, I found limited research using all three. Additionally, I wanted a strong approach that would provide alignment and connections to a fundamental question that districts face.

Choice of Setting for the Study

The settings I chose for the research were districts considered urban. An urban setting is defined as a school located in or near an urban center, primarily serving poor

and ethnically diverse students in densely populated areas. Urban schools are often characterized by lower academic achievement than suburban schools and high mobility rates by students. I selected to use elementary schools that had a range of 300–400 students. Additionally, I selected schools that had more than one classroom for each grade level.

Role of the Researcher

As the sole author of this study, I served as the interviewer, observer, and data analyzer. My role as a district-level administrator wherein teachers and service providers have, in my experience, a high rate of turnover provided me with a unique background in various philosophies or perceptions as to the reason that influences novice educators' willingness to remain in the field. I was familiar with educational terminology and professional jargon, which could have provided the respondents with a sense of calm and ease during the in-person interviews. This familiarity with K–12 education enabled me to be better able to determine areas in which to expand the in-person interview and identify areas for further questions. This familiarity and knowledge could have hindered the research if complicit bias had not been addressed, and if objective tools had not been used. To maintain objectivity, I had the taped interviews transcribed. I analyzed the data using the prescribed process for qualitative studies.

Methodology

Within this section, I cover the research design topics, the role of the researcher, and the methodology. I discuss the choice of the setting for the study, participant selection logic, instrumentation and materials, procedures for recruitment, participation in

data collection, interviews, interview questions, observations, and document review. Additionally, issues of limitations, ethical practices, and dissemination of findings are included.

Participant Selection Logic

For this study, I used a purposeful sampling approach to select the most appropriate participants. Due to the nature of the study, which involved understanding the influence of SDT on a targeted group of educators, the participants were selected based on their willingness to participate in the study and having served 5 years or less in any teaching environment in public K–12 schools. The study had 8 participants included and provided saturation. The selection of participants was based on meeting the criteria of being in the field of education for less than 5 years. The participants were in elementary Grades 3 through 5, with one special education teacher serving Grades K through 5. Settings included public schools, charter schools, and private schools. No participant was removed from the selection process for any demographic response.

I selected districts with varied student population-sized elementary schools serving kindergarten through fifth grade. Elementary schools with student enrollment between 300 and 500 were used as this provided for two or more teachers for each grade level. The potential pool for one elementary school was six or higher for the selected grades. This study identified critical stakeholders as the elementary school principals/administrators. Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study plan with an expiration date, IRB# 03-07-22-0554044. The principal/administrator received a letter that outlined the study to include the research

question, limitations, and anticipated time educators provided for the research.

Principals/administrators provided their elementary teachers in Grades 3 through 5 with a copy of the letter for their consideration. Respondents provided their email address and willingness to participate directly to me via email. From there, I selected a purposeful stratified sample representing urban school districts across the urban and metropolitan Midwestern states to analyze novice elementary educators' results and willingness to remain in the field.

Instrumentation

Based on the exploratory nature of this study, interviewing was the best approach for this research study. The interview protocol was developed with the committee members and was designed using the SDT framework. The interview protocol was gleaned from the purpose and research questions for this qualitative research study and was linked to each research question as indicated in Appendix A. Patton (2015) posited that scholars have perspectives on the use of central research questions and subquestions and how the formation of the interview questions take shape. Uniform approaches in inquiry and structured interviews provide researchers with a simplified method (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Patton, 2015). According to Patton (2015), these interviews allow researchers to deeply analyze data content, connect with peers, and maintain notes/journals for audit trails. Research techniques and practices must be completed with fidelity of the field and the methods outlined in this section.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

All potential participants were sought from an urban district with the building-level administrator's approval and district-level agreement to conduct a study with human subjects. I contacted the urban districts within the Midwestern state. Districts identified as urban districts were included in the list of targeted vital stakeholder identification. Of the urban district(s), I identified the elementary schools that had a student population ranging from 300 to 400 students and more than one classroom for each grade level. The principals of the schools meeting the criteria were given a written flyer to distribute to their novice educators meeting the participant criteria. I provided the principal with the research questions, the design of the study, and the written agreement that participation would allow for the teachers' ability to complete their day-to-day tasks.

Novice educators received a written flyer from their building-level administrator that I had sent via email communication to identify the study and allow for self-selection to be a participant of the study. The potential participant pool was generated using cooperation from the district human resource offices and social media. This study was based on a voluntary participant pool, and there were no repercussions should a participant decide to withdraw. The participants had a clear understanding of the interview method and how their data were used.

The data collection method I used for this qualitative inquiry was a semistructured interview approach to gather the experiences of novice educators in elementary Grades 3 through 5. The number of participants was nine based upon saturation. I gave the participants a short summary of the study for their review. Following the summaries, I

conducted virtual interviews using the interview questions developed using Appendix B. Virtual interviews were between 45 and 60 minutes, with a brief 5- to 10-minute follow-up after the transcripts were prepared. The interviews were recorded for later transcription.

I maintained ethical standards by eliminating incomplete interviews for analysis; for example, if a participant only partially completed the interview or provided unusable data, the responses were not included in the analysis, and another participant was selected. Principals of elementary schools were contacted as a primary source to ascertain if they were interested in their teachers being part of a small study. Principals did not respond to interview questions but rather provided the conduit for me to complete the study. No reimbursement was provided to any of the participants nor the agreeing principal or district.

Live and real-time interviews were conducted with the participants using online technology (e.g., Zoom). The interview process allowed for deep, enriching conversations and responses to the developed interview questions. I used a virtual platform because it ensured observing potential restrictions due to COVID-19 pandemic and allowed for the audio recording of the interview sessions, with recordings downloaded in a digital format. All participants were provided with the background knowledge and intentions for the study. I used the interview protocol (see Appendix A), which included probing questions. The interviews took between 45 and 60 minutes for completion.

The materials used in the interview process included a digital recording device with a backup device in case of malfunction. I also had paper and pen/pencil to note anything that could impact the interpretation or analysis of the responses, such as body responses, illness, participant expressions, and/or language shifts. I recorded and transcribed all interviews.

At the beginning of the interview, participants were notified that the meeting was recorded with their consent for transcription and analysis purposes. Written consent was obtained according to Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies of Walden University approval #03-07-22-0554044. Participant responses were analyzed and coded for interpretation as described in the section labeled coding process. At the conclusion of the study, the data were stored on a USB device and will be destroyed after a period of 5 years. Participants who completed the study were notified via email that their information will be destroyed according to university standards.

Data Analysis Plan

The data analyzed were the verbatim transcription of the recorded interviews from each participant. Data analysis plans included multiple components such as preparing the data, engaging various analysis methods, in-depth data analysis, analysis with precision, and interpreting significant meaning (Creswell, 2014). I used a two-step analysis strategy to review the recorded interviews from each participant. The first involved inductive analysis and included how data become themes, patterns, and categories through the information (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). The second was a deductive analysis where predetermined concepts and theories support the themes (Patton, 2015, p. 551).

Anomalies appeared in the data analysis that did not support the themes and categories and were identified (Patton, 2015). I reviewed and documented any anomalies and provided a brief description in the results and findings section.

Second, the transcription was done using the recording device and transcribed into a Word document or Google doc. Each manuscript was labeled with the participant's name, title, date, and time recorded. I stored all transcribed data on my PC desktop and an external hard drive to ensure that the data were not lost. As the sole researcher, I took notes, documented observations, and organized data as I conducted interviews. I analyzed the recorded data for accuracy in transcription and sent the final transcription to the participant for any edits and final approval. Creswell (2014) indicated several necessary steps that must be adhered to move from the raw data stage to the final steps of interpretation of themes and descriptions. I adhered to the steps outlined by Creswell.

- Step 1. Organize and prepare data from the transcriptions, field notes, observations, and interviews.
- Step 2. Read through the data, searching for general ideas, tone of ideas, impression of depth and credibility.
- Step 3. Begin analysis with coding and coding steps.
- Step 4. Use the coding process to generate labels and categories.
- Step 5. Advanced description to include teasing out some emerging themes or repeating information.
- Step 6. Make meaning or interpretation of the data.

Coding Process

Qualitative data analysis is an iterative process. After completing the coding process outlined in the aforementioned paragraph, I began to organize my final themes to begin the process of interpretation for final results and highlights to be used to provide poignant data points. The interpretation and analysis of the data provided me with corroborating evidence for further research in understanding the dynamics of intrinsic motivation that influence educators' willingness to remain in the field.

I employed Atlas.ti to code the data collected during the semistructured interviews. I reviewed the steps to familiarize myself with Atlas.ti through the software website and any additional resources available. I used these resources to train myself in the tool and gain feedback from my committee throughout the data collection and analysis part of my study.

Issues of Trustworthiness

According to Ravitch and Carl (2015), qualitative research studies utilize various strategies and methods in the design to demonstrate trustworthiness. In this study, trustworthiness was evidenced by the combined purposeful sampling approach to finding potential participants. Participants were interviewed and had the opportunity to review their transcripts to ensure I had caught everything in the meaning and perceptions they provided during the interview process. The interview questions were solely based on the framework of SDT and allowed for open responses from participants. Additionally, the participant pool had 8 participants with 3 reserve participants to account for potential incomplete interviews and/or saturation. The choice of setting also allowed for credible

measures as there was a clear definition, and the study included only those settings comparable in student count size and geographical location.

Credibility

Another measure to strengthen the study was using a secondary source to provide data triangulation. I used data triangulation as an additional credibility measure to ensure that the data released from the state every year correlates with the data analysis. The secondary source data included any publicly published retention rate from the district, state, or national website or publishing. State and National statistics were pulled and analyzed during the data collection period. The State and Federal data sets were within the last 5 to 7 years. Schools and districts were asked to provide staff retention and turnover records for the teaching staff with 3 years or less experience as identified on their district or school website for fiscal transparency. This included teachers who were new to the buildings and teachers who were currently employed with 3 years or less experience. Staff retention and turnover did not include names of exited teachers, and numerical data were collected to compare the survey information. By using a secondary data source, I have an unmistakable methodology design to test further the study's ethical considerations, delimitations, and strengths. The secondary data source and the coded interviews were analyzed and triangulated for similarities or significant discrepancies to provide results on the 2 research questions, which are grounded in theory. Data triangulation included the coded personal interviews and publicly published state retention statistics available for the most current years.

Transferability

The research design allows for transferability pertaining to specific analyzed topics and can be replicated using the same or similar methodology. Qualitative studies intend to understand the experiences of individuals using inquiry methods such as focus groups or individual interviews (Patton, 2015). Ravitch and Carl (2015), posit that personal interviews provide researchers with meaningful and relevant data from their perspectives. The interview process allows participants to tell their stories from their perspectives and value systems. The participant's interviews are thereby interpreted and analyzed by the researcher and provide findings that are specific to the research questions.

Dependability

Qualitative data was organized and categorized into common themes or patterns. I utilized the computer data analysis software Atlas.ti to code the data. The use of data analysis software also strengthens the data's credibility. Emerging themes were summarized in conjunction with the data. The secondary source data, public records of exit rates, were analyzed for comparison. The interpretation and analysis of both data sets provided corroborating evidence for further research in understanding the dynamics of professional development in high-quality induction programs that influence educators' willingness to remain in the field. I analyzed the virtual interviews to compare the results with statewide retention rates objectively. The study determined significant findings that were used to support further investigations and provided insight into the social change of retaining novice elementary educators.

Trustworthiness

Several critical factors were included in the study's design to ensure high measures of validity and trustworthiness were present. Factors included member checking after the initial transcription of the interview was completed. Member checking was completed to ensure the accuracy of the recorded interview. Member checks gave the researcher a valuable tool to implement before coding (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). Another factor was selecting semistructured interviews to ensure the responses were based on guided questions constructed to provide meaningful data to answer the research questions. The coding process allowed additional measures to strengthen the completion of data sets that were analyzed for themes and labels used by the researcher. Finally, the study used a secondary source to provide data triangulation. I used data triangulation as the last step to ensure the results and findings were based on an in-depth analysis using high measures of trustworthiness.

Ethical Procedures

IRB approval was gained through Walden University before any outreach or contact to principals or potential participants. Ethical considerations of the study's benefits to the participants was identified and follow-up with participants after completing the study was provided by myself. All recordings and coded transcripts are stored for a maximum of 5 years on a USB and destroyed after the fifth year of the date of completion. Participants received this notification on their agreement to participate in the study, which details how their data was used, stored, and destroyed.

As there was a narrow pool of willing potential, with approval from IRB, the recruitment materials were provided to selected districts and social media sites such as Facebook. Social media can be a valuable tool for researchers and has become an additional resource; however, it is critical to maintain confidentiality and provide strict privacy settings for your study (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). Social media provided a larger platform to recruit participants.

Participant identification was protected in this study with the use of pseudonyms to record their data, records, files, and correspondences. Willing participants received informed consent forms in accordance with the IRB standards at Walden University. The use of informed consent form allowed the researcher the opportunity to share a basic understanding of the study and to establish an introductory relationship. The use of informed consent thereby allowed the participants with an opportunity to refuse, withdraw, or not answer the interview questions at any point of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Additional efforts to meet the requirements of social distancing due to the COVID-19 were included in the informed consent form and the way the interviews were conducted.

Ethical considerations of the study determined that the findings were shared with the schools that had participating teachers to share in the ownership. The small sample size minimized threats to the validity of the results. This measure assisted in minimizing threats to the validity of the study as responses were consensual in nature. Only schools that have an active induction program remained in the study to minimize the threats to the

validity of schools that have no induction programs. Threats to validity were minimized with the use of the data analysis software.

Limitations

I concluded there were several limitations to the study. The first being the limited participant pool could negatively influence the data if it is not expanded to include school districts that did not have an active induction program limited the number of school districts' ability to participate in the study. A final limitation of superintendent and district staff turnover was analyzed for any variance in the retention rates. I proposed that student outcomes are an essential measure; however, they limited the inclusion of social and cultural values. Criteria for success are misunderstood by many evaluators and impact the results that are provided by teachers and directors.

Summary

In this chapter I discussed the research questions, study design, trustworthiness, limitations, strengths, and how participants were selected. The validity of the study was discussed with an emphasis on the sources of data and how the participants were selected using an initial selection through key stakeholders and subsequently random selection. Participants willing to participate in the study were interviewed in a virtual setting recorded and transcribed for analysis. The chapter also discussed how the design of the study ensured that the method to analyze the data would provide validity and rigor. Chapter 4 provided results from the coded data from participant interviews and a secondary source of data provided by public access to state retention rates as outlined in the Chapter 3.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

In this qualitative study, I sought to explore intrinsic motivation among novice elementary educators in Grades 3 through 5 and their willingness to remain in the field. Some of those experiences focused on autonomy, competency, and relatedness. In Chapter 4, I present the results, including thematic patterns and codes of this qualitative study based on the RQs. The chapter includes a description of the research setting. I then explain the steps I engaged in the recruitment process, interviews, transcription, and coding. I go on to explain the analysis process and provide evidence of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The chapter ends with a description of the results and a summary. The two research questions in this qualitative study were as follows:

- RQ1. How does intrinsic motivation influence novice elementary educators' willingness to remain in teaching?
- RQ2. What are the reasons novice educators give for choosing to stay in the field of education?

Setting

This qualitative study was completed through semistructured interviews and analysis of published survey results from two Midwestern states of similar educational demographics. After receiving IRB approval, I submitted internal review processes with several area school districts, social media posts, and Walden's participant pool. Finding willing partner districts proved to be very challenging. Many districts denied the study

due to school closures and COVID fatigue of the teaching staff. After being denied, I completed revisions to IRB to remove the school size of 300–500 and opened the participant pool to any elementary school and included social media as a platform as a means to increase participation.

The interviews were conducted during the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Communities followed their individual county guidelines for health and safety. Due to followed guidelines, the interviews were all conducted via Zoom meetings. Interviews were done in a private office or room in the participant’s home that was free of distraction. I conducted the interviews in my private home office with no other people present in the dwelling.

Demographics

A total of nine novice elementary educators in Grade 3 through 5 participated in the study. The participants were all female and were teaching in urban areas. The participants ranged from 1st-year teachers to 5th-year teachers with employment in public elementary schools. Two of the participants had a coteaching assignment, one teacher had a temporary assignment, and the remaining seven teachers had their own assigned classrooms. Participants were not asked their age, race, ethnicity, marital status, or disability status. Table 1 presents the demographics of the participants.

Table 1*Participants*

	Years of Experience	Grade Level
Participant A	< 5	5
Participant B	< 3	3
Participant C	< 5	3
Participant D	< 2	4
Participant E	< 3	4
Participant F	< 2	4
Participant G	< 3	4
Participant H	< 5	3
Participant I	< 4	4

Note. Participants were given a letter in the order in which they were interviewed.

Data Collection

The data collection process presented in Chapter 3 was followed without exception. As previously described, between 8 and 10 participants were selected to conduct a 45- to 60-minute semistructured audio recorded interview. To begin data collection, I had to identify that the participants were (a) novice educators with less than 5 years' experience and (b) currently teaching in Grade 3 through 5. Each district selected had elementary schools within the original design of a student population for 300–500. I submitted over 20 internal district research reviews with districts that were identified as urban. I received permissions from two of the districts contacted, with six rejections and many “no” responses. The reasons indicated for the rejections were COVID implications, school closures, and mental health of the teaching staff. One district requested significant changes to the IRB-approved forms, and I indicated that I would not be able to deviate from the approvals without resubmission to IRB. My study was also posted to Walden's participant pool, to which I had several replies. After several weeks without any response from potential participants, I submitted revisions to IRB to use social media and removed

the student population of 300–500. Once IRB approved these changes, I posted to social media groups to actively recruit participants. Subsequently, I had an increase in activity in the recruiting process of finding novice elementary educators. I received some outreach from candidates from districts that did not give approval. Those participants were not selected, as it would have been unethical for me to interview them. Potential participants emailed my student account, and I sent the consent forms with directions to reach out to set up interviews. I set up interviews to only those participants who returned the consent forms.

I set up interviews based on the participants' availability, and all of the interviews were conducted over Zoom. I scheduled the Zoom meetings for 60 minutes as I had discussed with participants that the interview would take no more than 45–60 minutes. I used a script for my introduction and closing as described in the IRB forms.

The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai. Transcripts were reviewed for accuracy and spelling errors using Otter.ai. According to Saldaña (2016), qualitative studies are uniquely designed; thus, coding approaches can be predetermined or take on an emerging approach as the researcher begins analyzing their data. Given the nature of my study, I selected multiple coding approaches to best guide my ability to interpret the data. I did first-cycle coding, after-first-cycle coding, and second-cycle coding to allow for additional credibility in my findings. I also used Atlas.ti as an additional coding tool to ensure that I had alignment with my initial hand coding. Atlas.ti provided additional analysis through word clouds and word lists to ensure that the data were thoroughly analyzed and coded correctly.

Data Analysis

I began the initial coding by reading the transcripts first without any highlighting or note-taking. I then reread the transcripts again, this time using highlighter and sticky notes to make initial words or phrases that summarized the interviewees' statements. I organized the first-round coding words and phrases into categories. To avoid any common errors, such as descriptive coding or code proliferation, the codes were labeled with the words directly from the transcripts (Saldaña, 2016). First-round coding produced 47 themes that emerged from the data analysis from the two RQs, along with categories and codes, respectively.

These codes were distributed across the research questions as was described in Appendix A. The interview questions were designed to influence both of the RQs based on SDT. Of the 47 codes, 31 applied to RQ1 and 25 applied to RQ2. All of the research questions were coded, and RQ1 (How does intrinsic motivation influence novice elementary educators' willingness to remain in teaching?) produced the greater number of applicable items to lend to the emerging themes, labels, and categories. Themes emerged from RQ1 (How does intrinsic motivation influence novice elementary educators' willingness to remain in teaching?) and RQ2 (What are the reasons novice educators give for choosing to stay in the field of education?). After cycle coding was the second iterative step in coding the data and identifying additional labels and themes. I grouped the codes together, which resulted in seven themes: strong induction programs, ongoing professional development, strong administrative support, positive mentor,

support for mental health, life/work balance, and strong experiential training. Table 2 provides the themes and respective categories.

Table 2

Themes and Categories

Themes	Categories
Strong induction programs	There was no induction Collegial support was self-discovered Needed basics of teaching Not tied to mentors
Ongoing professional development	Pause on training Nonrelevant training Need more training during the year Too many initiatives
Strong administrative support	Knowledgeable Positive interactions Negative communication Never seen Too new on the job
Positive mentor	Friendly Supportive Good feedback Paired with the right person Veteran teachers don't like change Couldn't voice opinions
Support for mental health	Overwhelmed Student behaviors Lack of engagement causing stress Getting sick Different learning environment
Life/work balance	Loss of personal time Lack of self-care Working late at night Personal relationships
Strong experiential training	Strong student teaching Learned more while teaching College didn't prepare for real world

Note. The categories are presented as the words or patterns identified in the interview transcripts. The positive and negative connotations were included in the identified themes.

After several rounds of coding and identifying the emerging themes, I made discoveries in the data that warranted another final round of coding. Several of the themes were found to have a strong correlation with one another and were combined. These combinations were supported with the anecdotal evidence within the participant interviews. Thereby, the following final themes emerged: strong induction programs with an emphasis on mentoring, strong experiential learning with continued professional development, mental health supports and life/work balance, and strong administrative support.

Table 3*Final Themes and Categories*

Themes	Categories
Strong induction programs with an emphasis on mentoring	There was no induction Unclear if the district had induction Participants had varied experiences with mentors Collegial support was self-discovered Needed basics of teaching Not tied to mentors Friendly Supportive Good feedback Paired with the right person Veteran teachers don't like change Couldn't voice opinions
Strong experiential learning with continued professional development	Pause on training Nonrelevant training Need more training during the year Too many initiatives Wanted more training in the district Strong student teaching Learned more while teaching College didn't prepare for real world
Strong administrative support	Knowledgeable Positive interactions Negative communication Never seen Too new on the job
Mental health supports and life/work balance	Overwhelmed Student behaviors Lack of engagement causing stress Getting sick Different learning environment Loss of personal time Lack of self-care Working late at night Personal relationships

Note. The final themes and categories are reflected in the interview data. The final analysis yielded correlation among the original themes.

After the final coding revealed four themes, I compared them to the Teaching and Learning Conditions in Colorado (TLCC) Survey results that were published for the 2017/2018, 2019/2020, and 2021/2022 school years (CDE, 2018, 2020b, 2022). The TLCC survey results were not provided for the 2019 SY due to COVID-19. The TLCC Survey longitudinal results are provided in Table 4.

Table 4

TLCC Longitudinal Survey Results

Survey prompts	2018	2020	2022
Adequate time for professional learning	No data	63.4%	57.3%
New initiatives	52%	53.1%	49.6%
Support students' social and emotional learning	53.1%	52.6%	57.3%
Professional learning aligned to needs	65%	63.9%	58.7%
Adequate new teacher support	70.8%	73.4%	74%
Personal support	No data	67.7%	68.5%
Satisfaction with the recognition received	No data	73.7%	72.9%

Note. The selected prompts were based on the themes and categories identified from the iterative coding process of participant interviews.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The basic narrative design of this study necessitated the development of evidence of trustworthiness. This entailed constant reflection with the data in analyzing and reporting findings. Adjustments to the strategies to gain participants were explained in Chapter 3. Those evidentiary pieces included ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability throughout the study.

Credibility

Credibility in this study was assured with consistency in using the semistructured interview protocol, allowing for expanded responses, debriefing, and member checking.

Additionally, credibility was assured with an analysis of a 3-year trend of published survey results from TLCC. The TLCC survey results provided the secondary source described in Chapter 3. Triangulation of the survey data provided additional credibility. Each interviewed and/or surveyed participant contributed to the experience and perceptions of novice elementary teachers in Grades 3 through 5.

Transferability

The transferability of qualitative research is based on the inquiry method and questions used to understand the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2015). The semistructured interview provided meaningful and relevant data from the participants' perspective (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). In this study, the participants helped understand the intrinsic motivation of novice elementary educators in Grades 3 through 5 and their willingness to remain in the field of teaching. The participants shared their personal experiences and perceptions as they related to the semistructured interview questions. Although the participants provided rich, detailed descriptions of the context, the findings are not generalizable.

Dependability

The interview protocol (Appendix A) developed for the study secured consistency throughout the study. The nine participants in the study responded to the same interview questions, in order, to understand the experiences and perspectives of novice elementary educators in Grades 3 through 5. The participants' responses were analyzed to provide similarities, differences, and overarching themes. The majority of the participants shared similar experiences and concerns with teaching in the current landscape of education.

Words and phrases from their interviews formed themes and categories representative of their similarities and differences. Additionally, the use of a second source provided triangulation of the data to strengthen the themes and categories.

Confirmability

As a qualitative researcher it is important to acknowledge your role in the research process. Reflexivity helped to develop my stance on receiving information during the interviews. Throughout the interviews and coding process, I monitored my personal bias. I maintained awareness of the implications of being a participant with a fellow educator. During the interview process, I monitored my tone, language, and agreeability to provide a safe, welcoming environment. Debriefing and member checking provided means to monitor any potential bias.

Results

This qualitative study's focus was on understanding the experiences and perceptions as it relates to intrinsic motivation among novice elementary educators in grades 3 through 5 and their willingness to remain in the teaching field as posed in the RQs. Nine participants provided consent and responded to three semistructured interview questions. Subsequently the data produced involved analyzing two RQs that included understanding the influence of intrinsic motivation on novice elementary educators' willingness to remain in the field. Secondly, the reasons that novice educators give for choosing to stay in the field. Several themes emerged from the extracted data based on these RQs to support findings. In this section, the two RQs, supporting themes, and secondary source data connect to describe the results' words, phrases, and quotations.

The research questions were addressed in order RQ1 “How does intrinsic motivation influence novice elementary educators in grades three through five willingness to remain in the field?” and RQ2 “What are the reasons novice educators give for choosing to stay in the field of education? The participants shared their experiences with their college preparation and the experiences they had as a novice educator entering their schools and districts. The participants were asked about their experiences with what originally motivated them to become a teacher, how their college prepared them, what level of induction and mentoring programs they participated in and their relationship with their building administrators. The participants provided rich details regarding their experiences and how their experiences motivated them to stay in the field of education. Several themes emerged from the extracted data and the secondary data source to provide findings. In this section the two RQs and supporting themes meet to describe the results quotations, phrases, and words. In this section I describe the themes that emerged from RQ1 and RQ2, strong induction programs with an emphasis on mentoring, strong administrative support, mental health and live work balance, strong experiential training accompanied with continued professional development.

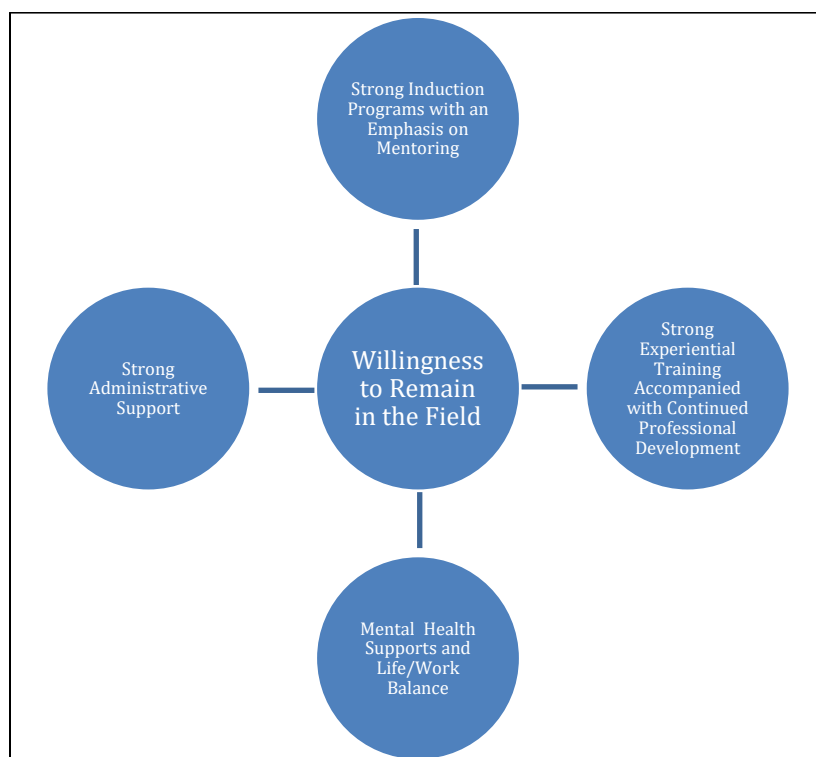
Research Question 1

The first RQ was, How does intrinsic motivation influence novice elementary educators’ willingness to remain in teaching? The participants candidly shared their experiences with their personal stories on what made them want to become a teacher. Most of the participants shared that they either had a relative that was an educator or a strong influence from their childhood that made them want to become a teacher or simply

an opportunity they found during their college experience. Additionally, the participants described their experiences with their administrators and induction programs that further influenced their willingness to remain in the field.

Figure 1

Final Themes



Theme 1: Strong Induction Programs with an Emphasis on Mentoring

The first theme involved understanding the experiences the participants had with the district induction programs. Induction programs in school districts are designed to assign a mentor teacher and provide additional professional development in the areas of instructional practices. Interview questions related to this theme were: IQ3 Can you please describe your district's induction program (if available) and how you participated?

And IQ3a. What are some supports that you have found within your induction program?

Participants shared their experience and understanding of induction programs.

Interestingly, half of the participants were unfamiliar with the term induction; however, were assigned a mentor teacher.

One of the specific interview questions (IQ3b) “How has professional development in your induction program has influenced your classroom instructional strategies?” Responses included expected data such as “you need someone to like, remind you, you need more training” or “I would have really wanted to have these professional trainings every now and then” (Participant B). Participants indicated that they had little to no professional development during the pandemic. Participant D responded that “Actually, I don’t know what really I can say about it, but I think I learned from other teachers, mainly on communication.” They further went on to explain that approximately half of the participants relayed that during the pandemic they were not provided additional supports and indicated that they believe they would have liked to have had more time with their colleagues and additional trainings.

For example, participant C shared that they were considered a late hire and were not included in the induction program. One advantage that they shared was they had done their student teaching in the district and had a rudimentary knowledge of how the district operated. They also shared that they had been able to participate in the districts’ formal training during their student teaching and that they believed they would have been overwhelmed as a first-year teacher without that experience. Additionally, 2, and 3-day trainings were condensed into one two-to-three-hour training session.

Participant C also indicated that they had moved states and began with a new district that did have an induction program and they were assigned a mentor teacher; however, it was not a content peer. They stressed that it was much more helpful to have an instructional coach as a mentor and not their grade level peer due to the connection to the curriculum. The level of training opportunities was more extensive at the new district and were held three times over the year rather than one night. Participant C further went on to state,

“There were different positions that were responsible. So, there was a lot of whole group communication from one individual, she was like the talent director, and she basically oversaw new hires and there was also training that we were required to do within the first three years of teaching. So, there were six categories of classes, you picked one in each category and took two classes every year”.

While the other participants indicated they had not been in any induction programs nor were they assigned a mentor, two final participants indicated induction programs can be provided with brevity. Participant J described their induction program as a two-week intense professional development program that included district level support. While Participant E indicated that although they were unfamiliar with the term, the district did provide a mentor teacher in the classroom, at the district level, and with a building administrator. This was a tri-level support for new teachers in the building. Participant E joined various trainings that included technology, curriculum, and resources. The critique given was that the training on the resources were not implemented

in the classroom, thereby, making it difficult to see the connection to their day-to-day classroom experience.

All of the participants provided their experiences with and without an induction program. The participants were educators who shared varied experiences with induction and mentoring within their setting. Similar to the study's participants responses, the TLCC Survey (2022) results indicated that only 74% of respondents felt they had adequate new teacher support.

Theme 2. Strong Experiential Training Accompanied With Continued Professional Development

The second theme that emerged was strong experiential training accompanied with continued professional development. Strong experiential training is provided during the 4 years of college. Entering into the teaching profession requires extensive knowledge of educational pedagogy that includes the foundational knowledge of literacy and mathematics. The college experience includes 2 years of basic courses and an additional 2 years of more intensive training that are designed to prepare teachers for the classroom setting. Ongoing professional development is the training and professional opportunities that educators receive as they enter a school system. Professional development includes training on curriculum and resources, technology, classroom management, district procedures, and assessment. The participants described the various types of training opportunities that they experienced as new teachers. Professional development in the districts was described as trainings that focused on district policies and procedures, communication,

The participants all shared their experiences in their preparation to becoming educators. They shared similarities and differences in the level of preparedness that they had as they went through their college course. Over half of the participants shared that they did not feel that the colleges prepared them for the actual classroom environment to include classroom management, how to navigate a school/district system, and how to become part of a school community. There were a few of the participants that felt that had been prepared; however, they believed that the colleges did not prepare them with regards to the experience of being a teacher. Experiences being a teacher were described as knowing how to set up a classroom, how to engage students and adjusting to a school environment. For example, participant B shared “I think more of the teaching practice should have happened, in case for someone who doesn’t know where to start” and “teaching practice is also very key.” Similar statements from participant D included “for you to become a teacher, you must be very strong willed, and you must be willing to learn because it’s a learning face every day;” “so basically, college doesn’t prepare you fully for all that, you’ve just been equipped with skills.” Participant E further explains “that going back to school prepared me in a lot of ways, but I think that the experience I learned while student teaching about the things I wanted to do, and I think more importantly, about the things I did not want for my classroom” and “most of my associates did nothing for preparing me for becoming an educator...much of the actual bachelor’s degree program had content specific stuff really did help prepare me to become an educator, I think there are things I would have done differently, there should be more of an emphasis on getting into

the classroom earlier”.

Participant C shared similar experiences with their college courses.

The first two years were the general education classes, some which I would argue are irrelevant.” They further explained that “starting their sophomore year there’s kind of very minimal preservice teacher options or opportunities. They also indicated that it was kind of laying the foundation and obviously never be enough to prepare me fully for actually teaching. I would definitely say that I got more experience my student teaching year and what’s nice is I was assigned to one school the entire year.

Similar results were published in the TLCC Survey (CDE, 2020b, 2022) that indicated 63/4% of respondents in year 2020 and 57.3% of respondents in year 2022 felt there was adequate time for professional learning. The TLCC Survey (CDE, 2020b, 2022) results also revealed that respondents felt that “professional learning that is aligned to needs” has seen a decrease over the past 4 years from 65% in 2018 to 58.7% in the year 2020. The examples provided by the participants and the TLCC Survey (CDE, 2022) results indicated a significant impact of meaningful professional development has on novice educators.

Theme 3. Mental Health Supports and Life/Work Balance

The third theme that emerged was life/work balance. Novice educators are not only learning to become fully immersed in their classrooms they are also learning how to balance life outside of the classroom. Many teachers are reported to spend hours after work to complete all of the necessary work that is assigned to them. This may include

lesson planning, grading, and attending additional coursework outside of the regular scheduled day. The amount of work that teachers are being asked to do over the past years has substantially increased and greatly impacts their ability to balance work and home life. The participants shared their experiences that provide insight on what novice teachers can expect as they enter their first years of teaching. For example, participant C states:

“I wouldn’t sugarcoat it, I would kind of be like, it’s tough, you are kind of always on the go. There’s you kind of have to and you know, you have to be able to adjust to whatever the it is whether it’s a student behavior or have unexpected fire alarm, or, you know, whatever it is. But, also to say that it’s worth it. I would probably also advise, make to do lists and do little things at a time, even if you’re not fully, you wanting to because it can pile up I would also advise, as tempting as it is to work outside your contracted hours unnecessarily, even though you’re not getting paid, make sure you find a good balance between work, and school, or work in your personal life, because it can quickly snowball”.

Participants reported that mental health supports were needed during the pandemic, and many found that the schools were not equipped to handle the major changes that took place during remote learning as well as the return to in-person learning environment. Participant B indicated that “teachers cannot function in isolation without their welfare being put first.” Similarly, participant D shared that “you must be very strong willed and must be willing to learn because it’s a learning face every day.” The participants responses correlate with the TLCC Survey (CDE, 2018, CDE 2020b, CDE

2022) longitudinal information from Table 4. Educators reported only 68.5% of the total number of respondents felt they had personal support during the 2022 school year as compared to 67.7% in the 2020 school year.

Theme 4. Strong Administrative Support

Administrative support and teacher retention has been researched and has proven to be a significant factor in whether or not teachers remain in the school and/or district in which they are currently employed. Administrative support includes communicating with staff, students, and families to ensure that the school is fully functioning. Administrators provide direct and indirect supports through classroom observations and follow-up with feedback to teachers. As novice teachers are finding their way in the classroom, relationships with the building administrator can impact the desire to remain in the field of education.

In order to gain insight into the perspectives of novice educators one specific interview question was asked IQ3(a) How would you describe your relationship with your building administrator? All of the participants spoke about how their experience with their administrator had highlights as well as areas for improvement. All participants shared the importance of having a good relationship with their administrators as it related to maintaining employment in their school. Responses from the participants ranged from positive, healthy relationships to those that left them feeling they couldn't reach out or respond to questions in staff meetings.

Participant H indicated that their relationship was more of a "worker and employer relationship" and that if they could change the relationship, it would be "to give

teachers a chance to express themselves to channel their issues and concerns.” Their experience was more of the administrator providing communication about events and messages from the district. This was not shared with all of the participants as some indicated that they were able to get to know the administrator.

One example was shared by participant I was that they,

“Felt like the principal was very, very nice to me as opposed to some stories that I heard from teachers. For me, I felt like I caught a principal who’s kind of God fearing so he knows how to treat people. He doesn’t treat people badly. He’s someone very understanding at times and at times he also noticed our personal values. I felt that he was someone with a good heart”.

Participant J indicated that they had a positive relationship with their administrator, that they addressed issues in group settings to alleviate any one teacher feeling pinpointed unless it was a severe case. Participant J also indicated that the school environment was a “good environment” and that is part of the reason that they were staying. Another example of the impact of a strong administrative support was provided by participant E. They stated that they were mentored by their principal and assistant principal throughout their time. They additionally shared that this was a similar experience among all of the teachers they worked with and was a significant part of their desire to work in that particular district.

However, not all of the participants had positive relationships with their administrators. During the interviews, some participants were hesitant to respond to the question and further asked if they would be identified in the results. I gleaned from the

hesitation that some participants did not have good experiences or were guarded with their opinions. For example, Participant C shared that if they “see a bad admin, I’m gonna run for the hills.” This response prompted me to allow the participant additional time to respond to the interview questions as they further went on to share a positive perception of their administrators. Participant D shared their relationship as “not bad, thought at times, she’s tough.” They further clarified that “she’s always inclined on getting the best use of those people who are perfectionist. Like they don’t believe in failure...like failure is not in their language.”

In order to answer RQ2, What are the reasons novice educators give for choosing to stay in the field of education? I asked the question, describe your plans to stay teaching in the elementary setting? In addition to this question, I also embedded prompts that would lead to responses to the interview questions specific to induction and support as a novice teacher. The participants provided varied responses with some going into detail and the majority being brief with either a yes or no response. Most of the participants responded to the question very quickly and concisely. For example, Participant D shared that “I feel like I’ll still continue teaching, I don’t have other choices currently ...just need more experience on the job.” They further went on to share the experiences they were looking for were more trainings, collaboration with other teachers, and a mentorship program that is supportive and free from judgment. Another example shared was from participant E:

“Absolutely, that was what I wanted since I was little...I absolutely have plans to continue in education and to continue to grow my skill set...I love the idea of

creating curriculum and pursuing additional education to support me as an educator”.

Participant C shared,

“I still want to teach next year and I’ve been able to honestly see a bunch of different school environments and kind of makes this decision this is what I want to continue...I have been very lucky my entire teaching career to build positive relationships with staff...I think those relationships keep me going because even on the worst of the worst days, I’ve always had supportive staff around me”.

Participant J provided a much shorter response simply stating that they believed “in the next 5 years, I’ll still be here...that’s the plan.” Similar to participant J, participant G simply stated, “that’s what I love doing.” One final example that indicates intrinsic motivation of teachers comes from participant B:

“I think teaching is fulfilling and I have a passion for that. I just feel that teaching is sort of a calling and it just depends on how you take it...I cannot see myself in another industry that I can perform better. It’s something you can continue with, like, go from one career ladder to another and fulfill a lot and get recognized and get good positions”.

There appeared to be an overwhelming perception that teaching is about passion and feeling that you are meant to be in front of students.

Research Question 2

Despite most of the participants indicating that they would remain in the field there were at least two participants that did not indicate a positive response to remaining

in the field. Participant A stated that they had mixed feelings about staying in education due to the amount of work that is required outside of school hours. They indicated that it had nothing to do with the students or teaching, just that they didn't feel that they had a life outside of school. Participant I shared feelings that they would not stay in education as they were leaning towards a different path that they felt passionate about. While they indicated they had a passion for education, it would not be for long.

Out of the 9 participants, only 8 said that they would be staying in the field of education. Supporting information from the TLCC Survey (CDE, 2022) reported they had 39,147 respondents identified as certified school staff. TLCC (CDE, 2022) indicated that 47.5 new staff were not assigned a formal mentor during the 2021/2022 SY. Additionally, only 70.5% of new staff stated they had received supports as a new staff. TLCC (CDE, 2022) shows 86.8 considered the pandemic negatively impacted student engagement and that supports for social emotional well-being (staff and students) was not provided. Among the respondents, 33,014 are teachers, making up 71.6% of the total number of respondents. Nearly 6.8% of the respondents indicated that they would leave the field of education, which is an increase of 3% from the 2020 TLCC (CDE, 2020b; CDE 2022).

Summary

In summary, the transcribed interview responses from novice elementary educators with less than 5 years of experience showed that their experiences and perceptions influenced their intrinsic motivation and their willingness to remain in the field of teacher. After several rounds of coding, there were 4 themes that were clearly

established: Strong induction programs with an emphasis on mentoring, strong experiential learning with continued professional development, mental health and life/work balance, and strong administrative support. Results showed that each of the themes play an integral role in novice educators' intrinsic motivation and their willingness to remain in the field of education.

Participants shared their experiences, both positive and negative, as it relates to their first years of teaching in public K-12 schools. Results showed 47 initial codes with 31 of the total answering RQ1 and 25 codes answering RQ2. My first related research question focused on the intrinsic motivation of novice educators. Results showed the influence that connections with colleagues, being knowledgeable, mental well-being, and administrative support has on their perceptions of their first years of teaching experience. The results provided were based on the participants responses to my semistructured interview questions that allowed respondents to share openly their perceptions and insight into novice elementary educators. As an additional measure of credibility, the use of triangulation with the TLCC Survey (CDE, 2018, 2020, 2022). further provided an in-depth analysis on what impacts retention rates among novice elementary educators.

In Chapter 5, I provided further interpretations of the findings, any limitations and implications of this study, as well as recommendations for future studies in the area of novice elementary educators' and their willingness to remain in the field. I provided a summary of conclusions. Additionally, I provided recommendations for policy makers and legislators.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

In this qualitative study, I sought to understand the experiences of novice elementary educators and their willingness to remain in the field. Participants were selected through purposeful sampling and provided their responses in a 45–60 minute semistructured Zoom interview. I interviewed nine novice elementary educators who had 5 or fewer years of experience in education. SDT served as a framework to analyze the effects of autonomy, competency, and relatedness, which provided relevant, meaningful data that were coded and thematically analyzed to detail findings in which recommendations and implications were later introduced.

The findings from this study confirm the knowledge of the literature review in Chapter 2. Through thematic analysis, four themes emerged describing the experiences of novice elementary educators and the willingness to remain in the field. The themes corresponded with RQs 1 and 2 simultaneously. The themes that emerged had significant factors that explained both the intrinsic motivation as well as the reasons educators chose to remain in the field. RQ1's intrinsic motivation factors are found throughout Theme 1 (strong induction programs with an emphasis on mentoring) as well as Theme 4 (strong administrative support). The themes from RQ2 focused on mental health, life/work balance, experiential training, and ongoing professional development. The themes discussed will support and extend the knowledge for this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to seek supporting data on understanding intrinsic motivation of novice elementary educators and their willingness to remain in the field.

- RQ1. How does intrinsic motivation influence novice elementary educators' willingness to remain in teaching?
- RQ2. What are the reasons novice educators give for choosing to stay in the field of education?

Conceptual Framework

First established in 1985, SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2017) specifically addressing social and psychological conditions that influence growth and development was selected to provide a lens that supported the semistructured interview process outlined in the methodology of this study. SDT provided a viable framework to explore intrinsic motivation among novice elementary educators. Specific psychological factors were focused on for this study: autonomy, competency, and relatedness. Autonomy, competency, and relatedness were targeted because the primary purpose of SDT is to account for human tendencies rather than dictating a scenario in which people would make forced decisions that may or may not hold value to their persons. Environments that support and promote autonomy, competency, and relatedness in the field of education were explored to support the RQs.

Interpretation of the Findings

Strong Induction Programs With an Emphasis on Mentoring

In the study, the participants described experiences of lack of an induction program and lack of a strong mentor. The research suggested that induction programs with strong mentors can impact the decision to remain in the field and continue with the current setting. Nine novice educators participated in the study, and only one served as a special education teacher in kindergarten to fifth grade. All the participants were entering the field of education with a traditional pathway of a 4-year college prior to teaching.

Two of the participants were in their first 2 years of teaching, and neither of them were aware of induction programs. Each was assigned a mentor; however, neither were receiving ongoing professional development in the areas of curriculum and behavior. Strong induction programs with an emphasis on mentoring for novice elementary teachers is a critical need to mitigate the detriment to the district finances and school culture (Foster, 2022) Induction programs with mentoring can provide real-time benefit to novice educators if the rate and frequency of mentoring hours are met at a moderate rate (Caven et al., 2021). Participant B provided a glimpse of their interactions with their mentor:

“She was available when needed and she was very friendly. She didn’t have negative attitude towards me, because I was a bit young and she was a bit older. So definitely did not expect that you will click immediately but the good thing we did”.

Participants who shared that they had a mentor indicated that the relationship with the mentor influenced their ability to connect with the school as well as their willingness to work harder for their administrators. Participants shared the value of a mentor and the connections that they were able to make. Additionally, they expressed how connections with being partnered with the right mentor made the difference in their experiences with their classrooms and their school.

Strong Experiential Training Accompanied With Continued Professional Development

In this study, college preparation and district professional development were two of the identified factors that influence educators' decision to remain in the field. Rose and Sughrue (2020) supported earlier research that suggested that alternative methods to obtain education degrees limited the depth of coursework and limited opportunities for up-and-coming educators. Participants discussed the feeling that colleges prepared them with coursework and lacked in providing them with real-life experiences and what to expect as they entered their own classrooms. Participants reported that "basic things" were not provided, such as information on handling conflicts in the organization and/or with students. Not only were the participants reporting lack of experience, but they also reported that there was a lack of professional development within the districts. Professional development was significantly impacted during the pandemic; however, participants in the study were not 1st-year teachers and had knowledge of district professional development prior to the pandemic. Participants reported that training courses were not aligned with new initiatives, nor did they feel that there was enough

professional development for the curriculum they were expected to teach. Aligned with this finding were the findings from the TLCC longitudinal survey indicating results declining from teacher retention. The perceptions of professional learning aligned to needs from 65% in 2018 to 58.7% in 2022. While there were no data on adequate time for professional learning in 2018, only 57.3% of educators reported that there was enough time in the district for professional development. Participants who had some positive experiences attributed this to having more experiences during college in the classroom and meaningful professional development in their respective districts.

They all reported that they felt inadequate in their 1st year of teaching. One participant stressed the importance of training and having more experiential learning about what it is to be a teacher before entering employment. The participants further explained that college does not prepare teachers for day-to-day duties and everything else that encompasses a “real” elementary teacher. Elementary educators are not content specific and therefore do not have the same needs as secondary teachers (Luesse et al., 2022). Luesse et al. (2022) concluded that content-specific professional development did not provide conclusive results, as the subgroup required further investigation. Connections from postsecondary settings and school districts are necessary prior to ensure that novice elementary educators are prepared to enter the career world of education. Whether the connections provide additional experiential learning such as additional requirements of student teaching or mandatory induction programs that provide grade-level-specific trainings with grade-level mentors, novice elementary

educators agreed that something would need to occur if they were expected to return to the school district.

Mental Health Supports and Life/Work Balance

Another factor that influences novice educators' decision to remain in the field is their mental health and work/life balance. During the COVID pandemic, educators made a major shift in how education was provided to their students. Many states went to a completely remote scenario in which educators and students were in their own home environments for their school day. This scenario led to many significant struggles in managing their workload and their life balance. Similarly, Walter and Fox (2021) posited that during the COVID-19 pandemic, educators reported feelings of disconnect and a loss of autonomy, which led directly to attrition rates. Disconnect and lack of satisfaction continue to be a struggle for many educators. Uncertainty and feelings of being overwhelmed were shared by many of the participants in this study.

The participants agreed that this was not an ideal situation, and many felt that there was a loss of professional development and connections with students. However, many of the participants stressed the importance of understanding that the school day begins very early and extends past the school day as teachers must prepare for the next day. Participant A shared that "teaching does not end; it doesn't stop when you leave the classroom." Participants also shared that there are days when it is a struggle to leave the classroom even for basic needs.

An additional consideration for balancing work life stems from Participant C's thoughts on advice they would give anyone who would want to go into teaching: "not

going to sugarcoat it, it's hard" and "make lists to do and do little things over time because it can pile up" ... "as tempting as it is to work outside of your contracted hours unnecessary, even though you're not getting paid, make sure you find a good balance between work, and school, or work and your personal life, because it can quickly snowball." Similarly, Participant F reiterated that "mental health awareness is coming out so broadly, so I feel also that the teachers also need that kind of mental health." They went on to indicate that there should be mental health awareness woven through postsecondary preparation courses, not just when teachers enter their own classroom. Walter and Fox (2021) also reported that mental health awareness was observed in the way educators were supported with well-being strategies and noted the importance of being "heard, safe, and valued" (p. 46) as the demands of teaching required structured frameworks.

Strong Administrative Support

Strong administrative support was a consistent characteristic that participants attributed to their willingness to remain in the field of education. Participants freely spoke of their experiences with their administrator and whether they had positive or negative interactions with the building and district leaders. The experiences shared are similar to the longitudinal statistics provided in Table 4. The TLCC survey (CDE, 2018, 2020b, 2022). According to the TLCC longitudinal data, personal support rose from 67.7% to 68.5% between 2020 and 2022. Satisfaction with recognition decreased from 73.7% to 72.9% as educators perceived that their administrators were not providing accolades for performance (CDE, 2018, 2020b, 2022).

Participants shared a range of perceptions about their building leaders, from motherly to businesslike. Some participants reported that they heard “horror stories” about administrators who were uncaring and demanding. Participant D shared that their administrator was “tough” and was “always inclined on getting the best use of those people who are perfectionist ... like failure is nothing like close to what they want ... failure is not in their language, it’s either when you do it or do.” Not only did the participant share that this changed their thinking on how to approach “failures,” but it made them more determined to not let themselves down as an educator.

Participant E discussed a positive relationship with their administrative team, as it was composed mostly of women who grew up with technology and were progressive in their approaches to supporting students and staff. They shared that their administrators “really wanted consistency across the board ... they want the same things I want, which is important to me.” Participant E also discussed the initiatives that were taking place in the school and how they supported social emotional learning in student learning.

Not all participants had positive experiences with their administrators. Several reported negative interactions that impacted their willingness to remain in the field.

Participant F indicated that

“you have to understand that every management in every school is different. You might have a very good like head teacher, who’s very understanding, or an administrator very understanding and elsewhere there’s nothing like that. So, it depends on your resilience ... spirit”.

Participant C shared that they look for administrators who are “very approachable” and “supportive” as they have “heard horror stories about micromanaging, unapproachable administrators.” These varying types of administrators significantly impact educators’ decision to remain in the field of education (Conley & You, 2017; Olsen & Huang, 2019; Urick, 2020). Similar to Urick’s (2020) position on integrated leaders, participants shared the perception that leaders who were able to provide managerial tasks, transformative practices, and instructional leadership were among the most highly thought of leaders. School and district administrators continue to hold a unique position in teacher retention rates among novice educators. The higher levels of support and recognition allow educators a sense of determination and autonomy within their classrooms. The “resiliency” is found in the levels of self-accountability and collegial respect for their fellow teachers and administrators.

Psychological Principles

The three psychological principles of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2002) are autonomy, competency, and relatedness. Operational definitions of these terms were presented in Chapter 1 based on those definitions, a brief summary of each is presented below:

- *autonomy*: individual interests, values, and experiences as an expression of self
- *competency*: direct foundational knowledge of instruction and student behaviors
- *relatedness*: external factors such as training, administrative support, collegial camaraderie, and school culture

Based upon these factors, the following findings provide further corroboration of the aforementioned themes.

Autonomy

Participants reported that their sense of self either stayed true to their initial dreams or changed over the period of entering a new school from their first belief of nervousness and fear to becoming more confident in themselves. Participant D indicated that in the beginning they were “so worried if I was gonna be liked, if the students are gonna love me, and if other teachers were friendly, because I’m a law kind of person who really doesn’t like disturbing people”; this shifted to thoughts of

“I feel like it has changed my attitude so much ... like my entire me in terms of being so positive about like.... I’ll just don’t see the negative side, I will not concentrate on the failures or on the things that are preventing me from succeeding, you know, I’ll definitely want to be on the safe side, and to be inclined toward the achievement bit, because I don’t want to disappoint myself and that motivates me also to work so hard”.

Participant G reported that they would “stay teaching for some time ... maybe I’ll just go back to school, but still teach ... I think that’s what I love doing.”

Similarly, Participant B stated that “I think teaching is a career that I had always thought about and seeing, like many children depend on teachers most of the time and it’s a very fulfilling career ... It’s quite highly marketable.”

“Having a strong passion for education” is something that Participant C shared with their remarks of

“I absolutely love, I mean, it’s so cliché because like, every teacher says it, but I truly love working with kids. It’s kind of funny, because growing up whenever my mom was always like “Oh, you could get a job at summer camp” I’m like, absolutely not, though, you know, it’s just a totally different setting. I enjoy the structure of the classroom and we have an opportunity to build a community and you know build this level of respect. I’m insanely huge on positive relationships with students”.

Similarly, Participant H answer in response to the question “What made you want to become a teacher?”:

“I don’t know. But it’s like something that I had wanted since I was you. I always loved to become like my teacher. I wanted to be like my teacher, or maybe...okay, lets say it’s the teacher that made me to want to do what I am doing. Yeah, right, I always wanted to be like my teacher...and finally, I’m here”.

Competency

Participants provided direct insight on their reflection on how well college prepared them, the professional development that was provided in the district and school, as well as their reflections on what it takes to be a teacher. Participant C shared their experience in a typical 4 year degree program as

“so just kind of your typical yeah, two years, you get into the program leading up to your junior year and then those two years I’m looking for a pre service teacher option or opportunities.... so those were the classroom experiences and then the class or the actual classes kind of varied, you know we took it down to the basics

... it was kind of laying the foundation and obviously would never be enough to prepare me fully for actually teaching. I would definitely say that I got more experience my student teaching year”.

They further went on to indicate that

“I student taught in that district, in my student teaching year happened to be the year they were rollin in this new Math and ELA curriculum. So, I actually got all the formal training on it prior, so that helped”.

Participant A shared some interesting details regarding their coursework and educational experience trainings.

“I think my education experience has been ample becoming a teacher in regard to what I have been training to pursue. It prepared me by giving me life experience situations by giving me teaching practice ... the coursework did not prepare me to enter public school, because what I studied for was high school ... I would more say that my experience prepared me for teaching elementary”.

Participant B expressed how their college experience prepared them to become a teacher:

“Oh, my college was very helpful in how they prepared me, in that I was able to know what to do, especially in terms of the class setup, because at times, you don’t even know what to expect and besides, students are very different. So I feel like I was equipped with that flexibility, and communication skills, and being resilient in a way ... All the course that I took were quite like, reflect of what to expect in the class setup and it was quite exciting, because most of the things that

I got to learn in the class setup I was able to apply now in my job, although I think more of the teaching practice should have happened”.

Relatedness

Connections through administrative support, mentoring and induction, and overall feelings of belonging were strongly represented in the participants responses to how they felt their experiences shaped their determination for staying in education. Participant E shared their experiences of having two mentors with a very different example of a positive and a negative mentoring. The expressed that

“I don’t think that candidates are vetted particularly well for mentor teachers ... I was paired with a teacher who is considerable more old school and traditional ... because I do think that what you learn from observations and from being in environments with good teachers I’ve learned many good things ... I was switched mentors to one who was more familiar with technology and supported me with encouragement. The switch made a significant impact on the remainder of my school year”.

They further went on to express their admiration for having an administrative mentor program:

“they have a mentor program within the building and then a mentor program with administration and with the assistant principal as well ... that administration piece just seems to be very supportive for teachers within the district, which is a huge part of why I wanted to work within this district”.

Participant C reported they did not have an induction program and were not assigned a mentor, their experience in their first year was described as

“so my first year of teaching, I had a tough class, I could go on and on about it. But I was basically told by my teammates, who were all veteran teachers, “Natalie, you’re not being supported the way you should,” which was, you know, I’m naive, I’m new, I’m trying to keep my head above water. But I had some rough behaviors and there was no accountability ... I was considered a late hire and at the district it was a quick section popped last minute due to numbers. So, my program was very expedited”.

However, their experience with their administration painted a different perspective:

“and I know it’s a good relationship. They’ve seen me teach a lot so they started asking questions. “Oh you’ve done this before, hey what are your plans for the fall” and they wanted to build a good relationship basically, to try to establish something you know, futuristically speaking”.

Participant J shared that their school culture provided them with a positive experience:

“my school has that kind of environment that is quite positive. Like there’s a lot negativity and attention is given to great aspirations. I feel like I have matured over time, I have gotten a lot of motivation. The administrators are good, like, whenever they need something addressed they’ll just call you, not in a group so you will not be pinpointed. You know, at times when you’re being pinpointed at

times it feels very frustrating, so they really don't do that not unless it's a severe case ... it's a good environment, that's the reason I'm staying".

Participant H expressed their positive experiences with their administration.

"Okay, I got support from the administration, of course, they give me the necessary resources, the equipment that I'll be using in the classroom and I'm told to socialize with the other teachers so it will be easier because we'll be sharing ideas".

Limitations of the Study

In the initial proposal one of the identified limitations was COVID-19 pandemic social distancing guidelines. Several districts response to my request to interview their teachers was negative or denial of the request due to the increased burdens on teachers due to COVID-19. However, the use of professional databases such as LinkedIn, as well as the use of Facebook and the Walden Pool, recruitment and interviews were conducted using Zoom.

The limitation that unexpectedly appeared was the pool of applicants on the Walden pool generated participants that did not meet the criteria; however, potential participants were provided with the study consent form and reported their ineligibility. This presented some potential bias as the study moved forward. There were two interviews that were discontinued after the beginning due to responses to Interview question 1 *How would you describe your educational experience prior to becoming a teacher?* as they indicated that the participants were in fact not novice educators with less than 5 years' experience.

Recruitment of participants took a considerable amount of time leading to expansion of geographical locations. COVID-19 restrictions were in place; therefore, all the interviews were conducted using Zoom. Remote interviews remove some of the ability to build a relationship with the participant as it can be difficult to observe all the body language and subtleties of interviewing may be missed. The participants were willing to be audio-recorded for their interviews; however, at least half of the participants felt uncomfortable having their cameras on. This made the interview process difficult, and I had to build relationships with the participants with my ease and tone of voice. I practiced considerable wait time with minimal interruptions to allow for increased natural responses. This left the researcher to rely solely on notes taken during the interview and unable to observe the teachers in a natural setting.

Another limitation presented the need to expand participant pool to include novice educators outside of grades 3 through 5. Interestingly, only one additional participant fell outside the grade range as they were elementary special education teachers serving K-5. The participants received an email requesting permission to proceed, only those participants who responded were sent consents.

The transferability of this qualitative study may pose limitations. The research design, sampling, methods, and RQs were to understand the experiences of novice educators in grades 3 through 5 and their willingness to remain in the field of education. Education systems have had considerable changes over the past 10 years, which spans the time of this initial planning of this study. However, the participants' views and responses should be considered as relevant keys to understanding the modern field of education.

Some potential biases may have impacted the study, providing limitations. For example, I am a female in a district level leadership specific environment. Also, I have served in the evaluative role of an elementary principal and a director of special education and may have tendencies due to those roles and experiences. However, to minimize any personal bias, I was able to balance follow-up questions and probes after the main questions. Internet interviews provide a significant strength within the platform as it pertains to lack of judgment or criticism (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Data collected after the interviews was later transcribed and emailed back for any additional comments, feedback, and accuracy. This process entailed member checks that included the participants (Patton, 2015). At no time during the interview or follow-up process did I influence the participants' responses.

Recommendations

The data supports several recommendations with regards to retaining novice elementary educators. Based on the research findings, it is first recommended that research continues around understanding the various dynamics of why educators remain in the field of education. The world of education is vastly changing over the years, whether it is to maintain in the political environment or to meet the demands of the new learners entering the school systems. To understand how to continue to retain quality teachers, researchers need to consider the duality of the factors that influence novice educators.

The experiences of novice elementary educators in grades 3 through 5 and their willingness to remain in the field entailed probing and understanding their perspectives of

factors that influence their decisions as well as understanding the influence of SDT as they navigate their educational system. From the study, recommendations were generated concerning key factors that influence novice educators' willingness to remain in the field. In the study, the participants described experiences of lack of an induction program and lack of a strong mentor. The research suggested that induction programs with strong mentors can impact the decision to remain in the field and continue with the current setting. Nine novice educators participated in the study, and only one served grades Kindergarten to fifth grade. All the participants were entering the field of education with a traditional pathway of a four-year college prior to teaching.

Two of the participants were in their first two years of teaching and neither of them were aware of induction programs. Each was assigned a mentor; however, neither were receiving ongoing professional development in the areas of curriculum and behavior. Strong induction programs with an emphasis on mentoring for novice elementary teachers is a critical need to mitigate the detriment to the district finances and school culture (Foster, 2022). Induction programs with mentoring can provide real time benefit to novice educators if the rate and frequency of mentoring hours is met at a moderate rate (Caven et al., 2021; Zumwalt et al., 2017).

The second recommendation is to improve the collegiate preparation through an investigation within teacher readiness of third- and fourth-year teaching candidates. Higher education has an obligation to provide high quality candidates prepared to enter classrooms. The exploration and consideration of additional experiential classroom learning should be included in the investigation of teacher readiness. The investigation of

teacher readiness must go beyond the coursework and include more “real-time” experiences that include understanding student behavior, school characteristics, managing workloads, and strategies to maintain self-satisfaction. The inability to recruit students into the field of education is even more critical as the nation continues to struggle with staff shortages.

Implications

The understanding of novice elementary educators’ willingness to remain in the field continues to be limited. Few researchers have considered a multi-pronged approach to understanding why some educators leave and why some choose to stay. These challenges and barriers are even more significant as the nation continues to struggle with staff shortages in the field of education. For example, understanding the over-arching theme of combined efforts of induction programs and professional development can lead to direct policy making for districts as well as suggestions for state legislators (Zumwalt et al., 2017). In this study, the purpose was to explore the experiences of novice elementary educators’ willingness to remain in the field. Several of the results and findings lead to understanding the multi-faceted perceptions of why decisions to stay are made and why some choose to leave. The findings revealed 4 major themes that novice elementary educators that impact their decisions: strong induction programs with an emphasis on mentoring, strong experiential training accompanied with continued professional development, mental health supports and life/work balance, and strong administrative support.

Identifying local and state systems to support novice educators may be impactful in the efforts to retain high-quality educators in elementary education. Tracking these efforts should be considered as part of the existing evaluation tools used to determine proficiency and performance of districts and state agencies. Higher education must also share in the responsibility to produce high quality teachers that are prepared to enter the classroom with not only the knowledge of pedagogy but also the preparedness to manage student behaviors and district expectations. Educators entering the classroom are often overwhelmed with expectations and conditions and leave the field for higher pay in other careers (Saks et al., 2021). While there are no clear models for predicting who will stay or who will go, the burden often falls on the district to determine the answers while facing economic challenges with the costs of hiring and training new staff. Qualitative data could help support not only higher education practices but also district policies on how to best support incoming teachers. Responses from state surveys as well as district surveys of educators may also provide significant insight on which policies are providing a positive impact on the retention rates. Higher education may consider expanding current practices or student teaching and/or experiential opportunities for teacher candidates. States that currently require ongoing professional development or college units to continue to maintain licensure, may consider what level of supports they are providing to the educational community in terms of resources and free to no-cost professional development.

Legislative committees that support public education through bills and funding may benefit from being provided samples of district performance in the area of retention

rates. Legislative champions run their elections based on promises made to communities, tracking school and district performance needs to have more qualitative data provided to make informed decisions on how well districts are really doing. Legislators should consider hosting townhall meetings with their constituents as well as district leaders to ensure that “voices” are heard from multiple perspectives. As districts in one state use BEST grant dollars as a means to improve their districts through additional resources, curriculum, staffing, and facilities, the community has a direct impact on whether the district receives grant dollars. Staff shortages should not solely burden school districts, higher structure levels must get involved if they are ever to see significant changes.

Education champions must continue to forage for greater understanding of how local and state policies impact the retention difficulties that many districts are facing on a day-to-day basis. By prioritizing the impact of student performance, the shift must also include our impact on educators’ knowledge and well-being. Positive social change can happen when education champions provide safe spaces for relevant and meaningful conversations include how the field is approaching solution oriented problem-solving to the significant challenges in the loss of our educators over time. Thusly, this study helped provide input to policy makers at the local, higher education, and state level decision makers.

Conclusion

This study provided an opportunity for 9 novice elementary educators to share their experiences as they were entering the field of education and factors that influenced their decision to remain in the field of education. The participants provided a fresh

perspective to the continued challenges that have plagued the nation for several years. They equally assisted in a better understanding of a multi-pronged approach to this dilemma that must be considered as we move forward to recruit and retain educators. The participants freely provided their insights and experiences over Zoom meetings all while on the tail end of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants were either entering their second year or as high as fifth year educator.

The results and findings of the study coincide with much of the research that has been conducted over the past two decades. Participants expressed similar frustrations with issues/concerns of the past. To understand another dynamic of retention rates, this study approached the problem using SDT, specifically focusing on autonomy, competency, and relatedness. The participants were able to provide significant details on each of the SDT principles and the influence of each on their decisions to remain in the field.

The educators in this study were open with their perceptions and offered suggestions on how to improve systems. Many expressed the joy that teaching brings and that there is a distinct difference in having a job versus choosing to do something you love every day. Educators across states are rising to the challenge of staff shortages to ensure that our students receive the very best education. Districts are continuing to problem solve on how to ensure educators are not getting burned out and remain in their current position to provide consistency to students. The multi-pronged approach to this significant challenge must be in the forefront of our policy making and supports we provide our local and higher education agencies. My final thought is that educators

entering the field hold a unique perspective on how they will succeed within the first 5 years, and it is up to those in leadership positions to ensure that they are supported. Educators continue to provide the beacon of hope to all our students and families.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol/Questions

Interview Protocol

Good morning/afternoon, participant name, thank you for being a willing participant in my study. My name is Lynnette Steinhoff and I am doctoral candidate at Walden University. My study is on retention rates of novice educators and their willingness to remain in the field. I have approximately 3 main questions that may or may not include probing questions that should take between 45 minutes to 60 minutes to complete. I will be recording the session with your permission. You should have received an email with a written consent form with our outline of today's events and who to contact at Walden University with any questions, please let me know if you did not receive the form. (I will wait to check any dissent the interview at this time...wait time) Thank you for providing me consent and I will begin recording the session now. At the end of our time together today I will verify that I have your correct spelling of your name and your correct email address. I will follow up with an email of your recording and transcription of our conversation today. Please allow me time to complete the transcription. If at any time during the interview today you wish to remove consent to participate in the study you may simply tell me you wish to remove yourself from the study and any recording will be sent to you directly and deleted from any storage device. May we begin with the first interview question? (wait time) Let's proceed...(ask interview questions as written).

Concluding the interview with the following statement: That is all of the questions that I have for you today. Do you have anything else that you would like to add that you

feel like I missed during our time together? (wait time) I wanted to thank you again for your participation and it was a pleasure to get to know a little bit more about you. I will be in contact with you regarding your recording and transcription. In the meantime, if you have any questions for me please contact me at lynette.steinhoff@waldenu.edu. Thank you again, Lynnette

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your educational experience prior to becoming a teacher? (RQ₁)

1. Could you clarify; what else?

Potential probing questions

- b. How did your college prepared you to become a teacher?
 - c. If you could give anyone advice to becoming a teacher, what would it be?
 - d. How did your college coursework prepared you to enter public school?
 1. Can you give me examples of that?
2. Can you please describe your motivation to become a teacher?
 - a. What made you want to be a teacher?
 - b. What is something that excites you about your school?
 - c. What is something that you wish you could change about your school?
 1. What additional resources do you think you need to be successful?
3. Can you please describe your district's induction program (if available) and how you participated? If your does not have an induction program, please describe how you were supported as a novice teacher? (RQ₁ and RQ₂)

- a. What are some of the supports that you have found within your induction program?
 - b. How has professional development in your induction program has influenced your classroom instructional strategies?
 - c. How would you describe your experience with district and state assessments?
 1. Are you familiar with any of your school districts' assessments or any state assessments?
4. What was the experience of coming into a new school district? (e.g., fears, needed supports, hopes, and desired outcomes) (RQ₁)
- a. How would you describe your relationship with your building administrator?
 - b. How would you describe your experience with your mentoring teacher?
 - c. How would you describe your ideal classroom?
5. Describe your plans to stay teaching in the elementary setting? (RQ₂.)
1. Is there something about teaching in the elementary school that you're teaching in general that you want to stay with?
 2. You believe that you're compensated well enough in your current district?
 3. What is something that you feel like I need to know that perhaps I didn't ask you?

Appendix B: Principal Letter

Dear Sir or Ma'am,

It is with great honor that I am writing you to you today. I am a current PhD candidate with Walden University in the Education program Leadership, Policy, and Change. I am conducting a qualitative study to “Exploring the Role of Intrinsic Motivation in Elementary Public-School Educators Willingness to Remain in Teaching.” I am seeking 10 volunteer novice teachers in the grades 3 through 5 to participate in a brief (45-60 minute) personal interview. My goal of the study is to provide the field of education with critical answers to the ongoing struggle with retaining highly effective teachers in our school systems. Additionally, I am seeing to answer three research questions:

RQ₁. How does intrinsic motivation influence novice elementary educators' willingness to remain in teaching?

RQ₂. What are the reasons novice educators give for choosing to stay in the field of education?

There is no attached compensation for this study, nor will it reflect on any job performance or school performance. I am requesting that you send this letter along to your elementary teachers in grades 3 through 5 to determine if they would be willing participants and meet the criteria for being in the study. I will be asking for only novice educators with 5 years or less experience and will not conduct interviews during the regular scheduled school day. Should you have any further questions or require any further clarification, I would be happy to engage in a conversation.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this qualitative study.

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