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## Traditionally Certified, Second-Career Teachers' Perceptions of Intent to Stay in the Classroom

Tara L. Wells  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Tara L. Wells

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

Review Committee

Dr. Belinda McFeeters, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. Denise Uehara, Committee Member, Education Faculty

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

Walden University  
2026

Abstract

Traditionally Certified, Second-Career Teachers' Perceptions  
of Intent to Stay in the Classroom

By

Tara L. Wells

MA, Bowie State University, 2008

BS, University of Maryland, University College, 2004

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education  
Higher Education and Adult Learning

Walden University

May 2026

## Abstract

The problem that was addressed through this study was the high teacher turnover, including traditionally certified, second-career teachers (TCSCTs), in United States classrooms, despite support and additional resources provided. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine TCSCTs' perceptions on the reasons and their recommendations to remain in the classroom. Ingersoll's teacher turnover and retention framework was used to conceptually frame this study. Using a basic qualitative design, semistructured interviews were conducted with 12 TCSCTs. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis. The following themes emerged: TCSCTs remain in the profession primarily due to a sense of purpose in their daily work, meaningful relationships with students and colleagues, supportive leadership and a positive school culture, having a manageable workload, opportunities for professional growth, and an overall positive employee experience. In addition, TCSCTs recommended systemic improvements in leadership, mentorship, professional development resources, workload management, and compensation as key strategies for increasing teacher retention. Positive social change may be promoted by offering best practices for teachers, K—12 leaders, higher education leaders, and policymakers for sustaining long-term commitment and professional resilience of TCSCTs, which in turn might benefit students by having a consistent teacher presence and a teacher with prior career experience.

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work of art to my mother, Sandy. She is the only person who helped me to accept that I could not truly be myself without an education.

“A mother is not a person to lean on, but a person to make leaning unnecessary.”

– Dorothy C. Fisher

To my mother,

Who believed in me when I doubted myself,

Who instilled in me the strength to persevere,

Who instilled in me the values of resilience and curiosity,

And who herself lived as a testament to the power of education.

Your faith in me has been my foundation,

Your unwavering support and love have been my inspiration.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The primary reason public school teachers in the United States leave their positions is the high level of job-related stress (Peck, 2024b). In November 2023, approximately 51,000 educators quit their teaching positions in the United States, marking the highest level of teacher turnover since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (Peck, 2024a). Previously, teacher turnover was predicted to rise to a historic high of 14% in the 2021–2022 school year; then, decline to about 12% in the 2022–2023 school year, and remain stable in the 2023–2024 school year (US Teacher Shortage, n.d.). In addition to the stress associated with teaching, teachers left due to burnout, heavy workloads, understaffing, safety concerns, low salaries, and lack of resources or funding (Devers et al., 2024). Teacher turnover, as Gui (2024) pointed out, generates significant negative financial burdens for schools and also undermines several crucial aspects of the educational environment. These detrimental effects include lower student performance, decreased morale among remaining staff, disruptions in teaching practices, reduced satisfaction among parents, and a deterioration of the overall school climate.

Second-career teachers (SCTs) are career-change teachers (CCTs), despite their pathway to certification. SCTs bring unique experiences and perspectives to the field of teaching. Despite bringing transferable skills, specialized knowledge, a strong work ethic, and good communication skills (Hogg et al., 2024; Omadley & Villocino, 2023), SCTs are classified as nontraditional learners. Skov (2024) suggested that prior professional experience generally makes SCTs more adaptable, empathetic, and uniquely prepared for the realities of teaching.

SCTs are typically hired to support teacher shortages (Hogg et al., 2024; Keck & Frei, 2021). Although SCTs are offered school-based mentorship, competitive salaries, and professional development opportunities (Hogg et al., 2023), they continue to leave the profession. Alongside the national trend in teacher shortages, SCTs are leaving the classroom, furthering the longstanding problem of teacher retention. In a study on SCT retention, this specific group of individuals felt greater recognition should be placed on their individual talents. For example, prior work history, self-belief in their capabilities, and awareness of their own weaknesses are qualities that define this population. The study further suggested that retention may be influenced by both positive and negative aspects of an individual's traits (Ruitenburg & Tigchelaar, 2021). Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar (2021) identified leadership, induction programs, and collaboration as three external contextual factors that influence an SCT's decision to remain in education based on the publications they studied. Moreover, Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar (2021) adopted a global lens on teacher induction programs, examining best practices from programs in Japan, Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Germany, Switzerland, and France. Their research was conducted between 2019 and 2021. In their literature review, they uncovered the intentions of first-career teachers (FCTs) and SCTs and found that SCTs differ from FCTs in five aspects: motives, skills, knowledge, beliefs, and autonomy. The current study aimed to examine more closely the perceptions of traditionally certified second-career U.S. teachers about their intent to remain in the classroom. This study offers the perspectives of SCTs postpandemic (after 2021). Participants of this study included newly hired SCTs as well as regular and tenured SCTs.

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) found that individuals who enter teaching through alternative routes often possess prior work experience, exhibit a significantly higher early attrition rate—25% greater—compared to their traditionally prepared counterparts. Dadvand and Dawborn-Gundlach (2020) attributed this increased turnover to a confluence of factors, including less extensive formal training, the intensified demands of teaching in high-needs schools, and a greater reliance on schools to provide essential practical and early-career development. This research aimed to identify strategies that can enhance teacher retention in the classroom.

This teacher retention problem exists in a greater context across the nation. However, there is a gap in practice regarding best practices that encourage traditionally certified, second-career teachers (TCSCTs) to remain in the classroom (postcertification and postinduction period). Understanding why TCSCTs remain in the classroom is essential for addressing teacher shortages and enhancing the quality of education. Factors such as job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, school leadership support, and professional development opportunities play significant roles in retention (Syptak et al., 1999). For example, Laher (2024) explored the motivations and satisfaction levels of SCTs. Findings suggested that job satisfaction and alignment with personal values significantly influence retention. Likewise, in the current study, I sought to gain a deeper understanding of best practices for teacher retention. This study may also promote social change by offering best practices for teachers, K-12 leaders, higher education leaders, and policymakers for sustaining long-term commitment and professional resilience of TCSCTs, which in turn

might benefit students by having a consistent teacher presence and a teacher with prior career experience.

This chapter provides an overview of the study, introducing the problem and purpose, followed by the research questions and conceptual framework. It also explains the study's nature, defines key terms, and outlines assumptions, scope, delimitations, limitations, and significance. The chapter concludes with a summary.

### **Background**

TCSCTs have a unique position in addressing workforce shortages. TCSCTs have more prior career experience than first-career teachers, thus offering an available pool of highly qualified candidates for the field of teaching (Troesch & Bauer, 2020). Teacher retention is important for reducing recruitment costs, ensuring instructional stability, and enhancing student achievement (Maready, 2021). As career switchers enter the teaching profession, these transitions are not necessarily smooth. Exploring the literature, researchers found that experiences of CCTs transitioning into secondary education emphasize the importance of the development of CCTs' professional identities and advocate for initial teacher education (ITE; Hogg, 2023, 2024). Traditionally trained teachers are better prepared to enter the profession. Viviani et al. (2023) consistently observed that teachers who completed accelerated alternative certification programs reported feeling significantly, though not overwhelmingly, less prepared to teach at the beginning of their careers compared to those who underwent traditional teacher preparation programs.

Few studies have focused on understanding best practices for retaining TCSCTs. This study addressed TCSCTs' intent to stay over time—in other words, not just during their induction periods. Related factors such as the influence of school demographics, teaching assignments, and policy conditions related to retention also need to be researched. By examining the turnover intentions of TCSCTs, this study may contribute to a more substantial and sustainable teacher workforce. The retention of TCSCTs benefits both students and teachers who offer real-world knowledge and perhaps career guidance, as well as diverse perspectives on the profession.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem that was addressed through this study is the high teacher turnover, including TCSCTs, in United States classrooms, despite support and additional resources provided. The evidence that this problem exists was the turnover rates for all teachers, regardless of their certification pathway. Diliberti and Schwartz (2025) reported that districts estimated that teacher turnover in the United States continued its drop of 10% after the introduction of the coronavirus disease in 2019 to 7% as of the 2023–2024 school year. Nonetheless, this 7% turnover rate was still above the estimated prepandemic level of 6%. Globally, the problem at hand is an issue. Research on the topic of teacher turnover extends to other countries. For example, Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar (2021) synthesized findings from studies in the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

Most of the research on teacher retention practices has focused on early-career teachers, first-career teachers, or novice teachers (herein collectively named *traditional*

*teachers*). For example, Redding and Smith (2016) found that alternatively certified teachers (ACTs) leave the profession at a higher rate than traditionally certified teachers for several reasons. These reasons include their placement in Title I schools, lack of student-teacher experience, staff collegiality, and student discipline problems. Ruitenburg and Tigchelaar (2021) reported that both personal and external factors influenced the retention of SCTs. They also indicated that individual characteristics, professional development support, and integration processes affected the professional growth of these teachers.

Furthermore, Richter et al. (2022) conducted a quantitative study on international teacher retention, with a focus on alternatively certified (second-career) teachers, a group that has received much less attention in the literature over the years. Out of 238 ACTs, 25% were more likely to leave the classroom than their colleagues who completed a traditional certification program. Their findings showed that traits like extraversion and perceived social support are positively linked to job satisfaction and intentions to stay. Extraversion describes the extent to which an individual exhibits characteristics of sociability, outgoingness, and high energy levels (Maxfield et al., 2024). Perceived social support refers to an individual feeling connected and supported by others, measured by assessing the perceived availability and satisfactoriness of supportive relationships and the support received. In addition, self-efficacy serves as a mediator (Richter et al., 2022). Within education, self-efficacy pertains to a teacher's belief in their ability to educate students in a productive and impactful manner (Yang et al., 2024).

In contrast, Bacher-Hicks et al. (2023) found that the challenging conditions educators encountered across three academic years during the global pandemic likely contributed significantly to teacher attrition. Their findings indicated that heightened uncertainty correlated with reduced opportunities for teachers to pursue alternative career training. Moreover, the temporary suspension of licensure exams and student teaching requirements in numerous states coincided with comparable turnover rates among emergency (43.1%) and provisional (43.0%) license holders, only marginally higher than those with initial licenses (41.2%). These data led Bacher-Hicks et al. to conclude that the educational workforce exhibits instability, and a lack of substantial investment in teacher-specific training may exacerbate turnover.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine TCSCTs' perceptions on the reasons and their recommendations to remain in the classroom. Specifically, this study aimed to examine factors that influence TCSCT retention, including intrinsic motivations, school culture, workplace experiences, external factors, and the value of their traditional pathway training. By investigating these perceptions, the study sought to provide a perspective on how educational stakeholders can support this subset of the teaching workforce and address attrition.

The primary concept of this study was teacher retention, specifically for the subset of the teacher workforce that includes TCSCTs. The study aimed to explore the interplay of the following factors—intent to stay, SCTs, and traditional certification

pathways—to better understand what motivates TCSCTs to remain in the classroom and address broader concerns about teacher attrition, shortages, and workforce stability.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were explored in this study.

RQ1: What are TCSCTs' perceptions of the reasons they choose to remain in the classroom?

RQ2: What are TCSCTs' recommendations about what can be done to increase the number of teachers who remain in the classroom?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The theory that supported this study was Ingersoll's teacher turnover and retention framework. Using the teacher turnover and retention framework, one can explore the factors that influence why teachers choose to remain in or leave the profession. The framework is typically used to identify the key drivers of teacher stability or attrition and guide strategies to improve teacher retention (Ingersoll, 2001).

Ingersoll's teacher turnover and retention framework addresses both external and internal factors impacting teacher turnover and retention. Ingersoll et al. (2021) highlighted that teacher shortages resulting from teacher turnover are a primary factor in the staffing challenges schools encounter to fill vacancies with qualified mathematics, science, and other teachers. Additionally, they pointed out the disproportionately high attrition rates among teachers at the beginning of their careers. This includes traditional teachers as well as ACTs (Ingersoll et al., 2021).

The core idea of this framework is that teacher turnover significantly contributes to school staffing challenges. It is influenced by factors such as working conditions, job demands, pay and benefits, professional development, career growth, teacher characteristics (e.g., experience and subject area), external factors, and mentorship programs, rather than just supply issues or retirement (Ingersoll, 2003a). For example, a study from the early 2000s, which remains applicable today, cited several reasons why beginning teachers leave the profession. According to Ingersoll and Smith (2003b), the top significant reasons were listed as poor salary, student discipline issues, inadequate administrative support, poor student motivation, and lack of faculty influence.

Ingersoll's teacher turnover and retention framework related to the current study in several ways. For example, school staffing issues are always a concern for educational districts. According to Ingersoll and Tran (2023), the data suggested that efforts to solve teacher shortages should focus on both recruiting new teachers and retaining current ones by making schools better places to work. They advocated for offering high-quality and appropriate support for teachers, such as mentoring and induction programs (Brantlinger, 2021; Burger et al., 2021; Viviani et al., 2023). Ingersoll's framework also highlights the critical role of school-level factors such as administrative support, relationships with colleagues, student discipline, workload, and autonomy in retaining teachers (Ingersoll, 2003a). Even with additional resources, if SCTs experience challenging working conditions, these negative organizational factors can outweigh the benefits of the supports and contribute to their decision to leave (Ingersoll, 2003a). Other related areas included

insufficient compensation and benefits, unmet expectations, and a lack of professional agency (Ingersoll, 2003a).

This study directly addressed the issue of teacher retention, which is a central theme in Ingersoll's (2003a) research. His framework emphasizes that teacher turnover is a complex issue rooted in organizational factors and working conditions, not just individual teacher characteristics. By focusing on the perceptions of TCSCs regarding their intent to remain, this study tapped into a specific group of experienced professionals who can offer valuable insights into what makes a workplace conducive to retention. In addition, this study aligned with this perspective by seeking to understand the factors that encourage experienced teachers to remain in the profession. Furthermore, through this study, I aimed to gain insights into workplace improvements and recruitment strategies, which directly resonate with the implications of Ingersoll's findings. Ingersoll's research suggests that improving the organizational context of schools is key to both retaining existing teachers and attracting new ones (Ingersoll, 2003a).

Given that this was a qualitative study and the research questions that guided it focused on the perceptions and recommendations of TCSCs, semistructured interviews were the most effective instrument for capturing the depth and nuance of their experiences. Prior to conducting these interviews, I used an initial open-ended questionnaire to help gather data from a larger sample and identify common themes that could then be explored in more detail during interviews. Given the qualitative nature of the interview, thematic analysis was the most appropriate method for data analysis. This thematic analysis included transcription, coding, defining themes, and exporting the data.

### **Nature of the Study**

I employed a basic qualitative research design for this study. Bazen et al. (2021) highlighted the capacity of qualitative research to gather insights into the affective, cognitive, and axiological drivers of behavior through open-ended inquiries exploring the how, what, and why of a phenomenon. Their work also underscored the inductive nature of qualitative analysis, where broad thematic patterns or general principles are derived from specific observations, subsequently informing the development of hypotheses regarding the phenomenon or behavior under investigation. In the current study, data collection came from TCSCTs located in the US. Participants in this sample possessed perceptions about their intent to remain in the classroom. Semistructured interviews were conducted to address the problem statement and understand participants' perceptions and recommendations for increasing retention amongst TCSCTs. In addition, this study sought to obtain recommendations from the participants on how retention may be increased for this particular subgroup of teachers.

### **Definitions**

*Alternatively certified teachers (ACTs)* are defined as individuals who might not have taken the traditional pathway of education degree programs. A true definition for ACTs is challenging due to the diverse pathways and experiences that characterize this group (Bowling & Ball, 2018).

*Career-change teachers (CCTs)* are defined as individuals who transition into the teaching profession after pursuing a different primary career (Hogg et al., 2024).

*Intent to remain* is commonly defined as an individual's commitment to staying in a particular role or profession. For example, in a study on volunteer management, "intent to remain" was measured by asking volunteers how likely they were to continue volunteering for the organization in the following year, using a scale from 1 (*not likely at all*) to 10 (*extremely likely*; Piatak & Carman, 2023).

*Second-career teachers (SCTs)* are defined as individuals who transition into teaching after pursuing a different profession (Coppe, 2024).

*Teacher retention* is defined as the ability of educational institutions to keep qualified teachers employed within the profession, minimizing turnover and ensuring continuity in student learning (Peprah Opoku et al., 2024).

*Teacher attrition* is defined as the phenomenon of educators leaving the teaching profession entirely, either to pursue other careers or for personal reasons (Cells et al., 2022).

*Traditionally certified second-career teachers (TCSCTs)* are defined as individuals who transition into teaching after pursuing a different career and obtain their teaching credentials through traditional teacher education programs (Teacher Builder, 2020).

### **Assumptions**

As this is a basic qualitative study, I assumed that participants' self-reported data would be accurate representations of their experiences, as online data collection can lead to sampling bias and deceptive behaviors, which may cause participants to misrepresent themselves (Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2024). As noted by Šimundić (2013), sampling bias

can occur when the selected sample lacks sufficient size to accurately reflect the characteristics of the broader population of interest. Confidentiality of participant data was provided to assist with eliminating the need for individuals to hide or falsify information, as online studies carry some risks related to privacy and to the exclusion of some participants (Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2024).

A second assumption is related to the generalizability of the findings. Although it was expected that each participant had a story, the data acquired from each participant may be at least partly generalizable to a larger population. Sweeping assumptions about the relevance or irrelevance of generalization to qualitative research are of limited use (Osbeck & Antczak, 2021). To alleviate this, data were collected until saturation was reached. The usefulness of a concept of generalization for any application must be tested, not assumed (Osbeck & Antczak, 2021). Testing refers to careful analysis, reflection, and potentially further research to determine the broader applicability of these findings in diverse contexts. Finally, I remained neutral and unbiased during data collection. The findings from this study could help school stakeholders better understand how to support and retain TCSCTs, thereby addressing teacher shortages.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of this qualitative research was to obtain the perceptions of TCSCTs' reasons for remaining in the classroom. Delimitations are factors and variables not included in the study (American Journal Experts, 2022). The specific focus of the problem selected in this study (or target population) was TCSCTs. There are several reasons why this specific focus was chosen. The first reason for selecting this focus was

to address the retention challenges in education. Retention challenges in education are identified by teacher retention as a major concern in education, with many leaving the profession within the first few years (Baeten & Meeus, 2016). Comprehending why TCSCTs remain can help identify factors that contribute to long-term commitment. The second reason for selecting this focus was to obtain unique perspectives and experiences from this population of teachers. Unique perspectives and experiences are identified by SCTs who bring diverse experiences, skills, and motivations from their prior careers (Baeten & Meeus, 2016).

These insights provided valuable information about how professional experiences outside education influence teachers' decisions to remain in teaching. Researching their perspectives can help assess whether preparation impacts their resilience and commitment to the profession. Another reason for selecting this focus was to address workforce shortages. Addressing workforce shortages implies that many educational systems face teacher shortages, especially in critical areas like STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and special education. Understanding the motivation of TCSCTs to remain in the classroom can inform recruitment and retention strategies targeting similar individuals (Viviani et al., 2023).

Similarly, improving professional support for SCTs is an issue. Strategies to improve professional support include acknowledging TCSCTs' prior experiences, addressing TCSCTs' unique needs, providing TCSCTs with mentoring opportunities, creating supportive workplace environments, and providing targeted professional development opportunities (Hogg et al., 2023). Finally, contributing to educational

quality was a key focus of this study. A contribution to educational quality demands a need for retaining experienced SCTs, which ensures continuity and stability in schools, which is essential for fostering positive student outcomes. Exploring their reasons for staying can provide strategies to enhance job satisfaction for all educators (Burger et al., 2021; Ertürk, 2021; Richter et al, 2022).

Focusing on research that examines the perceptions of TCSCTs' reasons for remaining in the classroom was significant for several reasons including retention challenges, unique perspectives and experiences, the impact of traditional certification pathways, addressing workforce shortages, improving professional support, and a contribution to educational quality. The boundaries of a study examining the perceptions of TCSCTs' reasons for remaining in the classroom helped define its scope and ensure clarity about what is and is not included. These boundaries included a focus on perceptions, geographic scope, which may limit generalizability, certification pathway (traditional versus alternative), reasons for staying and not leaving, methodology (qualitative versus quantitative), institutional variables, and career backgrounds.

As previously stated, delimitations are the boundaries that the researcher sets in a research study, deciding what to include and what to exclude, which helps narrow down the study, making it more manageable and relevant to the research goal (American Journal Experts, 2022). The self-determination theory (SDT) framework is an excluded conceptual framework most related to this current area of study that was not investigated. SDT explores the relevance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in career transitions and teacher commitment. It is increasingly recognized by schools and educational institutions

that SDT can foster an environment that is beneficial to teaching and learning, a notion supported by many studies (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Cherry (2024) indicated that SDT proposes that people become self-determined when their needs for competence, connection, and autonomy are satisfied. This conceptual framework was not chosen as the participants in this study are already established career transitioners.

Namely, transferability refers to how an outcome is accomplished within a given context (Osbeck & Antczak, 2021). Potential transferability in this study depended on several factors, including relevance to other educator groups outside of second-career and traditionally certified teachers, educational settings (public versus private and geographical school environments), the application across teacher shortages, how traditional certification influences retention, professional development and retention, as well as transferability to other professions. Careful attention to context and participant diversity can enhance the transferability of the findings (Drisko, 2024). By including a diverse group of participants, there was a likelihood that the themes and insights would emerge from the data, which may reflect a broader range of experiences within the population of TCSCsTs.

### **Limitations**

This research had a few limitations. I employed a snowball sampling technique, where respondents recruited additional respondents from their personal networks (Makwana et al., 2023). This restriction resulted in a sample that did not accurately represent the wider population. However, when trying to access populations that are difficult to identify, snowball sampling was a helpful tool. The snowball sampling

technique created a chain effect, resulting in a snowball-like growth of the sample (Makwana et al., 2023). I attempted to continue this method until the desired sample was reached. Because the desired sample size was not initially reached, this limitation was addressed by increasing the number of initial participants, diversifying the initial sample, and also using a different sampling method, such as convenience sampling, to achieve a more representative sample.

A postpandemic world includes different modalities of learning and expression. Conducting interviews with teachers who work full-time had to be flexible and offered at the participant's convenience. This included conducting virtual interviews. Although virtual interviews may be a preferred option for some, they do have their disadvantages. Previous research has identified challenges with the platform, including issues with call connection, as well as the reliability and quality of audio and video (Archibald et al., 2019). Using videoconferencing reduces travel costs and meeting costs, and enables recording and transcription (Boland et al., 2021). This limitation may be alleviated with a portion of interviews received electronically and through voice calls. The potential impact on rapport-building and the nuances of nonverbal communication were carefully considered. Clear expectations were established, effective use of video techniques was strongly encouraged, active listening strategies were employed, and through informal conversations, facial expressions and body language were observed before and after the interview.

Another limitation that arose in this research was reliance on self-reported data. Self-reported data was a possible limitation because participants may not have accurately

reported their thoughts, behaviors, or experiences due to a desire to distort the truth to remain positive. They may have even been unable to recall past events or misinterpret what they hear when questions are being asked. One of the primary advantages of self-reporting is that it can be easily obtained, is inexpensive, can reach a wide array of participants, and can be performed relatively quickly. Self-reported data can be gathered in private through anonymization to protect sensitive information and perhaps promote truthful responses (Salters-Pedneault, 2023). This study aimed to mitigate this limitation by employing a well-established questionnaire and combining self-reported data with other data sources that are reliable, such as the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), and relevant collected data from state reports.

### **Significance**

This study held significance for several reasons. First, its findings could help state education agencies enhance teacher preparation programs offered through higher education, ensuring SCTs are better equipped for the challenges associated with the classroom. TCSTs may be formally trained as educators through college teacher preparation programs. These insights could inform the development of training programs tailored to the unique needs and professional backgrounds of SCTs.

Second, the results could guide national recruitment policies aimed at addressing teacher shortages by attracting TCSTs (Love & Love, 2022). Governments may use these findings to design supportive measures such as mentoring programs, professional development opportunities, and work-life balance initiatives to better support TCSTs.

Additionally, teacher residency programs, which provide practical experience, mentorship, and stipends, can help recruit educators for hard-to-staff schools, diversify the workforce, and improve retention (National Education Association, 2022).

This study specifically examined the perceptions of TCSCTs regarding their intent to remain in the classroom amid high attrition rates. While previous research has explored teacher attrition broadly (Ingersoll et al., 2021), this study contributed to the literature by focusing on retention strategies for SCTs, a group that is rarely addressed alone. The findings from this study may serve as a foundation for future research and assist school administrators in developing resources, conducting exit interviews, and implementing retention strategies (Ingersoll et al., 2021).

Beyond its local implications, this study contributes to global research on teacher best practices for attrition and retention. Teaching is widely recognized as a stressful profession with high turnover (Gunn et al., 2023), and teacher shortages remain a global concern (Siostrom et al., 2023). Although many countries recruit professionals from other fields into teaching, attrition persists. This study aimed to serve as a stepping-stone for further research at both local and global levels and may inform policy changes, such as strategic observations or exit counseling. It may also provide a basis for examining factors that influence attrition and retention among TCSCTs.

### **Summary**

To review, the purpose of this qualitative study was to examine TCSCTs' perceptions on the reasons and their recommendations to remain in the classroom. With

less teacher turnover, student learning may improve. Directly impacting student learning can have a positive influence on student achievement.

Through an analysis of their perceptions, findings led to the identification of best practices, including strategies for supporting TCSCTs, such as tailored professional development and mentoring programs; improving certification programs that provide insights for enhancing traditional certification pathways to support SCTs; and policy recommendations, such as creating retention-focused incentives and support systems for TCSCTs. Researchers have cited a growing trend in this problem (Baeten & Meeus, 2016; Hogg et al., 2023; Keck Frei et al., 2021; Nielsen, 2016). As previously stated, there is a limited focus on traditional pathways to certification and a need to track the intentions of TCSCT's commitment to remain in the profession over time. If the problem is not addressed, workforce shortages may increase, and there may no longer be an interest in career switchers to enter the teaching profession. Ingersoll's teacher turnover and retention framework provided a solid conceptual framework to guide the interpretation of the data that were collected.

The following chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to this study. It begins by examining prior research on the topic, highlighting key findings and trends that have shaped the current understanding of the issue. The discussion synthesizes essential themes that inform and contextualize this study, offering insight into the factors that influence the research problem. In addition, the chapter presents a detailed explanation of the conceptual framework that underpins the study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem that was addressed through this study is that despite providing TCSCTs supports and additional resources designed to encourage them to remain in the classroom, TCSCTs continue to leave the classroom in the United States. TCSCTs, also referred to as SCTs or CCTs, continue to leave the classroom at higher rates than first-career teachers in the United States for a myriad of personal and professional reasons (Hogg et al., 2023). Traditionally certified teachers are teachers who have earned a teaching license through a traditional certification program rather than an alternative teacher certification program. TCSCTs enter the educational field with prior life and work experiences and complete traditional pathways to certification (Lucksnat et al., 2022). Traditional certification programs are designed to provide a pathway to teaching for individuals who already hold a bachelor's degree but do not have an education degree by completing an initial teacher education (ITE) program (Siostrom et al, 2023). This qualitative study examined the perceptions of TCSCTs' reasons for remaining in the classroom. Specifically, this study examined factors that influence TCSCT retention, including intrinsic motivations, school culture, workplace experiences, external factors, and the value of their traditional pathway training.

SCTs represent a growing group in many countries. Hiring SCTs has helped address teacher shortages while bringing in individuals with prior work experience (Bauer et al., 2021). However, their experience has not always been positive. SCTs who had left the profession often cite dissatisfaction with aspects of teaching itself rather than the work environment. Understanding how basic needs are met among SCTs may provide

insight into these issues (Bauer et al., 2021). Despite being provided with fewer tasks, smaller class sizes, increased professional development, coaching, and additional resources designed to encourage them to remain, some SCTs continue to leave the profession (Bauer et al., 2021). Those who remain in the classroom are often overworked, underpaid, and appear demoralized. For example, Walter and Fox (2021) reported that many teachers felt unsuccessful during the pandemic, leading some to consider leaving the field. Similarly, factors such as personal, school, and job factors led to the attrition of teachers from the field (Farahmandpour & Voelkel, 2025). Likewise, some teacher attrition in Washington state was attributed to burnout and dissatisfaction (Goldhaber & Theobald, 2022).

This chapter introduced readers to the literature search strategy, including keywords and phrases used to find peer-reviewed articles related to the problem. This chapter also discussed seminal studies and articles relevant to the topic and methodology used in this study. Further into this chapter, the study's conceptual framework was presented. Finally, the literature was organized by key topics and variables to demonstrate that saturation has been reached in the literature review, allowing possible themes to emerge.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

To conduct this literature review, Walden University's library was used to access Google Scholar and the "Research by Subject" tab to identify and explore peer-reviewed articles suitable for this investigation. Keywords and phrases included: second-career teacher, career change teacher, traditionally certified teacher, traditional pathway teacher,

switched career teacher, attrition, intent to stay, intent to remain, transition challenges, initial motivation, motivation, influences, perceived or actual barriers, support, job satisfaction, United States, American, turnover, retention, stay, leave. Due to the lack of research surrounding this topic, the search was limited to scholarly peer-reviewed journals, seminal studies, and other credible sources.

These searches generated literature results from peer-reviewed professional journals. Once the article's title and journal name were retrieved, the information was entered into Walden University's library "Databases A-Z" tab to secure the electronic copy of the article for later use. Internet searches, observations, and conversations with instructors and fellow educators also aided in the collection of relevant literature. This document included content generated with the assistance of ChatGPT and Gemini, both of which are identified as large language models. ChatGPT was developed by OpenAI, and Gemini was developed by Google. I reviewed, edited, and verified the content for accuracy and academic rigor. The literature review also included articles referencing any keywords with the learning theory that framed this study. Saturation has been reached.

### **Conceptual Framework/Theoretical Foundation**

This study examined TCSTs' perceptions of why they choose to remain in the classroom and their recommendations about what can be done to increase the number of teachers who remain in the classroom. This study used Ingersoll's teacher turnover as a conceptual framework to guide the study. Ingersoll's teacher turnover and retention framework grounded this study, as it related to the definition and connection to teacher retention. Ingersoll's work investigated the profession of teaching by focusing on teachers

as employees within the school environment. His research spans the entire career trajectory of educators, from their initial training to their retirement (Ingersoll, 2001). More recently, Ingersoll (2023) highlighted that teacher dissatisfaction is driving higher turnover rates in rural schools compared to their urban and suburban counterparts, suggesting that merely focusing on recruitment efforts will not be enough to solve this problem. He contends that key factors contributing to this dissatisfaction in rural settings include a lack of autonomy in the classroom and exclusion from decision-making processes, rather than issues of salary or class size. This aligned with findings by Ertürk (2022), who, within their research, indicated that the overall quality of the work environment significantly influences both teachers' job satisfaction and their likelihood of leaving the profession. Dr. Ingersoll's research examines teaching as a job, teachers as employees, and schools as the workplace. His research is examined from the teacher preparation period through their last day in the classroom (Ingersoll, 2001). Furthermore, Ingersoll (2023) wrote that the discontent teachers feel results in higher turnover in rural schools than in urban and suburban schools, and that recruitment alone will not address this attrition. He further addressed that not having the ability to control your own classroom and not being a part of decision-making are among the top causes of rural teacher discontent, not compensation or class size. The quality of work and all dimensions predict both job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Ertürk, 2022). Subsequently, Nguyen et al. (2024) stated that if researchers continue to use intent as an outcome in research aimed at informing policy and practice, then a stronger evidence base is needed to support the validity of measures used to address turnover intentions. I

planned to include questions in each interview that focus on intent to remain in the classroom. These interview techniques were used to gather perceptions about TCSCs' intentions to remain in the classroom.

Ingersoll (2001) wrote that teacher recruitment programs will not solve the school's staffing problems if they do not address the organizational sources of low teacher retention. The Ingersoll teacher turnover framework posits that teacher shortages are not due to a lack of qualified teachers but primarily to a substantial number of qualified teachers leaving their positions for reasons unrelated to retirement. Ingersoll (2001) stated that a robust body of research demonstrated that mentoring by veteran teachers positively affects novice teachers' quality of instruction, retention, and capacity to improve student academic outcomes. This specific study also identified a relationship between teachers' views of strong principal leadership and teacher turnover in urban schools. The Ingersoll teacher turnover and retention framework is relevant to understanding teachers' perceptions of intent to remain in the classroom.

There are several past relevant studies that have applied this framework in a similar manner. For example, Nguyen and Springer (2021) created a framework that can be used to study and advance knowledge on teacher turnover and provide guidance for future research through a systematic review and synthesis of the literature, including that of Ingersoll. Additionally, Holme et al. (2017) pointed out that studies using annual turnover rates reveal significant differences among schools. Their research suggested that teachers leave their positions primarily by choice, rather than due to being fired or laid off, a finding that aligned with Ingersoll's framework on teacher turnover and retention.

Expanding on the research of Holme et al., Ryan et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of understanding how state-level accountability pressures affect teacher stress and professional outcomes. Their study identified test-based accountability policies as a factor that predicts teachers leaving the profession. Given the considerable turnover rates and attrition in teaching, alongside worries about national teacher shortages, Ryan et al. (2017) established a noteworthy connection between high-stakes testing, accountability policies, and teachers leaving, which also supports Ingersoll's model of teacher turnover and retention.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variables**

Through an extensive literature search, several themes emerged. Below, the literature was arranged by themes. The first theme discussed was intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for becoming teachers. The next theme discussed in this chapter was transition challenges for TCSCTs from prior work experience into teaching. The third theme discussed in this chapter was perceived or actual barriers faced by SCTs entering this new profession. The fourth theme discussed in this chapter was the interplay of school culture and climate. The next theme discussed in this chapter was teacher support and job satisfaction. The sixth theme discussed in this chapter was external factors that affect TCSCTs in the profession. The next theme was understanding teacher intentions and their impact on turnover. The final theme discussed in this chapter was understanding the complexities of teacher retention. The following paragraphs framed the study through literature.

## **The Driving Forces Behind Choosing a Teaching Career**

Motivations for becoming teachers for TCSTs involve understanding the reasons and driving factors that lead individuals to pursue teaching as a career, particularly when they follow traditional pathways or transition from other professions. However, career change decisions may be motivated by a combination of several intrinsic and extrinsic indicators (Dadvand et al., 2023). For instance, the ability to directly contribute to a community by fostering knowledge and development is a key motivator for many teachers (Dadvand et al., 2023). In a qualitative analysis of 1,298 reflective blogs' posts written by 98 SCTs during their first year of teaching, Bar-Tal and Biberman-Shalev (2022) identified themes such as nostalgia for past roles, challenges in adapting to the education field, and the transfer of skills from prior careers as motivators for entering the profession. Although conducted in Sweden, the study by Kristmansson and Fjellström (2022) found experiences similar to those of US teachers. Their study revealed that 113 vocational education and training teachers who entered the field as a second career entered the profession for several reasons, mainly to pursue meaningful work, make a tangible impact, and the chance to leverage existing expertise in a new field. This specific research was significant because it directly investigated the motivations of SCTs. Likewise, Troesch and Bauer (2020) identified factors related to motivation that impact TCSTs. Their study revealed that teaching offers opportunities for continuous learning and skill development, which appeals to TCSTs with a growth mindset. Troesch and Bauer (2020) surveyed a sample of 297 teachers, comprising 193

FCTs and 104 SCTs. Both groups of teachers experienced traditional pathways to certification.

Oliveros et al. (2024) conducted a phenomenological study, employing in-depth interviews with 10 purposefully selected participants. The criteria for inclusion in this research specified that individuals must be full-time teachers who also possessed prior work experience in a field outside of education. The research indicated that SCTs entered a career in teaching for pay opportunities and influence from their loved ones (Oliveros et al., 2024). While teaching may not be as lucrative as some prior careers, the steady income, benefits, and job security can motivate some TCSTs to stay, as the relative stability of teaching jobs attracts some who enter the field of teaching. Based on their findings, Oliveros et al. (2024) suggested several recommendations for school administrators. These include holding orientation programs specifically for newly hired SCTs, facilitating introductions to all school staff (both teaching and nonteaching) and their designated mentors, creating a mentoring program to ease the transition for SCTs, providing differentiated supervision tailored to their needs, adhering to policies regarding teacher workload and administrative responsibilities, and ensuring that essential resources for learning and support are readily available.

Additionally, Siostrom et al. (2023) identified a range of internal, external, and selfless reasons that motivate individuals to become CCTs. They defined CCTs as individuals who enter the teaching profession later in life, bringing with them existing qualifications, expertise, and life experiences. Their research synthesized findings from 641 studies, ultimately focusing on 29 full-text papers for their analysis. Siostrom et al.

(2023) highlighted specific factors influencing this career transition, including previous experiences in roles similar to teaching, having positive role models as teachers, viewing teaching as a career that accommodates family life with a perceived shorter workday, and the expectation of earning a sufficient salary to support their families. Hence, the TCSCTs' decision to enter teaching reflects a willingness to adapt and learn new skills for the sake of their students. The academic year offers a flexible schedule with summers off, holidays, etc. Additionally, there may be an opportunity for advancement. Leadership roles (e.g., department head, instructional coach) or professional certifications may also encourage TCSCTs to remain engaged in the profession.

### **Navigating the Complexities of a Teaching Career**

While motivations for entering teaching are often diverse, ACTs and TCSCTs may face challenges. Compared to traditionally certified teachers, ACTs can face challenges such as limited pedagogical training and adjusting to classroom management and the demands of lesson planning, whereas TCSCTs may face challenges such as navigating cultural and systemic norms in educational settings. These transition challenges referred to the unique difficulties these individuals faced when entering the teaching profession through traditional pathways or after transitioning from another career. SCTs frequently cited challenges in balancing teaching demands with personal responsibilities.

Herman et al. (2020) found that SCTs in academia experienced anxiety about the transition into their new profession, as well as opportunities for professional growth. Their research emphasized the importance of ongoing support, including technological

resources and pedagogical training, for facilitating effective online teaching. Herman et al. (2020) sampled seven female professionals. Their data were collected through two reflective narratives written by each of the participants. Similarly, Oliveros et al. (2024) revealed that SCTs experienced challenges such as adapting to the teaching environment, managing classroom dynamics, and dealing with administrative demands. Managing diverse student behaviors and establishing authority while building rapport can be particularly daunting for those without prior experience in educational settings (Oliveros et al., 2024).

For older TCSTs, these challenges may be compounded by familial obligations, financial pressures, and the stress of transitioning into a new profession (Klusmann et al., 2022). These challenges often stemmed from their distinct backgrounds, limited exposure to formal teacher preparation programs, and the need to adapt to new professional and cultural environments. Klusmann et al. (2022) conducted a survey of 1,115 educators in the Netherlands. The final group of participants comprised 76.7% females and 22.7% males, with ages ranging from 19 to 69 years. The analysis of their responses yielded four key themes: (a) the balance between teachers' professional and personal lives, including the experience of working from home, (b) the dynamics of teaching and interactions with both students and parents, (c) the influence of school leadership and relationships with colleagues, and (d) a diverse set of needs that did not align with the initial three categories (Klusmann et al., 2022).

Knapp et al. (2023) found that professionals transitioning into academia often faced significant challenges, including adapting to a new work culture, balancing

teaching and research responsibilities, and navigating institutional politics. These findings also highlighted the importance of institutional support and mentorship in facilitating successful transitions. The research conducted by Knapp et al. (2023) gave a unique approach to career transition from the classroom into academia. They sampled 336 individuals, of which 57.40% were female, and 42.60% were male. Participants' ages ranged from 20 to 79 years, with the largest response from Generation X (Knapp et al., 2023).

Prior professional experience influences teacher identity. For example, Robb (2024) found that professional backgrounds in creative industries influence the development of teaching practices and identity among beginner primary teachers. A longitudinal narrative inquiry methodology was used with a sample from a cohort of postgraduate students from a university in Scotland (Robb, 2024). Exploring the literature, researchers found that experiences of CCTs transitioning into secondary education emphasize the importance of the development of CCTs' professional identities and the implications for initial teacher education (Hogg, 2023, 2024). Hogg (2023) undertook a systematic review of the literature to investigate the central question of how CCTs perceive and experience their roles in middle and secondary education. In a related vein, Hogg et al. (2024) conducted a systematic review of the literature to address the fundamental question: What is the role and importance of teacher identity development for CCTs? Their research advocated that initial teacher education programs adopt intentional strategies that acknowledge CCTs' prior experiences, support their identity development, and address the challenges they face during the transition into teaching.

Consequently, initial teacher education programs can amplify the retention and effectiveness of CCTs, contributing positively to the educational landscape.

### **Unveiling Perceived or Actual Barriers Among Second-Career Teachers**

There are challenges (barriers) – either real (actual) or subjective (perceived) that TCSCTs face as they transition into the teaching profession through traditional pathways. These barriers can influence their effectiveness, job satisfaction, and retention rates and often stem from their unique backgrounds, career paths, and the structural features of traditional certification programs. Viviani et al. (2023) analyzed influences on teacher education, such as classroom success, job satisfaction, and teacher retention rates. Research indicated that teachers who complete accelerated, alternative pathways to certification often reported feeling somewhat less prepared to teach at the beginning of their careers compared to those who graduate from traditional teacher preparation programs. Viviani et al. (2023) utilized a mixed-methods approach to explore teachers who entered the profession through the New York City Teaching Fellows (NYCTF) program, which is characterized as a fast-track, alternative route to initial teaching certification. Many schools implement induction programs designed to support new teachers, including TCSCTs. Comparatively, as reported by Hilger et al. (2021), studies revealed that these programs often lack tailored approaches for career changers, instead focusing on general challenges faced by novice teachers. Researchers from this longitudinal study collected data in two waves across Germany from 207 teachers with an average of 6 years of work experience (Hilger et al., 2021).

Coppe (2023) conducted a study that explored the development of a specific concept, its impact on existing research in the field, and its potential to shape future investigations that link teacher professional development to social network theory and analysis. Findings in this particular study revealed that SCTs often rely on formal mentorship programs and informal peer support to acclimate to their new roles (Coppe, 2023). However, the study also identified barriers, such as limited integration into established teacher networks, which can hinder their professional socialization. Simon (2022) investigated the ways in which SCTs develop feelings of belonging and purpose within the teaching profession. This study explored the evolution of these teachers' professional identities and the qualities considered valuable for future educators. The participants in this research were 23 student-teachers enrolled in a Master of Teaching (M.Teach) degree program. Furthermore, Simon (2022) highlighted the M.Teach program as a crucial element in this transformative process, suggesting that collaboration within the professional learning community helps students overcome challenges in mastering their subject matter and enhances their overall learning. This programming offers the necessary pedagogical tools, mentoring, and reflective practices that help SCTs integrate into the education system effectively. In other words, alternatively certified second-career teachers (ACSCTs) may feel less qualified compared to traditionally trained peers, leading to self-doubt or impostor syndrome. In the literature review by Siostrom et al. (2023), findings indicated that career changers faced various barriers and support mechanisms, such as initial teacher education programs not being supportive after graduation or financially supportive during field experiences. Traditional

certification programs often provide structured training over time, which generally results in adequate preparation in pedagogy, classroom management, and student psychology. The drawback is that ACSCTs are offered those same positions with less formal training and fewer resources (Siostrom et al, 2023).

Today, teaching is an already stressful job. The global pandemic put into motion significant shifts in learning and development across educational and professional settings (Karamushka et al., 2021; Keck Frei et al., 2021). Both of the following studies contribute critical insights into the dynamics of teacher development, well-being, and workplace adaptation, particularly in challenging or transitional contexts. While their focus differs, Keck Frei et al. (2021) focused on SCT workplace learning, and Karamushka et al. (2021) focused on the relationship between teacher motivation and well-being during the global pandemic. These studies share several conceptual intersections relevant to professional learning, support systems, and psychological resilience. For example, Keck Frei et al. (2021) provided a comprehensive qualitative analysis of the learning experiences of 58 SCTs in Switzerland. The study revealed that workplace learning is highly situational, task-based, and interaction-driven. In contrast, Karamushka et al. (2021) investigated how different types of work motivation correlate with teacher well-being across three stages of the global pandemic lockdown. Using quantitative methods, the study found that autonomous motivations were consistently associated with higher levels of psychological and physical well-being. Across both studies, three key themes emerged: the importance of internal resources; the need for structured support; and professional identity formation. Together, these studies advocated

for a holistic approach to teacher development through structured workplace learning, reflective practice, and motivation-enhancing strategies.

### **Educational Environments: The Interplay of School Culture and Climate**

The concept of school culture and climate for TCSCTs refers to the overall environment, norms, values, relationships, and expectations that shape the experiences of these teachers as they transition into the profession. School culture encompasses the shared beliefs and practices within a school, while climate reflects the day-to-day atmosphere and stakeholder interactions (Woolf, 2020). Both aspects significantly impact how TCSCTs integrate into their new roles.

SCTs often lack familiarity with schools' hierarchical and collaborative culture, including relationships with administrators, parents, and colleagues. They might struggle to associate with established protocols, such as grading policies, lesson planning formats, and reporting requirements. They may view themselves as outsiders in the educational landscape, which can lead to feelings of isolation or alienation (Hammond et al., 2020). Furthermore, Viviani et al. (2023) suggested that new teachers' preparedness and perceptions of initial preparedness appear to be influenced by the school and classroom contexts in which they work. Building relationships with colleagues and fitting into preexisting teams can be challenging, especially if their pathways are viewed skeptically by traditionally trained peers. Understanding unwritten rules or informal networks within schools may take time (Viviani et al., 2023).

TCSCTs often bring diverse skills and viewpoints from their previous professions, enriching school culture (Coppe et al., 2022). Many TCSCTs work in

underresourced schools, bringing enthusiasm and a keen sense of purpose to address educational inequities (Dadvand et al., 2023). Recognizing the importance of inclusive education and economic disparities with limited resources can pose significant obstacles for those who go through nontraditional education programs when entering the teaching profession (Dadvand et al., 2023). The literature highlighted the complexities that certified teachers encounter when implementing inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogies (Chang & Viesca, 2022). The need for comprehensive training that combines theoretical knowledge with practical experience, especially in diverse and economically disadvantaged settings, is apparent (Haggard et al., 2006). Research specifically suggested that while certified teachers are aware of the importance of these pedagogical approaches, they often require more support and experience to apply them effectively in communities (Finn, 2023; Mtika et al., 2024). In their 2024 mixed-methods study, Mtika et al. sampled 47 student teachers from the University of Aberdeen to explore their perspectives on applying inclusive pedagogy in high-poverty schools, with a specific focus on the professional knowledge and skills developed during their initial teacher education. Additionally, Finn (2023) conducted a qualitative study that employed a critical social sciences approach to investigate how two preservice teachers applied culturally responsive critical pedagogy during professional practice placement.

Enhancing teacher education programs to provide robust, practical experiences in diverse environments and classrooms is essential. This approach will better equip future educators to meet the needs of all learners, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds. Suggestions such as pairing new teachers with experienced mentors,

providing specific training around school culture and climate, encouraging collaboration among all teachers, having supportive school leadership, and incorporating community-building activities can help TCSTs adapt to their new school culture and climate.

### **Enhancing the Educator Experience: Teacher Support and Job Satisfaction**

Like other career employees, teachers need specific resources and support to increase job performance, well-being, motivation, and morale. Teachers need several types of support to achieve perceived satisfactory work conditions, such as institutional support, administrative support, peer support, and community support (Ertürk, 2022). These concepts are interrelated, as the support teachers receive significantly affects their job satisfaction, motivation, and overall sense of efficacy in the classroom (Ertürk, 2022).

The existing research indicated that teachers have fundamental psychological requirements, including feeling capable (competence), having a sense of control (autonomy), and experiencing connection with others (relatedness), as well as needing social support, emotional support, self-esteem, support for their belief in their abilities (self-efficacy support), network support, and intrinsic drive (autonomous motivation; Jansen in de Wal et al., 2020; Wetcho et al., 2023). In their study, Jansen in de Wal (2020) yielded a sample of 678 Dutch secondary school teachers in term 1 and 536 in term 2, due to attrition. Wetcho et al. (2023) gathered both numerical and descriptive data from 235 teachers across kindergarten through 12th grade in Thailand and conducted 42 in-depth interviews. Their results highlighted that strong support systems are crucial for both teachers and students to successfully adapt to and maintain remote learning environments. Additionally, Jansen in de Wal (2020) found that basic psychological need

satisfaction and autonomous motivation are key in explaining how job resources affect teachers' overall work motivation and their commitment to professional learning.

Creating a supportive work environment provides teachers with adequate resources and opportunities for professional growth while minimizing job demands.

Findings from the research of Fütterer et al. (2023) showed that first- and second-career teachers experience the most dissatisfaction due to a lack of mentorship, heavy workloads, limited collaboration with colleagues to share strategies and resources, and little emotional support during their induction periods. Fütterer et al. (2023) implemented a multicohort longitudinal sequence design in which multi-stage cluster sampling was utilized to obtain a representative sample of students from the general educational school system. Of the 2,238 teachers who participated at the first measurement point, 914 teachers also participated at the second measurement point, and of these, 202 participated at the third measurement point.

Fütterer et al. (2023) found that the higher teachers' general work engagement and if teachers were granted professional development leave, the more likely teachers were to show a more diversified professional development participation pattern. Notably, in their mixed methods study, Aderibigbe et al. surveyed 47 mentors and 93 new teachers using a questionnaire that assessed multiple facets of the mentoring process. Furthermore, their findings indicated that learning and professional development opportunities are crucial for both novice teachers and their mentors. Aderibigbe et al. also found that when mentors lacked professional development, they reported feeling uninformed, unskilled,

and unaware of potential benefits. As a result, the authors stressed the importance of tailored support systems in teacher preparation programs (Aderibigbe et al., 2022).

Moreover, Brantlinger (2021) employed a longitudinal qualitative study that sampled more than 600 NYCTF mathematics teachers over a 9-year period. Brantlinger (2021) identified personal factors affecting retention among career-changing teacher candidates, suggesting that understanding individual circumstances is crucial for the completion and retention of the alternative certification program, NYCTF. Likewise, Newton et al. (2020) conducted a case study involving 58 participants in alternative certification programs. Research revealed the effectiveness of integrating instructional coaching within teacher preparation, highlighting the benefits of collaborative partnerships between educational institutions and school districts (Newton et al., 2020). Additionally, Rose and Sughrue (2021) used a phenomenological approach, which sampled a population of elementary, middle, and high school ACTs in their first three years of teaching. From their sample, four teachers were interviewed. These researchers suggested that addressing the developmental supports necessary for ACTs' classroom success are vital in enhancing teacher preparation and retention (Rose & Sughrue, 2021). Such opportunities may be impactful when they are relevant to specific teacher challenges.

Furthermore, Kelchtermans (2017) pointed out in their professional article that the relationships a teacher has with pupils (and their parents), colleagues, and the school's formal leader are structurally embedded within teaching and schooling and are inseparable from the processes of teaching and learning. These supportive relationships

foster teacher retention and equip teachers to handle the demands of the profession (Kelchtermans, 2017). The following studies share an overarching theme of teacher retention and the factors that influence it (Burger et al., 2021; Cuddapah et al., 2011; Du Plessis et al., 2023; Siostrom et al., 2023). Burger et al. (2021) studied 579 individuals with an average age of 27.6 years. Their findings indicated that school-based mentoring during the initial stages of a teaching career has a significant positive impact on retention. They emphasized the importance of providing effective support to new teachers to protect their well-being as they develop their skills (Burger et al., 2021). In a similar vein, Cuddapah et al. (2011) undertook a descriptive study that investigated the employment status and reasons for leaving or contemplating leaving the teaching profession among 154 graduates with a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree from a private research university on the East Coast over a nine-year span. Their results indicated that school systems should acknowledge and address the ongoing professional development requirements of career-changing teachers once they enter the classroom as a best practice for teacher retention (Cuddapah et al., 2011). Furthermore, Du Plessis et al. (2023) conducted a mixed-methods study involving 133 second-career students completing their Master of Teaching degrees. Their research highlighted the need for targeted support for SCTs, as well as support from school leadership, which are aspects of the job that contribute to teacher retention (Du Plessis et al., 2023). In conclusion, these articles contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing teacher retention, with a specific focus on the role of mentoring and the experiences of SCTs.

Teachers who experience higher levels of work ability and overall well-being have greater job satisfaction (Ertürk, 2022). Several influencing factors arose for TCSTs who are satisfied with their jobs. These factors included a sense of efficacy, work-life balance, recognition and value, and alignment with personal values (Ertürk, 2022). Conversely, several factors contributed to dissatisfaction, such as high stress and burnout, limited autonomy, and a hostile school climate (Moore, 2012). A proactive approach to understanding and addressing the unique needs of TCSTs can lead to better outcomes for educators and students (Ha et al., 2025).

The following studies focused on SCTs, exploring their motivations for entering the profession and the factors influencing their decisions to stay or leave. They highlighted the specific dynamics surrounding teacher retention and SCTs, and how unique populations, such as SCTs, require specific attention and strategies. Lozano Botellero et al. (2023) carried out a comprehensive review of existing original research articles published in peer-reviewed journals that specifically examined the perception of teacher support within secondary education settings. This specific research indicated that teacher support has declined over the past 4 decades. To promote positive student outcomes and teacher well-being, teacher support is critical. Their findings indicated that teachers' perceived needs included several related and overlapping supports, including emotional, instructional, autonomy, instrumental, and academic support (Lozano Botellero et al., 2023). Likewise, Ertürk (2021) utilized a correlational survey model with 400 primary school teachers in the city center of Bolu. The researcher emphasized the crucial role of school leaders in fostering job satisfaction. Ertürk's (2021) findings also

indicated that the quality of teachers' work has a significant impact on both their job satisfaction and their likelihood of leaving the profession. Ertürk (2021) and Lozano Botellero et al. (2023) explored the link between teacher support (especially from administrators) and teacher well-being. These articles collectively contributed to a multifaceted understanding of the teaching profession.

### **Considerations for Pursuing a Second Career in Education**

External factors for TCSCTs refer to the influences outside of the classroom or school that affect their teaching experiences, career transitions, and professional success. These factors shape their motivations, challenges, and decisions about remaining in or leaving the profession. Understanding these external factors is essential for creating supportive policies and environments that help these teachers thrive.

The literature revealed the potential benefits of incorporating SCTs into the teaching profession, particularly in addressing teacher shortages. Scholars emphasized the importance of effectively utilizing SCTs' prior professional expertise and providing adequate support during their transition to enhance their teaching effectiveness and retention (den Hertog et al., 2023; Dos Santos, 2024). Skills from previous careers (e.g., leadership, communication, problem-solving) can positively impact ACTs' and SCTs' teaching but may not be fully aligned with the demands of education. However, these potential benefits help mitigate challenges and stimulate recruitment. Dos Santos (2024) sampled 16 preservice SCTs (eight Australians and eight Americans) changing careers from upper-level industry positions to secondary teachers through a phenomenological approach. Dos Santos (2024) identified a connection between knowledge gained in

professional industries and classroom learning in terms of readiness for university-level studies. Similarly, den Hertog et al. (2023) conducted a qualitative systematic review of case studies where SCTs discussed how they used their prior professional experiences. Their findings suggested that the positive application of previous professional experience, both in and out of the classroom, is more probable for tasks closely related to that experience. Furthermore, they noted that the successful transfer of expertise is enhanced when SCTs receive adequate support (den Hertog et al., 2023).

In addition, the dynamic relationship between external challenges and internal resilience during the pandemic can be considered an external factor in teacher recruitment and retention. They underscored the importance of institutional support, professional development, and teacher agency in navigating disruptions and emerging stronger (Herman et al., 2020; Knapp et al., 2023; Rose & Sughrue, 2021). The presence or absence of structured support networks can influence their ability to adapt and succeed. Strong external support (e.g., family encouragement, community recognition) can bolster TCSCT's commitment to the profession (Grillo & Kier, 2021). External challenges, such as societal undervaluation of teaching or complex certification policies, can diminish job satisfaction (Amitai & Van Houtte, 2022). Streamlining the certification process, providing adequate financial incentives, strengthening induction programs, and enhancing resource allocation are strategies to alleviate these external challenges (Brantlinger, 2021).

### **Intent to Stay: Understanding Its Predictive Validity for Teacher Turnover**

The concepts of intent and turnover for TCSCTs refer to their motivations and decisions about staying in or leaving the teaching profession. These teachers often enter education with unique perspectives and career trajectories, influencing their intentions to remain in the field (intent) and the rate at which they leave their teaching roles (turnover). There are several reasons for entering the teaching profession (as mentioned previously in this paper), such as altruistic motivations, career fulfillment, and practical considerations (Dadvand et al., 2023). Hunter-Johnson (2015) identified several factors that motivate individuals who enter teaching as their initial career to remain in the profession. These factors, many of which have been previously discussed, included satisfaction with their job, opportunities for professional development, a healthy work-life balance, and a sense that their teaching role aligned with their prior experiences and expectations (Hunter-Johnson, 2015). Furthermore, Hunter-Johnson (2015) wrote about some of these factors in a study that employed a qualitative, phenomenological approach, utilizing two focus group interviews from a sample of 18 SCTs. Hunter-Johnson's (2015) study indicated that the motivations for SCTs to consider leaving the teaching profession stem from both internal and external factors. The intrinsic reasons identified include the challenges of maintaining a healthy work-family balance, the desire to exert personal influence, a deep passion for teaching, a sense of civic duty and responsibility, and the aspiration to be a catalyst for change (Hunter-Johnson, 2015).

Additionally, Grant and Brantlinger (2022) conducted a nine-year longitudinal, quantitative study involving two groups of 608 mathematics teachers who entered the

profession through the NYCTF program. Their research revealed that alternatively certified mathematics teachers working in schools with staffing challenges frequently encounter significant obstacles, such as insufficient support and resources, which contribute to their higher rates of attrition from the teaching profession (Grant & Brantlinger, 2022). Insufficient mentorship, administrative backing, or professional development can increase feelings of isolation and frustration. Viviani et al. (2023) found that teachers who entered the profession through alternative pathways reported lower levels of initial preparedness and exhibited higher rates of attrition compared to those with traditional preparation. Similarly, Hogg et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of thoroughly examining the experiences of career-change student teachers (CCSTs) to provide them with effective support for successful and long-lasting teaching careers. They further suggested that CCSTs constitute a unique group with distinct identities and needs. Consequently, they argued that more research is essential on this important demographic of educators, and that teacher preparation programs and schools should apply insights from research on SCTs to address the specific needs, career transitions, and developing professional identities of CCSTs (Hogg et al., 2024).

The literature emphasized the potential benefits that SCTs and ACTs bring to education through their diverse professional backgrounds. However, the need for educational institutions to recognize these teachers' unique challenges and provide tailored support and professional development opportunities is also highlighted (Robb, 2024; Rose & Sughrue, 2021). Consequently, school leadership can better leverage the diverse experiences of SCTs and ACTs, ultimately enriching the educational

environment. Teachers with a clear commitment to their role and aligned motivations are less likely to leave, even in challenging environments. Fostering collaboration, inclusivity, and a positive environment where teachers feel valued and supported enhances retention. Positive experiences and support can reinforce intent, while negative experiences increase the likelihood of turnover (Collie, 2023).

### **Teacher Persistence: Understanding the Complexities of Educator Retention**

Understanding intent and turnover among TCSCTs is essential for creating retention-focused strategies and requires a nuanced appreciation of how personal background, professional challenges, work environment, and emotional resources interact over time. Troesch and Bauer (2020) demonstrated that SCTs tend to report fewer challenges related to instructional tasks compared to first-career teachers, likely due to higher self-efficacy and broader life experience. Complementing this view, Gimbert and Kapa (2022) showed that retention is heavily influenced by contextual variables such as school setting, organizational climate, and demographic factors. By aligning support systems with their needs, education systems can maximize SCTs' contributions and reduce turnover. Teacher attrition refers to the rate at which teachers leave the profession before reaching retirement (Ingersoll, 2001). Studies suggested that attrition can be influenced by several factors for TCSCTs, such as self-efficacy, life experience, supportive leadership, collegial climate, social support, and a professional alignment between prior career expectations and teaching realities (Gimbert & Kapa, 2022; Troesch & Bauer, 2020).

Changes in job quality, such as work intensification and a decline in task discretion, have accounted for teacher attrition (Green, 2021). This systematic literature review of teachers' job quality and job satisfaction revealed that even school counselors experience burnout. Consequently, Boulden and Schimmel (2022) applied an exploratory qualitative study with five participants. Findings suggested that school counselors needed support, professional advocacy, and relationships to remain in the profession. Subsequently, their research indicated that these counselors are not receiving enough professional development or support to perform their jobs well. These findings have implications for educator retention and attrition (Boulden & Schimmel, 2022).

Considering this, the literature illustrated how the pandemic acted as both a disruptor and a catalyst for change in education, offering lessons for future resilience and adaptability in teaching practices (Carver, 2021; Dadvand et al., 2023; Doherty, 2020). Carver (2021) employed a longitudinal study focusing on 197 participants. Carver's (2021) findings suggested that considering both teachers' intentions to leave and their feelings of regret about their career choice indicates a higher risk of attrition, especially for those who rate their teaching abilities, particularly their self-efficacy, as lower. Likewise, Doherty (2020) provided a systematic review of the factors within schools that contribute to teacher attrition. Findings suggested that teacher attrition is a very real phenomenon that is reaching a crisis point. It is impacting teachers in every phase of our education system (Doherty, 2020). Teachers need supports for their well-being, emotional and social health, and professional development. In addition, systematic investments in digital infrastructure and equity-focused initiatives are critical (Doherty, 2020).

García et al. (2022) revealed in their research that low salaries, inadequate administrative support, and poor working conditions are among the leading causes of teacher attrition (including SCTs), particularly in underresourced schools. García et al. (2022) utilized data from the 2011-2012 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), to investigate teachers' perceptions of their profession and how their workplace conditions might contribute to their decisions to leave teaching. Their analysis indicated that four key elements—teacher voice, school support, school problems, and teacher morale—significantly influence teacher attrition (García et al., 2022). Furthermore, Matsko et al. (2022) compared traditional, alternative, and residency pathways for preparing teachers in Chicago Public Schools, surveying 767 preservice teachers and 533 mentor teachers. Their findings suggested that traditional programs generally offer more extensive preparation, whereas alternative routes tend to be shorter and more centered on immediate classroom application. Matsko et al. (2022) also identified differences in previously less-studied aspects, such as the mentoring provided and the training and support received by mentors. These results carry implications for policymakers and teacher educators who may have supported nontraditional pathways, highlighting the need to consider unique forms of preparation (Matsko et al., 2022). Literature also pointed to the critical role of comprehensive teacher preparation in ensuring high-quality teaching and reducing attrition (Margevica-Grinberga & Odiņa, 2021; Reyes et al., 2022). Margevica-Grinberga and Odiņa (2021) investigated and assessed mentor training within work-based initial teacher education programs. Their study, involving 55 student participants and two

mentor trainers, suggested that mentoring positively impacts student teachers' experiences and helps ensure that students receive high-quality teaching content and support, ultimately leading to improved student performance. In a separate longitudinal study, Reyes et al. (2022) tracked over 14,000 certified teachers (49% from traditional pathways and 51% from alternative pathways) between 2010 and 2019. Their findings indicated that teachers certified through university-based programs demonstrated greater student learning outcomes and had longer tenures in the teaching profession compared to those certified through alternative routes.

Moreover, Oluk (2023) used a critical inquiry narrative approach of preservice SCTs (not yet licensed) in an initial teacher education program. They found through research that online communities of practice are instrumental in mitigating teacher burnout and increasing retention, especially for those entering teaching as a second career. Oluk (2023) stated that offering a platform for sharing experiences and resources may foster a sense of belonging and empowerment, which is crucial for increasing teacher retention, especially among those transitioning into teaching later in their careers. Similarly, Richter et al. (2022) utilized a quantitative study and found that job satisfaction was a predictor of teacher retention among ACTs. ACTs who were more satisfied with their jobs were more likely to intend to stay in the teaching profession. ACTs looked for support, autonomy, professional growth and development, less student misbehavior, and more parental involvement.

Furthermore, Carver (2021) indicated that teachers may be more likely to leave their positions when they question the effectiveness of their professional development

and feel inadequately prepared. Many TCSTs might struggle with the transition to teaching. The steep learning curve and workload can lead to burnout. Goldhaber and Theobald provided a historical perspective on the extent of teacher attrition during the COVID-19 pandemic by analyzing long-term data on teachers in Washington state dating back to the 1984-1985 academic year. Their research showed that reports of teacher burnout and dissatisfaction need to be taken seriously. Goldhaber and Theobald (2022) reported that this prompted teachers to consider alternative career paths. High student-teacher ratios, inadequate resources, challenging student behavior, and demanding school environments are all factors that contribute to stress and dissatisfaction, leading to higher attrition rates among new teachers. Moreover, Brantlinger's (2021) research identified several sources of teacher attrition, including dissatisfaction with student discipline practices, school administrators, interpersonal dynamics among staff, high-stakes accountability measures, job benefits packages, and the nature of instructional assignments. Mentoring resources, as well as continual professional development that are applicable to the teacher's specific discipline, can lead to increased retention.

Conversely, several factors also impact teachers' desire to remain in the profession. For example, teacher retention refers to the ability of schools and districts to keep teachers in the profession (Ingersoll, 2003a). This particular study used data from SASS/TFS, focusing specifically on beginning teachers and data on the reasons behind their attrition. Ingersoll (2003a) reported that for SCTs, retention strategies include induction programs, personal and professional satisfaction, career growth opportunities, work-life balance, and a meaningful cultural fit. Collie's (2023) research also pointed out

that the relationships between leadership styles that either support or undermine teacher autonomy, teachers' active involvement in their work, and opportunities for professional growth, in relation to teacher attrition, have not yet been thoroughly investigated. Collie (2023) applied a structural equation modeling approach and sampled 426 Australian school teachers. This research concluded that offering opportunities for career advancement, such as leadership roles, further professional development, and involvement in school decision-making, can motivate SCTs to stay in the profession long-term. There are many personal factors as well as external factors that positively influence teacher retention. Individual characteristics and perceptions, such as a desire to give back and having prior work experience, encouraged them to remain in the profession (Ruitenburg & Tigchelaar, 2021). The analysis of 27 publications, employing a constant comparison approach and centered on SCTs' perceived support, retention, and professional development, indicated that these individuals frequently bring significant experience and passion to the field of education. Additionally, schools that foster a positive and collaborative work environment where teachers feel valued can improve retention rates (Ruitenburg & Tigchelaar, 2021).

SCTs face a unique set of challenges and opportunities. While their prior work experience can bring valuable skills, they may also face the pressure of proving themselves in a field where they lack traditional teaching credentials. However, these teachers can thrive and remain a valuable part of the educational workforce with the proper support. Shakimova et al. (2024) applied a quantitative research design and utilized a quasi-experimental approach for data collection, which consisted of a sample of

50 female participants. Findings highlighted the importance of professional support and development in reducing stress and increasing teacher retention (Shakimova et al., 2024; Taylor, 2013). While professional development opportunities exist, many TCSCs reported that these programs do not address their specific needs as career changers. For example, Whitsed et al. (2024) adopted a qualitative design approach, using a snowball sample from several universities. They interviewed 36 academic staff over 12 months. Findings suggested that insufficient mentorship and guidance exacerbate feelings of isolation and reduce confidence in their ability to succeed (Whitsed et al., 2024). Efforts to improve retention among traditionally certified teachers often focus on addressing these specific needs, such as providing tailored mentorship, recognizing their previous experience, and offering professional development aligned with their career stage. TCSCs often enter the profession with idealistic expectations, only to experience a "reality shock" when confronted with the complexities of classroom management, administrative tasks, and systemic constraints (Dadvand et al., 2023). This gap between expectations and reality contributes significantly to early attrition.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Several significant themes emerged throughout the literature review. These themes included motivations for becoming teachers (Bar-Tal and Biberman-Shalev, 2022; Dadvand et al., 2023; Kristmansson and Fjellström, 2022; Oliveros et al., 2024; Siostrom et al., 2023; Troesch & Bauer, 2020), transition challenges (Coppe, 2023; Hilger et al., 2021; Karamushka et al., 2021; Keck Frei et al., 2021; Simon, 2022; Siostrom et al., 2023; Viviani et al., 2023), perceived or actual barriers (Herman et al.,

2020; Hogg, 2023, 2024; Klusmann et al., 2022; Knapp et al., 2023; Oliveros et al., 2024; Robb, 2024), school culture and climate (Chang & Viesca, 2022; Coppe et al., 2022; Dadvand et al., 2023; Finn, 2023; Haggard et al., 2006; Hammond et al., 2020; Mtika et al., 2024; Viviani et al., 2023; Woolf, 2020), teacher support and job satisfaction (Brantlinger, 2021; Fütterer et al., 2023; Goldhaber & Theobald, 2022; Ingersoll, 2023; Richter et al., 2022), external factors (Amitai & Van Houtte, 2022; Brantlinger, 2021; den Hertog et al., 2023; Dos Santos, 2024; Grillo & Kier, 2021; Herman et al., 2020; Knapp et al., 2023; Rose & Sughrue, 2021), intent and turnover (Collie, 2023; Dadvand et al., 2023; Grant & Brantlinger, 2022; Hogg et al., 2024; Hunter-Johnson, 2015; Robb, 2024; Rose & Sughrue, 2021), and teacher attrition and retention (Boulden & Schimmel, 2022; Grant & Brantlinger, 2022; Green, 2021; Hogg et al., 2024; Margevica-Grinberga & Odiņa, 2021; Reyes et al., 2022; Viviani et al., 2023). In education, there is substantial research on the motivation for becoming teachers, including job satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Brantlinger, 2021; Fütterer et al., 2023; Goldhaber & Theobald, 2022; Ingersoll, 2023; Richter et al., 2022). A series of recent studies highlighted that while SCTs bring valuable experience, they face unique challenges that can affect their retention (Herman et al., 2020; Hogg, 2023, 2024; Klusmann et al., 2022; Knapp et al., 2023; Oliveros et al., 2024; Robb, 2024). Motivations for entering the profession are diverse, but success largely depends on effective school culture, teacher support, and overcoming transition barriers (Coppe, 2023; Hilger et al., 2021; Karamushka et al., 2021; Keck Frei et al., 2021; Simon, 2022; Siostrom et al., 2023; Viviani et al., 2023). Schools that provide adequate support, recognition, and opportunities for professional

growth can enhance teacher retention and reduce attrition among SCTs (Boulden & Schimmel, 2022; Grant & Brantlinger, 2022; Green, 2021; Hogg et al., 2024; Margevica-Grinberga & Odiņa, 2021; Reyes et al., 2022; Viviani et al., 2023).

Previous studies have emphasized teacher attrition and retention because they are topics applied nationally for statistical purposes (Brantlinger, 2021; Kelchtermans, 2021). Approximately three studies in the literature search directly focused on the topic of ACTs, and seven directly focused on the topic of SCTs. Previous studies on the topic generally referred to preservice and beginning teachers; however, this cannot be considered conclusive because it encompasses traditionally certified teachers. The literature on attrition and retention of ACTs and SCTs was less consistent.

This study added to the literature by providing findings on SCTs' perceptions of their intent to remain in the classroom, highlighting a clear gap in practice that warrants further investigation. A more systematic and theoretical examination was required to determine why they choose to remain in the classroom and their recommendations about what can be done to increase the number of teachers who remain there. In the next chapter, a basic qualitative study approach is introduced and described in detail. This qualitative approach explains the steps taken to obtain the perceptions of SCTs' intent to remain in the classroom and how the study was conducted.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine TCSCTs' perceptions on the reasons and their recommendations to remain in the classroom. In particular, this study aimed to examine factors that influence TCSCTs' retention, including intrinsic motivations, school culture, workplace experiences, external factors, and the value of their traditional pathway training. To address this purpose, the following research questions were used to guide this study.

RQ1: What are TCSCTs' perceptions of the reasons they choose to remain in the classroom?

RQ2: What are TCSCTs' recommendations about what can be done to increase the number of teachers who remain in the classroom?

This chapter introduced the methodology to be used in this study. This included the rationale for selecting the topic and the researcher's role. This was followed by a description of the participants and the setting, recruitment of participants, data collection, and analysis procedures. The trustworthiness of the study and the ethical procedures to be followed when collecting the data were also discussed in this chapter.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

A basic qualitative research design with semistructured interviews was employed to collect data. Merriam (2009) outlined four key characteristics of qualitative research: it emphasizes process, understanding, and meaning; relies on the researcher as the main tool for data collection and analysis; uses an inductive approach; and produces detailed, descriptive findings. Qualitative research provides rich descriptions of people, places, and

full descriptions of conversations. Creswell (2009) defined this type of research as “a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 22). Qualitative research methods are less structured. They provide a more reflective or exploratory approach to collecting data using interviews or focus groups (Pilcher & Cortazzi, 2024). Merriam (2009) posited that qualitative research is often employed when a phenomenon lacks adequate theoretical grounding or when existing theories prove insufficient in their explanatory power. Currently, the reasons why TCSCTs remain in the classroom, and their recommendations about what can be done to increase the number of teachers who remain in the classroom, are sorely lacking. For this reason, using a basic qualitative research technique, such as conducting interviews, made it possible to better comprehend and identify these occurrences.

There are several other types of qualitative research that are also descriptive, such as phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, and narrative research. These approaches differ from basic qualitative studies in that these designs are focused on a deeper understanding of the investigated phenomenon (Dzogovic & Bajrami, 2023). Unlike other approaches, a basic qualitative study, according to Merriam (2009), is fundamentally concerned with understanding the meaning of a phenomenon as participants perceive it.

Employing alternative methodologies in this research was unsuitable, as quantitative research, according to Creswell (2009), is designed to test objective theories by analyzing the relationships between measurable variables through approaches such as cross-sectional and longitudinal studies utilizing questionnaires or structured interviews.

However, the aim of the present study was not to ascertain statistical correlations among various factors, and the data to be collected were nonnumerical in nature. Quantitative methods are predetermined and statistically based (Creswell, 2009). Thus, a quantitative method was not conducted for this study.

Alternative qualitative methodologies, such as phenomenology, were also deemed unsuitable for this research. Creswell (2009) described phenomenology as an approach in which the researcher seeks to comprehend the lived experiences of a limited number of participants through in-depth, sustained interaction. As van Manen (2017) highlighted, phenomenology offers insights into the complexities of lived experience and consciousness. However, the present study diverges from this focus; rather than exploring the lived experiences of a few individuals, this study aimed to describe the perspectives of a larger group of participants.

Ethnographic methods were also considered unsuitable for this research. Creswell (2009) characterized ethnography by its prolonged study of an intact cultural group in a natural setting, utilizing culture as its theoretical framework. Howard (2021) noted its holistic nature and potential for rich narrative development through researcher immersion. However, this study's design does not involve a focus on a cultural group or any extended immersion in a natural setting, thereby diverging from core ethnographic principles.

Grounded theory, with its focus on generating abstract theories from participant data (Creswell, 2009), is not aligned with the study's current objective, which is not theory development. Likewise, the in-depth and sustained exploration characteristic of

case study research (Creswell, 2009) makes it inapplicable to this study's aims. Furthermore, narrative research, which centers on the stories of individuals' lives (Creswell, 2009), differs from the study's intent to describe the perspectives of a group rather than individual narratives. This study would not use a narrative research approach as individual participant stories were not told; rather, their perceptions were shared with the reader.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Recognizing the researcher as the principal data collection tool in qualitative research, it is crucial, as Creswell (2009) noted, to identify personal values, assumptions, and biases from the outset. Data were gathered through semistructured interviews, allowing for probing follow-up questions as needed. Furthermore, all participants were informed of their rights and provided their consent to participate in the study. All participants of this study acknowledged the consent form issued by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The gathered data were reviewed, and the findings were reported. In addition to all the aforementioned items, the data collection and analysis process was conducted. The questions asked during the semistructured interviews were developed by me and not drawn from IRB preapproved questions. The entire semistructured interview process was developed and executed by me.

My personal experiences have shaped my perceptions of the problem in this investigation. From January 2005 through May 2008, I was formally trained as a secondary teacher through my master's degree program. During the course of my academic journey, I obtained a teaching certification. This formal academic training is

considered traditional. I am also a former federal employee turned classroom teacher. Hence, I would be considered a TCSCT. I believe understanding this context and my role as the researcher enhances my awareness of the problem. I bring knowledge of being traditionally certified, maintaining certification for over 18 years, entering the teaching profession as a career changer, and I am currently working as a classroom teacher.

In searching data sources, I found that there is currently no public data on the number of teachers identified as SCTs, whether they are traditionally or alternatively certified. I currently work for Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS). I formerly worked at a suburban private school. This particular institution is part of the Archdiocese of Washington schools' system. I planned to consult with a public school organization that employs SCTs. To ensure rigor in data reporting and analysis and to address potential research bias, field notes were employed. Recognizing the risk of confirmation bias, defined by Rieger et al. (2023) as the inclination to prioritize information confirming prior beliefs and values while neglecting disconfirming evidence, detailed written records were maintained as a proactive measure. Participants were chosen for convenience, and the sample may not be generalizable to the broader population of SCTs. I mitigated selection bias by using a triangulation strategy. To avoid personal bias, I continuously explored my own subjectivity through reflection.

Consistent with the ethical imperatives discussed by many qualitative research scholars, Creswell (2009) underscored the fundamental obligation to respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of those participating in the study. Walden University clearly

outlines ethical standards for protecting participants and their identities. Walden University's ethical standards were followed in this study.

## **Methodology**

This section contained an overview of the participant selection, recruitment, data collection, and data analysis procedures. The instrumentation of the study is also discussed in this chapter.

### **Participant Selection**

The study's population consisted of SCTs who obtained certification through traditional pathways. Participants in this study were selected through snowball sampling and convenience sampling. Participants were selected from my current employment organization, a former job site, and through networks such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and the Walden University Participant Pool. Snowball sampling, as described by Zickar and Keith (2022), is a recruitment technique that relies on initial participants to identify and refer other individuals who meet the study's inclusion criteria and to disseminate study information. Convenience sampling refers to a nonprobability sampling method where researchers select participants primarily because they are readily accessible or easily available. This approach prioritizes expediency in participant recruitment (Zickar & Keith, 2022). The authors also noted that this method may be the only viable approach to obtain a sufficiently large sample size to reach saturation.

Participants self-identified as SCTs. Participants were employed in any school setting. Participants were teachers who taught at any grade level in the K-12 sector of the US education system. 10-12 participants who met the requirements of this study were

recruited for this study. According to Hennink and Kaiser (2022), data saturation can be attained with a relatively small number of interviews (9–17). The attainment of data saturation was essential for ensuring the sample's representativeness of the population and the absence of bias in the data. The insights gained from the participant data were extrapolated to the wider population of TCSCTs to provide a more comprehensive understanding of their perceptions.

### **Instrumentation**

Consistent with Yi's (2022) assertion that qualitative researchers are the primary data collection instrument, I took ownership of the study's core data collection method by creating the interview protocol and facilitating the semistructured interviews. This involved eliciting further details through follow-up questions, systematically collecting responses, implementing robust data security measures, and diligently protecting participant privacy. A field log was employed to track time spent on key research activities, including interviews, transcription, and analysis, thereby providing an audit trail of the data collection process. Interview protocols were developed based on the key factors identified in Ingersoll's framework (administrative support, school climate, autonomy, workload, student discipline, professional development) as well as any unique aspects relevant to SCTs (e.g., prior career experiences, motivations for entering teaching). The following interview questions were open-ended to encourage rich and detailed responses.

***Script (Opening)***

"Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My study seeks to understand the experiences and perspectives of teachers like yourself - those who entered the teaching profession after working in a different career and who pursued traditional teacher certification. Your insights will help inform strategies to better support and retain teachers. This interview should take about 45–60 minutes. Your responses will remain confidential, and you may skip any question or stop the interview at any time.

I would like to record this interview for transcription purposes only. Is that okay?"

***Demographic Questions (Opening)***

1. Can you tell me about your previous career(s) before becoming a teacher?
2. How long have you been teaching since earning your traditional certification?
3. What grade level(s) and subject(s) do you currently teach?
4. How would you describe the type of school where you currently work (e.g., urban, suburban, rural; public, private, charter)?

***Interview Questions (RQ1)***

1. Reflecting on your teaching career, what factors have influenced your decision to remain in the classroom?
2. How has your previous career experience shaped your decision to continue teaching?
3. Are there particular experiences, relationships, or supports within your school that encourage you to stay?

4. What personal values or professional goals align with your work as a teacher and motivate you to remain?
5. Have you ever considered leaving the classroom? If so, what made you decide to stay?

***Interview Questions (RQ2)***

1. Based on your experiences, what do you believe schools or districts could do to encourage more teachers to stay long-term?
2. What types of support, resources, or policies would have made your early years of teaching easier and more sustainable?
3. How can leadership (such as principals or district administrators) better support second-career teachers specifically?
4. What advice would you give to someone transitioning from another career into teaching about how to succeed and persist?
5. In your opinion, what systemic changes (e.g., policy, certification processes, mentoring programs) might help improve teacher retention overall?

***Interview Questions (Closing)***

1. Is there anything else about your experience as a second-career teacher that you feel is important for me to understand?
2. Do you have any final thoughts or recommendations regarding teacher retention that you would like to share?

***Script (Closing)***

"Thank you so much for sharing your experiences and insights with me today. Your input is incredibly valuable and will contribute to a better understanding of how to support and retain SCTs. If you have any additional thoughts after the interview, please feel free to reach out to me."

**Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

The process of data collection began with multiple site authorization and approval from the IRB. Once IRB approval was given for this study, I used a demographic survey (which includes questions related to the population of interest) to initially locate participants. Instead of using a survey that was already constructed and requesting permission to use that survey, I created my own survey. The survey asked questions that were used to determine whether the individual was suitable for the study, such as whether they were traditionally certified or alternatively certified, and provided definitions for each term, gender, and years of teaching as an SCT.

I followed these steps to gather initial data:

1. Emailed survey invitation to all district teachers.
2. Determined which participants fit the study.
3. Submitted consent for interviews to the IRB.
4. Emailed colleagues an invitation to volunteer for interviews and posted the interview invitation flyer to Teacher groups on Facebook, LinkedIn, and GroupMe.
5. Set up and conducted interviews.

6. Transcribed interviews using a software application (app).
7. Shared transcripts and recordings with my committee.

If the initial sample size was not reached, I intended to employ strategies to widen the recruitment sample, such as adjusting the study's objectives or opting for smaller sample size analyses. This was achieved through the following strategies: offering incentives for study participation (e.g., gift cards), exploring additional social media outlets, exploring community organizations, and extending the recruitment period (if feasible). Adjustments made to the procedures were reported to the Walden IRB, as necessary, via the Request for Change in Procedures form.

Comprehensive details regarding the survey methodology employed in this study to recruit appropriate participants were provided in the survey documentation located in the appendices. As Stantcheva (2023) emphasized, achieving high data quality and reliable findings necessitates a strong focus on proper survey design, sound sampling strategies, and appropriate analytical methods.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The data for this study were analyzed using an inductive thematic analysis approach, a qualitative research method focused on identifying recurring patterns and meanings within the dataset. As Finlay (2021) noted, thematic analysis exhibits considerable flexibility, encompassing systematic to intuitive and scientifically rigorous to creatively interpretive forms. Braun et al. (2015) further highlighted this adaptability, indicating that themes can be identified through various approaches. The analysis proceeded through six stages: (a) comprehensive and iterative reading of the entire

transcribed dataset, (b) identification of initial codes representing meaningful patterns, (c) organization of similar initial codes into overarching themes, (d) review and refinement of the identified themes, (e) naming and defining the themes to articulate their relevance to the research questions, and (f) development of a coherent presentation of the findings.

Qualitative data may present conflicting or differing perspectives. Therefore, a structured method was essential to mitigate these inconsistencies (Braun et al., 2015). I began by carefully analyzing the origins of the data to uncover any inherent biases or weaknesses. Subsequently, I colligated the findings, actively working to decipher the underlying causes of the inconsistencies. When faced with inconsistencies in qualitative findings, the initial critical step involved a deep dive into the data's derivation to pinpoint any potential biases or methodological constraints. Following this rigorous evaluation, a comparative analysis of the results illuminated the factors contributing to their divergence (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Coding for this inductive thematic analysis approach was applied in phases. After the data were sorted into relevant topical categories, open (or initial) coding was used. This was the initial act of making sense of a large and unstructured dataset by giving names to the different pieces. These initial labels acted as a foundation for the more in-depth analysis that followed (Braun et al., 2015). Next, pattern coding was used (Saldaña, 2021). AI and the Anfara et al. (2002) method were used after this step to help refine or confirm initial codes and naming themes. The purpose of this step was to identify patterns, develop themes, and create statements about the findings. The purpose of employing the Anfara et al. (2002) method was for use of the code/re-code strategy,

which checked for consistency and dependability. Finally, literature and theory coding were utilized. This meant that Ingersoll's teacher turnover and retention framework was applied to explain the findings (Ingersoll, 2001; Saldaña, 2021).

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness was established through four key elements: transferability, confirmability, credibility, and dependability. Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied or have relevance in other similar contexts or with other similar participants (Ahmed, 2024). Strategies to achieve this included providing thick descriptions and selecting participants and sites that were rich in information and offered diverse perspectives relevant to the research question. Data saturation, defined by Glesne (2011) as the point where no new substantive information emerges, was a critical factor. Although each participant's experiences were distinct, achieving data saturation implied a degree of comparability with experiences within the broader population, thus supporting the transferability of the study's findings (Glesne, 2011).

Confirmability in qualitative research ensures that the findings are grounded in the data rather than influenced by personal biases or assumptions (Ahmed, 2024). In this study, the results remained objective as the researcher's bias was mitigated. The results were corroborated by participants through member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation. Additionally, a clear audit trail was maintained, with detailed, chronological records of all collected data. This audit trail is in the appendix of this document.

To enhance the credibility of this research, 12 participants were interviewed to ensure adequate information gathering. Credibility refers to the believability and accuracy of the findings from the participants' perspective and ensures that personal interpretation resonates with the lived experiences of the participants studied (Ahmed, 2024). Strategies to achieve this included member checking (participant validation), reflexivity, and peer debriefing. Member checking refers to sharing preliminary findings, interpretations, and conclusions with participants to ensure they accurately reflect their experiences and perspectives (Ahmed, 2024). This allowed participants to validate or challenge personal interpretations.

Dependability refers to the consistency and stability of the findings over time and across different researchers (Ahmed, 2024), ensuring that the research process is systematic, well-documented, and logical. Strategies to achieve this included keeping an audit trail, step-by-step reporting, and using a code-recode strategy. Establishing and meticulously maintaining an audit trail, a detailed record of the decisions and procedures employed throughout the research, enables external scrutiny and the potential for replication by other researchers (Ahmed, 2024).

### **Ethical Procedures**

Ethical procedures were followed by maintaining the confidentiality of its participants throughout the process. Following these ethical procedures helped maintain the integrity of the findings in this research. IRB approval was obtained before data collection began. According to Balon et al. (2019), the central role of the IRB is to

oversee research protocols to guarantee their ethical integrity and to adequately safeguard human subjects against physical and psychological harm.

After receiving IRB approval, site authorization was needed to conduct the research. I obtained site authorization from the relevant authorities who require permissions at each targeted organization. Necessary steps to protect the privacy of every participant and organization were taken. Each participant was asked to complete an informed consent form if they agreed to the study's conditions. Information was housed on a password-protected computer. Transcripts were renamed with pseudonyms rather than the participants' actual names to ensure confidentiality. All data and all files related to data collection, including audio recordings and transcripts, will be destroyed after a five-year period per Walden University IRB regulations (Walden University, n.d.).

### **Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine TCSCTs' perceptions on the reasons and their recommendations to remain in the classroom. Specifically, this study aimed to examine factors that influence TCSCT retention, including intrinsic motivations, school culture, workplace experiences, external factors, and the value of their traditional pathway training. In this chapter, I described the use of a basic qualitative design with semistructured interviews to gather research data.

In this study, I served as the primary data collection instrument. Participants in this study were selected from the United States and may work in any K-12 educational setting. This study used snowball and convenience sampling to recruit participants. The educational organizations considered for this study were located in the state of Maryland.

The data in this study were evaluated using the thematic analysis technique. The research's credibility was supported by conducting semistructured interviews with 10-12 selected participants, which led to data saturation. Ethical considerations were reflected in this study. These ethical considerations included informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, decreasing potential for harm and minimizing risk, personal positionality and reflexivity, data ownership and intellectual property, and ethical review and oversight. Chapter 4 reports the emergent themes derived from the data and illustrates them using participants' responses to address the research questions.

## Chapter 4: Results

Examining perceptions of TCSCTs' reasons and their recommendations for remaining in the classroom was the purpose of this qualitative study. Understanding the specific factors that influence our decisions to enhance teacher retention, such as one's personal workplace experiences, intrinsic motivations, external factors, school culture, and the value of traditional pathway training, led this study. By collecting these perceptions, the study sought to provide insight into how educational stakeholders can support this subset of the teaching workforce and address attrition. To address this purpose, the following research questions guided this study.

RQ1: What are TCSCTs' perceptions of the reasons they choose to remain in the classroom?

RQ2: What are TCSCTs' recommendations about what can be done to increase the number of teachers who remain in the classroom?

This chapter details the setting of the study. In addition, this chapter entails data collection procedures, including a description of the data preparation steps. Following the data collection, a description of the procedure used to analyze the data is given. Next, a presentation of results and a discussion of the trustworthiness of data and findings are included. The final section of this chapter is a summary.

### **Setting**

Several personal and organizational conditions were reported by participants that characterize their experience and could influence the interpretation of the study results. These are listed as follows: outdated classroom resources, staffing instability, ineffective

support systems, emotional distress, family and financial pressures, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020 and was a contributing factor for some teachers to leave the classroom. As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this study, the primary reason public school teachers in the United States leave their positions is the high level of job-related stress (Peck, 2024b). Teachers stated that on average, 40% of their coworkers who thought about quitting because of the COVID-19 pandemic actually did leave the classroom (Zamarro et al., 2021).

As a reminder, the COVID-19 pandemic was a catalyst that introduced new work-related stressors, which included technology demands and hybrid learning. This was coupled with ongoing retention concerns and severely degraded mental health, which made educators feel less supported and excluded from decision-making processes (Dunfee et al., 2024). These stressors were compounded by an increase in job demands and a decrease in resources (especially within a remote/hybrid learning environment), which significantly affected teacher well-being and heightened turnover intentions (Collie, 2023; Granziera et al., 2022). Furthermore, the abrupt shift to remote/hybrid learning amplified feelings of isolation and reduced professional autonomy, further diminishing educators' self-efficacy and dedication to the profession (Hilger et al., 2021; Klusmann et al., 2022).

Participants in the study were self-identified as TCSCTs and were employed in any school setting. This study did not take place at a single partner site, but the study did take place in the United States. The grade levels and subjects taught by each participant varied across the K-12 sector of the US education system. Two participants taught at a

suburban private school, and two participants taught within the public school organization, as referenced in Chapter 3 of this study.

In this study, transcriptions were completed following each audio-recorded interview. The qualitative data collected for this study included narratives in transcripts and notes, in which I identified specific textual patterns that emerged (Bihu, 2024). Prior to the analysis, electronic interview data underwent a rigorous process. This process involved sorting the data, removing grammatical errors, determining missing data, and organizing the data for analysis.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim, including pauses and nonverbal cues, to ensure accuracy and trustworthiness. Each participant contributed to member checking their interviews to confirm the accuracy of their spoken words. Often during an interview, I sought clarification and/or confirmation from each participant's responses. The transcription process was supported by software as a function of the platform.

Data files were encrypted and protected with a strong password to ensure confidentiality and integrity, and to prevent unauthorized access. The data will be retained for a period of 5 years following the publication of this report. After 5 years, the data will be permanently destroyed by deleting the data from all electronic files. After transcribing, the data were analyzed using an inductive–deductive hybrid consistent with Anfara et al. (2002) and the aid of an AI search engine. Codes were extracted from the interviews, and recurring codes were then organized into themes. These themes aligned with the research questions (reasons they remain; recommendations to increase retention).

### **Data Collection**

After obtaining permission from Walden University's IRB, participants were recruited for the study. Data were collected from 12 participants through in-depth, semistructured interviews. Before beginning the interview, participants reviewed and digitally acknowledged the consent form. The interviews were structured around an open-ended questioning technique. Prior to starting the interview (or sometimes called a conversation), I received permission to record the interview. Once permission to record the interview was obtained, the interview began. Interviews were conducted remotely using online platforms including Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Google Meet. Microsoft Teams was my initial preferred online platform, but technical issues arose during its use. Subsequently, Zoom became the platform to use for the remaining interviews. One participant had an issue with the Zoom platform; for that participant only, Google Meet was used to record the interview. All appropriate licenses were secured to ensure proper execution of holding remote meetings with individuals.

To facilitate the interviews, each participant received a calendar invitation with an embedded meeting link. A follow-up email containing the same link to the interview was also sent. Additional notes were taken to collect information on participants' daily activities, such as their teaching methods, their perceptions of their interactions with their students, and overall demeanor during the interview. This information is located in a data log, which is included in the appendices. Data collection began in early September 2025 and ended in the third week of November 2025.

The duration of the interviews varied significantly. The shortest interview: 31 minutes and 40 seconds. The longest interview: 78 minutes and 43 seconds. The average interview: 45 minutes and 6 seconds. Interviews were conducted by appointment. The schedule was limited to no more than two interviews per day. Details concerning the length, date, location, and the final single-spaced transcript length for each individual interview are presented in Table 1 of this study.

**Table 1**

*Details of Each Participant Interview*

Participant name	Interview location	Interview duration	Interview date	Transcript page length (single-spaced)	Years of teaching postcertification
P1	Teams Meeting	31:40	8/7/2025	14	9
P2	Zoom Meeting	42:47	9/2/2025	16	2
P3	Zoom Meeting	45:54	9/2/2025	18	3
P4	Zoom Meeting	48:30	9/3/2025	15	6
P5	Zoom Meeting	36:30	9/4/2025	16	2
P6	Zoom Meeting	41:41	9/4/2025	16	3
P7	Zoom Meeting	42:18	9/5/2025	21	5
P8	Zoom Meeting	45:51	9/5/2025	17	1.5
P9	Google Meet	35:02	11/10/2025	13	30
P10	Zoom Meeting	32:30	8/5/2025	7	17
P11	Zoom Meeting	78:43	11/18/2025	21	3
P12	Zoom Meeting	59:49	11/20/2025	17	7
Total		541:15		191	88.5
Average		45:06		≈ 16	≈ 7

*Note.* P represents the participant number for identification. The symbol  $\approx$  means approximately. Data were collected from 12 participants.

Data collection aligned with the plan outlined in Chapter 3, with no deviations occurring. This study focused on 12 educators identified as TCSTs, as defined earlier in Chapter 3. Data saturation was achieved through these 12 in-depth, semistructured

interviews. The interviews were conducted using a protocol guide specifically approved by the IRB. During the interviews, probing techniques were used to elicit deep and rich data from the TCSCTs. Probing involved using verbal prompts to ask the TCSCTs to:

- Clarify a previous statement.
- Elaborate on a topic.
- Explain a concept or experience.
- Provide greater detail about a specific point.
- Verify a prior answer to an interview question.

P4 may have been distracted during their interview with outside sources. This was captured in the field notes. These distractions were noted in the recording and did not detract from the content of the data. One interview was not initially recorded. This was P9's interview. The committee chair was contacted about the issue and was told to rerecord the interview. Thus, P9's interview was rerecorded. Both interview dates are mentioned in the interview log in the appendices.

### **Data Analysis**

A thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the collected data. Adhering to the model introduced by Braun and Clarke (2019), this study followed the six steps and guidelines for thematic analysis described in the literature. Thematic analysis is used to identify patterns of meaning across datasets and to offer practical insights for real-world situations (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The six systematic steps followed were:

1. Data Familiarization and Familiarization Notes: I read through the data thoroughly and became acquainted with it, taking initial notes and observations.
2. Systematic Data Coding: I systematically generated initial codes across the entire data set.
3. Generating Initial Themes from Coded Data: I collated codes into potential themes.
4. Developing and Reviewing Themes: I refined potential themes, checking them against the coded data set, and ensured they were coherent.
5. Refining, Defining, and Naming Themes: I clearly defined each theme, aspects of the data captured, and assigned final, descriptive names.
6. Writing the Report: I then created the final analysis report that explained the data in relation to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The processes used to move inductively from coded units to larger representations included reading through the data and making initial references by highlighting key words and phrases, generating initial codes, grouping related codes together and then labeling these codes, examining established categories/codes and looking for patterns to group similar codes, revisit and refine the codes, and lastly tell the story of the coded data. For step one of the thematic analysis, I broke down the data into smaller, more meaningful parts by assigning initial codes. Patterns soon emerged. The patterns that emerged across all 12 interviews helped me to reach data saturation.

The second step of using Braun and Clarke's (2019) thematic analysis was to systematically generate initial codes that were identified in the transcripts. For this process, I initially grouped highlighted codes together from my field notes. Then, I utilized ChatGPT and Google Gemini to refine the codes that I initially grouped/highlighted. The prompts and conversations used with ChatGPT and Google Gemini are available in the Appendix. The use of AI (artificial intelligence) should be viewed as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, the nuanced understanding and judgment provided by human expertise (Vera et al., 2025). All AI outputs and products were double-checked and edited to ensure accuracy and authenticity of the content.

Prior to using ChatGPT to refine code names, I initially created codes for the data. This was done so that the codes from ChatGPT would align more closely with the research. Table 2 shows which codes were changed and how they will appear herein throughout this study.

**Table 2***Original and Revised Code Names*

Original Code	Revised Code Generated by AI
Relationships	Student relationships
Mentoring	Mentorship
Administrative support	Leadership support
Workload	Workload
Compensation and benefits	Compensation
PD	Professional development
Respect	Professionalism & respect
Career pathways	Career growth
Well-being	Mental health & well-being
Classroom resources	Classroom resources
Intrinsic motivation	Intrinsic motivation
Prior career experience	Transferable skills

*Note.* This table displays the original codes generated by the researcher and the revised code names generated by AI (ChatGPT) applied prior to thematic grouping.

The following codes emerged from ChatGPT's generated output on the collected data: student relationships, mentorship, leadership support, workload, compensation, professional development (PD), professionalism and respect, career growth, mental health & well-being, classroom resources, intrinsic motivation, and transferable skills. Table 3 shows a participant code matrix summarizing the codes that appear for each participant.

**Table 3***Participant Code Matrix*

Code	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Student relationships	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mentorship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Leadership support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Workload	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Compensation	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Professional development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Professionalism & respect	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Career growth	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Mental health & well-being		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Classroom resources		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Intrinsic motivation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transferable skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

*Note.* Codes that appeared in the transcripts for 12 participants.

The third step of the analysis involved generating initial themes that emerged from the coded data identified in the second step. For this process, I looked for patterns within the codes and grouped those that were similar. In this third step, following best practices, I reviewed the codes and patterns and began grouping them to form key themes (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Table 4 illustrates how codes were combined into themes.

**Table 4***Grouping of Codes Into Final Themes*

Theme	Initial code clustered to identify theme	Theme frequency in data	Number of participants who supported theme
Relationships and purpose	Student relationships	32	12
	Intrinsic motivation		
	Professionalism & respect		
Supportive leadership and culture	Mentorship	31	11
	Leadership support		
	Mental health & well-being		
Workload management	Workload	26	10
	Classroom resources		
	Mental health & well-being		
Professional growth	Professional development (PD)	29	11
	Career growth		
	Transferable skills		
Employee experience	Compensation	39	11
	Leadership support (structural aspects)		
	Classroom resources (structural aspects)		
	Mentorship (formal structures)		

The fourth step involved reviewing the themes to confirm the validity of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Patterns were identified from the data in this study. These patterns turned into codes. Originally, there were 13 codes, but the data were refined to 12. Reviewing the data led to the construction of five key themes that emerged from the 12 codes. Each theme was adequately supported by the data.

The fifth step was to refine, define, and name the themes within the data. To accomplish this, I used ChatGPT and Google Gemini. The prompts and conversations inputted into ChatGPT and Google Gemini were shared in the prompts from step 2 and are also available in the Appendix. All AI outputs and products were double checked and

edited to ensure accuracy and authenticity of the content. Organizing and analyzing the data helped to refine, define, and name the themes in this study. These five key themes are presented in the results section of this chapter.

The final step of the thematic analysis was achieved by relating the research questions to participants' responses and including quotes from participant transcripts that told the story of each key theme. In addition, a brief description of each theme was provided as well as the link for each theme to the conceptual framework (Ingersoll's Teacher Turnover Framework). This step of the thematic analysis is also presented in the results section of this chapter.

Analysis of 12 interviews with TCSCTs revealed five interrelated themes shaping retention: relationships and purpose, supportive leadership, workload management, professional growth, and structural supports. These themes collectively illustrate that retention is not driven by a single factor but by the interplay of intrinsic motivation and systemic conditions that enable sustainability.

## **Results**

The data collected from the 12 participants in the basic qualitative study yielded five major themes. These themes are directly related to the central focus of the study: the perceptions of TCSCTs regarding their intent to remain in the classroom. ChatGPT was utilized to find codes. Those generated codes were then grouped into themes. The identified themes effectively addressed the study's problem and purpose, providing answers to the two research questions.

RQ1: What are TCSCTs' perceptions of the reasons they choose to remain in the classroom?

RQ2: What are TCSCTs' recommendations about what can be done to increase the number of teachers who remain in the classroom?

Participants consistently identified student-centered factors and a strong sense of professional purpose as their primary reasons for remaining in the teaching profession, often weighing these elements heavily against the challenges they encountered. Their recommendations predominantly emphasized the importance of structural supports, supportive leadership practices, and professional respect, indicating that both intrinsic commitments and organizational conditions play essential roles in teacher retention. In the following sections, each of the five themes will be presented and supported by relevant participant responses (direct quotes) from the TCSCTs, which will help substantiate the findings. Themes one, two, and three contributed to answering RQ1. Themes three, four, and five contributed to answering RQ2.

### **Major Themes**

The major themes identified in this study emerged from thick, rich descriptions drawn from participant narratives. Each theme offers refined insight into a critical gap in the practice regarding the policies and procedures of teacher education – TCSCTs. Across all 12 interviews, participants contributed firsthand perspectives that deepen our understanding of this complex phenomenon, which holds significant implications at the societal and global levels.

### ***Theme 1: Relationships and Purpose***

Across all 12 interviews, participants framed their decision to remain in teaching as rooted in relational and moral purpose. Some participants described teaching as a “second calling,” emphasizing the intrinsic rewards derived from student relationships. Teachers spoke of satisfaction in witnessing student growth and forming meaningful connections, framing these experiences as emotional anchors for remaining in the profession. Teaching was described as intrinsically rewarding and aligned with participants’ personal values.

One participant stated, “The students themselves – the breakthroughs when a struggling student finally grabs the concept – those moments remind me why I am here.” Another participant stated, “Retention is all about relation – when you feel connected, you stay.” However, they also acknowledged that passion alone cannot offset structural challenges, signaling that relational and moral purpose must be complemented by organizational supports. One participant stated, “This generation ... if they don’t like you, they don’t want to do the work.” While these relationships serve as emotional anchors, participants emphasized that relationships alone are insufficient for long-term sustainability without broader structural and administrative supports.

Relating this theme to the conceptual framework, Ingersoll emphasized the role of collegial support and collaborative workplace culture influencing teacher retention (2001). The findings in this study reinforced this view, demonstrating that relational ties with students and colleagues serve as emotional and organizational anchors. These

TCSCTs' sense of moral purpose strengthened their organizational commitment, aligning with Ingersoll's assertion that workplace community reduces attrition (Ingersoll, 2001).

### ***Theme 2: Supportive Leadership and Culture***

A second dominant theme involved the importance of leadership and workplace culture. Teachers repeatedly cited administrative respect, open communication, and authentic appreciation as critical factors in their decisions to stay in the classroom. One participant stated, "Having a supportive leadership team such as your administration is especially important ... it makes all the difference." They valued principals who provided autonomy, recognized their prior professional experience, and fostered trust.

Collegial environments also contributed significantly to retention. Structured mentorship and induction programs were particularly salient, with participants reporting that early guidance enhanced their sense of belonging and efficacy. Conversely, the absence of such supports often left teachers feeling isolated and overwhelmed, underscoring the critical role of leadership in fostering professional loyalty.

Mentorship and induction emerged as key components of this theme. Teachers who received structured mentoring, particularly during their first year, reported stronger feelings of belonging and efficacy. One participant stated, "My mentor teacher really advocated for me and helped me get my first job." Conversely, those without such support described early experiences as overwhelming. For many, supportive leadership translated directly into professional loyalty.

Administrative support emerged as one of the most critical factors influencing teachers' decisions to stay in this study. This mirrors Ingersoll's (2001) conclusion that

administrative behavior and school climate are among the strongest predictors of retention. Mentorship and shared leadership further extend his framework, demonstrating that support operates not only vertically (from administrators) but also horizontally (through mentoring and peer networks).

### ***Theme 3: Workload Management***

Third, workload management and well-being were recurrent concerns. Participants described heavy administrative burdens and after-hours demands as significant stressors that detract from instructional focus. One participant stated, “Reduce unnecessary workload—there’s endless paperwork and data entry. It takes away from teaching.” They expressed the need for mental health support, counseling services, and realistic work-life boundaries. Another participant stated, “Stress management and well-being resources ... would make teaching sustainable.”

They perceived the administrative and documentation requirements of teaching as detracting from their instructional focus. One participant stated, “We have 180 kids and the job of a mid-level manager.” While passion and strong relationships may sustain teachers emotionally, organizational inefficiencies and excessive demands appear to threaten long-term commitment.

Ingersoll (2001) identified excessive workload and limited autonomy as central causes of teacher dissatisfaction. Participants in this study often described overwhelming administrative burdens and unrealistic expectations that undermine their autonomy. These experiences empirically supported Ingersoll’s argument that attrition results from organizational inefficiencies rather than teacher deficiencies. For TCSCs, prior work

experience intensifies this perception. TCSCTs viewed disparities in workload distribution as indicators of deficient organizational structure.

#### ***Theme 4: Professional Growth***

Participants expressed a desire for professional development (PD) that was individualized and aligned with their goals. They frequently compared the training received at their prior careers, which was specialized and targeted, with what they perceived as generic, one-size-fits-all PD in schools. One participant shared, “Professional development needs to be individualized—where do our teachers want to go?”

Teachers also desired structured pathways for advancement that did not require leaving the classroom. As one teacher explained, “We need to be able to grow and lead while still teaching.” This theme highlighted the tension between teachers’ professional ambition and a system that often lacks clear mechanisms for career progression within teaching. Another participant emphasized the importance of opportunities within the district to advance their careers: “National Board makes me feel like my work is respected.”

Ingersoll (2003a) linked teacher retention to the degree of systemization within schools. In this study, participants’ desire for individualized PD and advancement opportunities echoes Ingersoll’s emphasis on autonomy and status. They equated professional respect with opportunities for leadership and growth. These findings augmented Ingersoll’s framework by demonstrating that career development is not only a

systemization issue but also a retention mechanism for TCSTs entering the teaching field.

### ***Theme 5: Employee Experience***

Finally, participants identified structural incentives, and practical supports were viewed as foundational to retention. These included, but are not limited to, tangible working conditions, such as compensation, class size, and access to resources. Nearly all viewed current salaries as inadequate relative to workload and professional expectations. One participant noted, “Policy changes should address salaries and benefits – teachers should be compensated for the work they do.” Teachers also noted the challenges posed by limited teaching materials and the need for streamlined certification processes. Another participant stated, “Our budget barely covers basics ... I buy supplies myself.”

These tangible factors complemented relational and cultural supports, reinforcing that retention requires both emotional and structural alignment. One participant suggested, “Make transitioning into teaching more streamlined – certification can be overwhelming for career changers.” These suggestions directly addressed the structural elements of teaching that influence long-term sustainability.

Finally, compensation, class size, and access to resources represent core organizational conditions in Ingersoll’s model. Participants in this study called for higher pay, improved resources, and streamlined certification, which reflects the systemic factors Ingersoll identified as key to teacher sustainability. Their unique perspective as career changers reinforced Ingersoll’s contention that the structural inequities of teaching are a major source of turnover.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research relies on four key elements: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The rigor of this basic qualitative study was established by applying a trustworthiness framework designed by Anfara et al (2002), focusing on credibility, confirmability, and dependability. As mentioned in Chapter 3 of this study, to enhance the credibility of this research, 12 participants were interviewed to ensure adequate information gathering. Rich descriptions from a total of 12 participants were collected. This number ensured that the same number of participants was sought from each partner organization. Data were collected from two participants within the public school organization and also from two participants within the suburban, private school. Additionally, there was immense interest in the study after posting the invitation to social media pages and in social media groups. This yielded an additional eight participants. With respect to both credibility and confirmability, the use of both ChatGPT and Google Gemini artificial intelligence (AI) tools involved a systematic review of all generated outputs to assess accuracy and to identify and correct any potential hallucinations or inaccuracies. Liu and Lin (2026) found that AI algorithm engineers perceive hallucinations as a natural occurrence during initial development stages of technology, whereas user tolerance varies by context. The findings further showed that differences in hallucination tolerance informed the development of an “intention–criterion” framework that delineates hallucinations and errors.

Credibility refers to the believability and accuracy of the findings from the participants' perspective and ensures that personal interpretation aligns with the

experiences shared from the participants studied (Ahmed, 2024). Strategies to achieve this included member checking (also known as participant validation), reflexivity, and peer debriefing. Member checking involved the sharing of findings and interpretations with participants to confirm that they accurately represent their experiences and views (Ahmed, 2024). This allowed participants to validate or challenge my interpretations.

Transferability is the degree to which the findings can be applied or are relevant in similar contexts or with comparable participants (Ahmed, 2024). Participants in this study provided thick descriptions through their interviews. Additionally, this study illustrated participants who were willing to be interviewed, and they all seemed eager to participate in the study! It was slightly challenging to obtain participation from the suburban private school; thus, the rationale for having only two participants from that site.

Through the public school organization's protocol, individual schools must be contacted for participation in the study. Consequently, 24 schools were contacted, and only two of those schools responded to the request for participant approval at their respective schools. From these two schools, five TCSCs responded directly to my email request. Although each participant's experiences were distinct, data saturation was achieved, and their experiences were comparable to those within the broader population, thus supporting the transferability of the study's findings (Glesne, 2011).

Dependability means the findings remain consistent and stable over time and across different researchers (Ahmed, 2024), ensuring that the research process is systematic, well-documented, and logical. Strategies to achieve this included keeping an

audit trail, step-by-step reporting, and using a code-recode strategy. Establishing and meticulously maintaining an audit trail, a detailed record of the decisions and procedures employed throughout the research, enables external scrutiny and the potential for replication by other researchers (Ahmed, 2024).

Confirmability is the extent to which the findings are grounded in the data rather than influenced by personal biases or assumptions (Ahmed, 2024). Confirmability was achieved by establishing a clear audit trail demonstrating the transparency of the analytical process. This required the explicit disclosure of the relationship between the raw data, the initial codes developed during analysis, and the final thematic interpretations. This rigorous documentation ensured that the findings were derived directly from the data rather than being influenced by personal bias. The process of triangulation was also used (Anfara et al, 2002). Specifically, interpretations generated from the analysis of participant narratives (direct quotes) were comprehensively substantiated by cross-referencing these emergent findings with established academic literature, which provided validation. Additionally, peer debriefing was used with some colleagues with whom I work, and with individuals holding doctoral degrees to gain alternative perspectives and identify potential biases or oversights (Ahmed, 2024). Triangulation refers to the use of multiple data sources and methods to help corroborate findings and reduce the influence of a single perspective (Ahmed, 2024). In addition, I kept a reflexive journal throughout the data collection process. Lastly, in terms of overall trustworthiness and transparency, generative AI was used solely in this phase to verify

the accuracy of outputs, as efforts were made to identify “hallucinations” that might have been generated.

### **Summary**

Regarding Research Question 1, the data revealed that TCSCs remained in the profession primarily because of the intrinsic rewards of student interaction, validation of their professional skills, and external support. Regarding Research Question 2, the data also suggested that treating TCSCs as experienced professionals rather than novices, and providing structural support that reflects their unique status. The data also indicated that retention should be conceptualized beyond the passive reduction of attrition rates. Instead, effective retention strategies necessitate the proactive cultivation of workplace conditions that foster a sense of purpose, opportunities for professional growth, and educator well-being. This systemic approach is essential for establishing an environment that genuinely values and supports the unique contributions of these educators. In the next chapter, I will present an interpretation of the findings, discuss the study’s limitations, provide recommendations for further research, and discuss the study’s potential impact for positive social change.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine TCSCTs' perceptions on the reasons and their recommendations to remain in the classroom. The investigation was driven by the desire to identify specific, influential factors that contributed to teacher retention. These factors included personal workplace experiences, intrinsic motivations, external factors, school culture, and the perceived value of their traditional pathway training. By examining these perceptions, the research offers insights into how educational stakeholders can better support this particular subset of teachers and, consequently, develop strategies to mitigate teacher attrition.

As previously mentioned in this paper, less teacher turnover may improve student learning. Directly impacting student learning can positively influence student achievement. The concepts of intent and turnover for TCSCTs refer to their motivations and decisions to remain in or leave the teaching profession. These teachers often enter education with unique perspectives and career trajectories, influencing their intentions to remain in the field (intent) and the rate at which they leave their teaching roles (turnover). Dadvand et al. (2023) mentioned several reasons for entering the teaching profession, including altruistic motivations, career fulfillment, and practical considerations. Likewise, Hunter-Johnson (2015) identified several factors, such as satisfaction with their job, opportunities for professional development, a healthy work-life balance, and a sense that their teaching role aligns with their prior experiences and expectations, which help motivate teachers to remain in the profession. Moreover, Collie (2023) expressed that positive experiences and support can reinforce intent, while negative experiences increase

the likelihood of turnover. The results of the thematic analyses discussed in chapter four of this study indicated that TCSCTs remained in the profession for the intrinsic rewards, validation of their professional skills, and external support. The data also indicated that effective retention strategies are necessary for a supportive work environment.

In Chapter 5, an interpretation of the findings discussed in Chapter 4 will be presented. This chapter is organized around the two research questions guiding the study: (RQ1) TCSCTs' perceptions of the reasons they choose to remain in the classroom, and (RQ2) their recommendations for increasing teacher retention. The context of the findings will be situated within the broader body of literature on teacher retention, second-career educators, and workforce sustainability in education to address a critical gap in practice. This includes relating the findings to the purpose and tenets of Ingersoll's teacher turnover and retention framework. This chapter also includes a discussion on the study's limitations, recommendations for future research, implications for practice and policy, and a concluding summary. Together, these sections highlight how participants' experiences reveal systemic factors that influence teachers' decisions to remain in the profession.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The following section of this paper discusses how the findings confirmed, disconfirmed, or extended existing knowledge in education by comparing them with the peer-reviewed literature described in Chapter 2 of this study, as well as how they aligned with the conceptual framework that guides this study. The purpose of applying Ingersoll's framework was to shift the focus from a teacher problem to an organizational

one. Ingersoll further suggested that teachers deserve the following: decision-making authority, better supports (structural and external), collegial supports, and professional development resources. These findings were organized into the following topics: demographic factors, intrinsic motivation and relationships, leadership support and culture, workload management and well-being, mentoring and peer support, and compensation and resources.

The demographic factors listed below describe the participants' prior career experience, length of teaching experience, grade level(s) and subject area(s) taught, and the worksite. Next, intrinsic motivations and relationships describe the participants' intrinsic motivations to remain in education and their relationships with students. Following this, leadership support and culture discuss participants' perceptions of the support they received from their leadership and the culture in which they work. Then, workload management and well-being refer to the excessive workload and time constraints participants perceive, as well as the emotional toll these demands impose. Furthermore, the discussion of mentoring and peer support focuses on participants' experiences with these forms of support. Finally, the last section examines the role that compensation and resources play in participant retention in this study.

### **Demographic Factors**

The demographic information that was gathered in this study from TCSCTs included prior career experience, years of teaching after earning a traditional certification, the grade level and subject(s) they currently teach, and a description of their worksite (i.e., whether the worksite was urban, suburban, or rural; public, private, or charter). The

following section discusses the findings related to these demographic factors, as well as the ways in which past research is confirmed, disconfirmed, or extends the existing literature.

### *Prior Career Experience*

The study's findings indicate that prior career experience is beneficial when transitioning into the teaching field. TCSCTs highlighted the importance of transferable skills from prior professions, which enhanced instructional practice and teacher authority in the classroom. These findings aligned with Troesch and Bauer's (2020) research, suggesting that career changers are a readily available pool of highly qualified candidates for teaching. SCTs offer high levels of professional maturity, adaptability, and content expertise (Troesch & Bauer, 2017). These particular skills help build teacher self-efficacy and confidence. That belief in themselves and their execution of duties reinforced TCSCTs' decisions to remain in the profession.

Moreover, the findings suggested that prior professional experience may serve as a protective shield against early attrition when appropriately recognized and supported (Hogg et al., 2024). The aforementioned study focused solely on CCTs. Ingersoll's framework on teacher turnover and retention indirectly aligns with this study's finding on prior career experience. Findings from this study suggested that prior career experience serves as a moderating lens through which organizational conditions are interpreted, thus enriching Ingersoll's framework without challenging its core foundational assumptions. Additionally, this current study extended existing literature by demonstrating that

recognition of transferable skills, particularly by leadership, may further strengthen retention among TCSCTs.

### ***Length of Experience in Teaching***

This study's findings indicated that the length of teaching experience after earning a traditional certification has no direct association with the perceptions of the reasons why TCSCTs choose to remain in the classroom. Ingersoll's research on teacher turnover and retention consistently showed that turnover is highest during the early years of teaching and stabilizes as experience increases (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011); however, most of the participants in this study have surpassed that early career high-risk period, which aligns with the teacher turnover and retention framework. There was also no direct connection to TCSCTs' recommendations about what can be done to increase the number of teachers who remain in the classroom, but there was an association between policy and research recommendations for teacher retention. These findings aligned with Dadvand and Dawborn-Gundlach's (2020) research from Australia, which suggested that SCTs require tailored supports to help them survive and thrive in the early, demanding years of teaching, ensuring the retention of these highly skilled teachers.

### ***Grade Level and Subject Area(s)***

This study's findings revealed that teachers tend to assimilate into subjects that align with their prior career experience. These findings aligned with those of den Hertog et al. (2023), who explicitly examined how SCTs utilize prior professional expertise. Their findings also suggested that teachers gravitate toward subjects related to their

previous careers. Additionally, in relation to Ingersoll's teacher turnover and retention framework, there was no direct association between grade level taught and the perceptions of the reasons TCSTs choose to remain in the classroom. Similarly, Oliveros et al. (2024) and Robb (2024) explored how prior professional experience affects pedagogical practice and subject alignment among SCTs. Their findings suggested that SCTs need tailored support such as mentoring programs and professional development opportunities.

Ingersoll directly addresses grade level and subject area as structural predictors of turnover. His framework does not single out TCSTs. Teachers in core subject areas such as math, science, and special education typically experience higher attrition rates (Ingersoll, 2001, 2003a). In the current study, teachers in secondary schools who specialize in subject areas, including arts and electives, occupied roles that are consistent with Ingersoll's framework, such as mathematics and science, which are considered fields with high turnover rates. The teaching field itself is a variable related to teacher characteristics within Ingersoll's teacher turnover and retention framework. Resource scarcity and limited institutional support, as indicated by this study's findings, raise concerns and underscore the need for targeted retention strategies.

### ***Description of Worksite***

The findings of this study indicated that some teachers enjoyed their worksite while others did not. There was no indication, beyond job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, of any association with perceptions of the reasons TCSTs choose to remain in the classroom or with their recommendations about what can be done to increase the number

of teachers who remain in the classroom. These findings aligned with the research by Ha et al. (2025), which asserted that while teacher autonomy did not exhibit a direct association with job satisfaction in the post-COVID-19 context, it moderated the relationship between perceived administrative support and overall job satisfaction. Ingersoll (2001) argued that worksite conditions are the primary indicators of teacher turnover. Participants' (in this study) recommendations for improving retention aligned with Ingersoll's conclusion that improving organizational environments is a necessity.

### **Intrinsic Motivation and Relationships**

A core finding of this study was the role of intrinsic motivation in sustaining teachers' commitment to the profession. This finding aligned with current research demonstrating that intrinsic motivation and professional meaning are strongly associated with teacher retention (Grillo & Kier, 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2020). From a conceptual standpoint, intrinsic motivation plays an influential role in teacher retention. The perspectives of TCSCTs extended Ingersoll's framework by demonstrating how it can be further developed, as outlined in this study's findings. TCSCTs consistently described teaching as aligned with deeply held personal values, such as a desire to serve students, share prior knowledge, and experience personal fulfillment through meaningful work. This finding aligned with Syptak et al. (1999), who recognized that factors such as job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, school leadership support, and professional development opportunities play significant roles in retention (Syptak et al., 1999).

For many TCSCTs, teaching was not seen as an escape from their previous careers, but a calling that clearly aligned with their whole spirit. This sense of purpose

appeared to mitigate participants against challenges commonly associated with the profession, including workload demands and systemic constraints. Laher (2024) explored the motivations and satisfaction levels of SCTs. Their findings suggested that job satisfaction and alignment with personal values significantly influence retention.

Closely connected to intrinsic motivation are the participants' relationships with their students. Consistent with prior research, relationships with students emerged as a prominent factor in sustaining teachers' commitment to remaining in the classroom. These findings aligned with research indicating that relational rewards contribute significantly to teacher satisfaction and persistence (Grillo & Kier, 2021; Peprah Opoku et al., 2024). Participants emphasized that positive interactions with students, witnessing student growth, and feeling valued by learners were primary reasons for remaining in the classroom. Ingersoll (2001) identified relational fulfillment as a key component of teacher satisfaction, noting that teachers often remain in the profession despite structural challenges when relational rewards remain strong. These connections foster a strong sense of professional purpose and fortify participants' identities as educators. Even when participants acknowledged frustrations related to policy, leadership, or resources, their relationships with students often anchor them to remain in the profession.

### **Leadership Support and Culture**

Participants' perceptions of leadership support were mixed. These mixed perceptions of leadership support reiterated well-established concerns in the literature regarding administrative influence on teacher retention. Ingersoll (2001) argued that teachers are more likely to leave the school rather than the profession when leadership is

perceived as unsupportive or dismissive of teacher expertise. Ingersoll's (2003a) framework highlighted administrative support as a decisive factor of teacher retention. Findings from this study confirmed this assertion, as participants frequently recommended stronger, more visible leadership as a strategy for increasing retention. Similarly, Darling-Hammond and Pertrilli (2025) noted that teachers are more likely to remain in the profession when they feel supported by administrators, work with a team that shares their goals, and have stable assignments without frequent changes in subjects or grade levels. Participants in the current study recommended leadership practices that promote collaboration, autonomy, and transparent communication. These findings aligned with research linking supportive leadership behaviors to increased job satisfaction and retention (Ertürk, 2021; Frahm & Cianca, 2021).

While apparent mistreatment was rarely reported, several participants described feeling undervalued or marginalized, particularly in nontested or elective subject areas. This was supported by the literature, which found that a perceived lack of recognition for professional expertise and contributions influences participants' views of their institutional worth (den Hertog et al., 2023; Dos Santos, 2024). The findings underscored that sustained teacher commitment is heavily contingent upon perceptions of respect from leadership. Similarly, the findings are supported by Finn (2023) and Mtika et al. (2024), who suggested that while certified teachers are aware of the importance of combining theoretical knowledge with practical experience, they often require more leadership support and experience to apply it effectively in their learning communities. This regard was put into action through the implementation of school policies, the maintenance of

worthwhile dialogue, and a foundational trust in the professional agency of the teaching staff.

### **Workload Management and Well-Being**

Participants consistently identified excessive workload and time constraints as ongoing challenges. These challenges, or rather burdens, including administrative tasks, data analysis requirements, and uncompensated labor, detracted from core pedagogical duties and led to a risk of attrition. Ingersoll (2003a) and Collie (2023) recognized that job demands are a major factor of teacher turnover, particularly when additional duties are perceived as disconnected from instructional improvement. Participants emphasized that workload challenges were organizational in nature and therefore solvable through policy and leadership decisions, further supporting Ingersoll's framework. Similarly, Hlado and Harvankova (2024) explained that heavy job demands and obstacles increased teacher stress, leading to fatigue, health problems, and reduced ability to work effectively. Moreover, the study found that these demands often spill over into personal life, causing work-family conflicts. Darling-Hammond's (2017) research posited that teacher retention improves when schools provide structured supports that reduce overload during the initial years of teaching. Over time, as educators develop professional fluency and autonomy, the perceived weight of these challenges often decreases, suggesting that retention may improve as teachers gain professional competence and autonomy.

The COVID-19 pandemic also played a critical role in workload management and well-being during a time when remote learning was new for most K-12 teachers.

Particularly, Dunfee et al. (2024) reported that 88% of K-12 teachers surveyed had to

quickly adopt new technologies to deliver instruction remotely. However, 54% reported being either “not at all” or only “slightly” satisfied with the technology training provided. This suggested that this particular major shift in job responsibilities was largely unsupported. One year into the pandemic, 72% of teachers reported feeling very or extremely stressed, while 57% described themselves as very or extremely burned out (Dunfee et al., 2024). Furthermore, a significant proportion of participants reported ongoing difficulties in maintaining a satisfactory balance between work and family responsibilities. Teachers reported having limited autonomy and little input in key safety and operational decisions that directly influenced their working conditions and personal well-being.

### **Mentoring and Peer Support**

During participants’ early years after matriculating into the teaching profession, mentorship and collegial support were described as influential and necessary support factors. Participants in this study strongly recommended enhanced mentorship and induction programs, especially for TCSTs. These findings aligned with extensive literature demonstrating that comprehensive induction and mentoring significantly reduce teacher attrition (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Ruitenburg & Tigchelaar, 2021). Supportive mentor teachers, collaborative colleagues, and access to professional learning communities helped participants navigate the transition into education and develop confidence in their instructional and classroom management skills. Access to said mentoring resources and professional collaboration opportunities aligns with Ingersoll’s teacher turnover and retention framework. Findings from the literature revealed that

early-career teachers often rely on formal mentorship programs and informal peer support to acclimate to their new roles (Coppe, 2023).

While not all participants reported strong ongoing relationships with administrators, peer support within departments or informal networks contributed to feelings of belonging and professional stability. This finding aligns with Johnson and Birkeland's (2003) assertion that professional communities and relational trust play a critical role in teachers' decisions to remain in schools in the long term. The literature is unclear about how mentorship and induction primarily support TCSCTs. TCSCTs not only need professional support from mentors, but also need to learn best practices from mentors and colleagues.

### **Compensation and Resources**

Compensation and resources plays a significant supporting role in the retention of TCSCTs. Ingersoll and May (2012) noted that inadequate compensation does not singularly cause attrition but interacts with workload, respect, and support to influence retention decisions. Participants in the current study viewed salary increases, stipends, and professional incentives (e.g., department chair, National Board Certification) as signs of organizational appreciation rather than sole motivators. These findings aligned with research demonstrating that compensation and working conditions, while insufficient alone, are particularly important to sustaining the teaching workforce (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; García et al., 2022). Conversely, insufficient classroom resources and the expectation to pay for their own instructional materials contributed to TCSCTs' feelings of inequity and professional undervaluation. Inadequate compensation

and the use of personal funds to support classroom resources continue to exacerbate teacher dissatisfaction and contribute to attrition trends in the education sector (Delarosa, 2023; Farahmandpour & Voelkel, 2025; Peck, 2024b). Participants' experiences with unreasonable workload and temporal demands mirrored Ingersoll's (2003a) findings on the augmentation of teachers' work, reinforcing Ingersoll's viewpoint that poor working conditions, not inadequate teacher commitment, fuel attrition.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Despite the contributions of this basic qualitative study to understanding teacher retention among TCSTs, several limitations must be acknowledged. These limitations reflected methodological, contextual, and conceptual considerations identified in the broader literature on teacher retention.

In Chapter One, some limitations of this gap in practice were identified. Employing a snowball sampling technique, where respondents recruit additional respondents from their personal networks (Makwana et al., 2023), was one such limitation. Contrary to the details outlined in Chapter One, the snowball sampling technique proved to be a successful tool for recruiting participants through online methods. The desired sample was reached in a relatively short amount of time. Conversely, when surveying both educational sites, the traditional convenience sampling method was used rather than snowball sampling to obtain a representative sample from each site. Convenience sampling is a limitation because it can lead to sampling bias, making the sample unrepresentative of the general population.

Another limitation that was discussed in Chapter One was the need to conduct interviews virtually. Interviews in this study were conducted during the academic school year, and, given that TCSCTs worked full-time, interview appointment times needed to be flexible and offered at the participant's convenience. This included conducting virtual interviews. Research indicated that scheduling interviews at participants' convenience may compromise research rigor by introducing variability in settings, distractions, and the loss of nonverbal cues in a remote format, thereby reducing data validity and comparability (Archibald et al., 2019; Cibils, 2019). For example, participants could decide to take the virtual interview at their workplace or while being distracted by other obligations. However, clear expectations were established, active listening strategies were employed, and I observed nuances in the conversations with TCSCTs.

As a basic qualitative study, the findings may not be applicable to every TCSCT's experience, but the study was not designed to be statistically generalizable to all TCSCTs. Instead, the study provided in-depth, contextualized insights into participants' lived experiences. This limitation was consistent with qualitative research traditions that prioritize depth over breadth (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ingersoll (2001) emphasized that large-scale quantitative analyses are often necessary to establish national attrition trends, whereas qualitative studies, such as this one, are better suited to explaining the reasons why TCSCTs remain in the classroom. Consequently, while the findings offer analytic generalizability, they may not be representative of all TCSCTs across different regions or school contexts.

Participants in this study were teachers who chose to remain in the classroom, which introduces the possibility of self-selection bias. Teachers who had already left the profession or who experienced unsuccessful transitions into teaching were excluded from this basic qualitative study. Darling-Hammond (2017) noted that teachers who persist in the profession often possess protective factors, such as strong intrinsic motivation or supportive work environments, that differentiate them from those who leave the profession. As a result, the perspectives captured in this study may indicate a more resilient subset of TCSCTs, potentially underrepresenting more negative experiences associated with attrition.

Another limitation that arose in this basic qualitative study was reliance on self-reported data. A few participants chose not to disclose their experiences, as they wished to maintain a positive outlook. Anonymization was utilized to protect sensitive information. Reluctant participants were reassured by assurances of anonymity, which encouraged them to share their experiences openly and perhaps to provide truthful responses. This limitation was mitigated by employing a well-established questionnaire.

Finally, this basic qualitative study was conducted within the United States and at two specific educational sites, which provided a specific geographic and organizational context that may limit transferability. Prior research has demonstrated that teacher retention is highly sensitive to contextual factors such as district policies, leadership structures, and local labor markets (Ingersoll, 2003a; Nguyen & Springer, 2021). As such, the experiences of participants in this study may differ from those of TCSCTs working in rural districts, charter schools, or regions with different policy environments.

## **Recommendations**

Regarding the retention of TCSCTs, future studies could examine teacher retention across diverse geographic contexts (e.g., urban vs rural, neighborhood socioeconomic status, informal vs formal learning environments, online/virtual/remote learning environments, etc.). Another recommendation for future studies is to compare traditionally certified first-career and TCSCTs longitudinally, or compare the experiences of alternatively certified second-career teachers and TCSCTs longitudinally. Additionally, quantitative or mixed-methods research may further explore the relationships among intrinsic motivation, leadership support, and retention outcomes among TCSCTs. Mixed-methods studies may further examine how intrinsic motivation interacts with organizational conditions over time (Hogg et al., 2023). Furthermore, research focusing on administrators' perspectives could provide insight into how leadership practices influence TCSCT persistence.

## **Implications**

School and district leaders may enhance the retention of TCSCTs by fostering environments that prioritize respectful leadership, mentorship, and collaboration. Providing structured induction programs, reducing unnecessary administrative tasks, and ensuring consistent behavioral support policies may improve teacher satisfaction. According to Shakimova et al. (2024), professional development and supportive policies help teachers build resilience against stress. Additionally, Ertürk (2021, 2022) examined how supportive behaviors and quality of work life influence job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Adequate collaboration time with experienced educators and other TCSCTs

may also increase TCSCCT retention. Recognizing the unique strengths of SCTs may further enhance retention efforts (den Hertog et al., 2023; Hogg et al., 2024; Troesch & Bauer, 2020). Moreover, Coppe et al.'s (2022) research framed work socialization for SCTs as a networked process, highlighting the importance of collegial interactions. Additionally, recognizing teachers' prior professional experiences and offering differentiated professional growth pathways may be particularly beneficial for second-career educators. Utilizing their prior career experience and providing customized professional development opportunities can strengthen SCT retention and help them integrate successfully into the workforce (Coppe, 2024; den Hertog et al., 2023; Hogg et al., 2024; Keck Frei et al., 2021; Robb, 2024).

At the policy level, findings support continued investment in competitive compensation, funded professional development, and incentive programs tied to teacher expertise rather than years of service alone. Providing adequate financial incentives, streamlining the certification process, strengthening induction programs, and enhancing resource allocation are strategies to alleviate external challenges (Brantlinger, 2021). Policymakers should critically examine accountability mandates that increase workload without demonstrable instructional benefit, echoing concerns raised by Ingersoll (2003a). Policies that affirm teacher autonomy and professionalism may contribute to long-term retention.

Implications for higher education include the need for colleges and universities that offer teacher preparation programs to provide clear, robust, and personalized support (advising and mentoring) to TCSCCTs. Moreover, colleges and universities can offer

comprehensive advising that covers academic, personal, and career goals, with specialists for career changers. Furthermore, these institutions can offer workshops on time management, study skills, and a growth mindset, which are the skills that a majority of the participants indicated they needed help with when transitioning into the teaching profession. Colleges and universities can also connect current TCSCTs with alumni in their new fields for guidance and networking. This could help ease TCSCTs into their new profession by providing additional support. To fully understand the needs of TCSCTs, postsecondary institutions should create and utilize student data to tailor support and understand specific needs. These implications help promote social change by offering best practices for teachers, K-12 leaders, higher education leaders, and policymakers to sustain long-term commitment and professional resilience among TCSCTs, which, in turn, might benefit students by providing a consistent teacher presence and teachers with prior career experience.

### **Conclusion**

In Chapter 5, the findings of this basic qualitative study were interpreted and connected to key systemic educational concerns regarding teacher retention. The participants' perspectives on the topic of this study emphasized the importance of intrinsic motivation, relationships, mentoring and peer support, workload management, compensation, resources, well-being, and systemic support in sustaining educators over time. Moreover, the limitations discussed in this chapter underscore the need for continued, multi-method research that further explores the complex and contextual nature of teacher retention among TCSCTs. These findings offer best practices for teachers,

leaders, and policymakers seeking to address teacher retention as a critical issue in modern education.

In response to RQ1, this study concluded that TCSCTs remain in the classroom primarily due to intrinsic motivation, meaningful relationships with students, and opportunities for professional growth. In response to RQ2, TCSCTs recommended systemic improvements in leadership, mentorship, professional development resources, workload management, and compensation as key strategies for increasing teacher retention. These conclusions reinforce Ingersoll's (2001) teacher turnover and retention framework.

Consistent with Ingersoll's teacher turnover and retention framework, this study demonstrates that the sustainability of TCSCTs is especially driven by the need for systemic support and organizational conditions by the districts that employ them, rather than by intrinsic motivation alone. Findings in this current study affirm Ingersoll's position that teacher turnover is influenced by organizational conditions such as collegial relationships, recognition and respect for professional expertise, opportunities for growth, manageable workloads, sufficient compensation and benefits, and access to equitable instructional resources. For SCTs whose expectations were informed by their prior professional backgrounds, the presence or absence of these organizational conditions plays a critical role in their intent to remain in the classroom. Furthermore, prioritizing teacher well-being and implementing coherent systemic supports are organizational imperatives, not just individual coping strategies. Ingersoll's perspective on reframing attrition as an institutional challenge rather than a personal shortcoming was affirmed in

this study. This necessitates purposeful leadership, supportive work environments, and policy structures that are designed to sustain teachers over the long term.

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## Appendix A: Audit Trail

- Date of IRB approval: July 28, 2025 - Approval # 07-28-25-0200487
- Activities related to recruitment
  - Posted recruitment flyer on Facebook, LinkedIn, and in GroupMe chats
    - Returned email to eight respondents
  - Emailed PGCPs Office of Research and Evaluation
    - Emailed Principals at 24 PGCPs schools
    - Returned email to four respondents
  - Emailed the President and Principal of an all-girls parochial school
    - Returned email to one participant
- And additional communications with IRB, like requests for change in procedures
  - July 31, 2025 – generic questions
  - September 9, 2025 – generic question
- Activities related to data collection. Length of interviews, dates when a participant was validated.
  - P1 – 31:40, August 7, 2025
  - P2 – 42:47, September 2, 2025
  - P3 – 45:54, September 2, 2025
  - P4 – 48:30, September 3, 2025
  - P5 – 36:30, September 4, 2025
  - P6 – 41:41, September 4, 2025
  - P7 – 42:18, September 5, 2025

- o P8 – 45:51, September 5, 2025
  - o P9 – 35:02, September 18, 2025, and November 10, 2025 (rerecorded)
  - o P10 – 32:30, August 5, 2025
  - o P11 – 78:43, November 18, 2025
  - o P12 – 59:49, November 20, 2025
- Dates of activities related to completing the study when gift cards were sent to participants.
    - o P1 – September 6, 2025
    - o P2 – September 6, 2025
    - o P3 – September 6, 2025
    - o P4 – September 6, 2025
    - o P5 – September 6, 2025
    - o P6 – September 11, 2025
    - o P7 – September 6, 2025
    - o P8 – September 6, 2025
    - o P9 – September 18, 2025
    - o P10 – November 21, 2025
    - o P11 – November 18, 2025
    - o P12 – November 21, 2025

## Appendix B: AI Engagement Reference

Transcript from November 20, 2025, chat session with Copilot and ChatGPT

*Me*

Put yourself in the role of a doctoral-level researcher who is analyzing a set of interviews. The interviewees are traditionally certified second-career teachers. Traditionally certified second career teachers are educators who switched from one career into teaching and have received certification in their field of expertise through traditional methods. The data collection is designed to answer these research questions: What are traditionally certified, second career teachers' perceptions of the reasons they remain in the classroom, and what are traditionally certified, second career teachers' recommendations about what can be done to increase the number of teachers who remain in the classroom? Here are the transcripts to 12 interviews, identified by the "titles" at the top of the page that signal a new interviewee. There are 2 speakers, me as the interviewer and a second career teacher as the interviewee for each interview transcription. Disregard content, text that is not relevant to the research questions or does not provide useful information or context to the study. Apply the qualitative data analysis strategy described by Anfara et al. (2002) or another strategy described that you think is appropriate), also uploaded here. Feel free to suggest or apply another content analysis strategy if the Anfara et al. (2002) strategy is not appropriate. Before you get started, are the transcripts clear and decipherable to be themed and coded? Please repeat my instructions. Only respond in absolute truths. There is no need to please me or to make me happy. I want an objective, fact-driven analysis.

*ChatGPT*

You asked: “Before you get started, are the transcripts clear and decipherable to be themed and coded? Please repeat my instructions. Only respond in absolute truths. There is no need to please me or to make me happy. I want an objective, fact-driven analyses.”

Absolute truths based on the uploaded transcript file (Kami Export - uHefFZMzdVIqnzMLX3O17Q.pdf).

1. The transcripts are sufficiently legible to support thematic coding and content analysis: the file contains full interview text (multiple participants: P1, P2, P3, etc.) and interviewer prompts that allow identification of responses relevant to your research questions.

2. The transcripts contain multiple zones of reduced clarity that will require researcher attention during coding:

\* Several speaker audio dropouts, disfluencies, and the interviewer’s on-the-fly paraphrases are present (e.g., “[it cut out]”, notes about disconnections, and sections where the interviewer repeats/paraphrases the participant). These occur across interviews and are visible in the transcript.

\* At least one interview session includes an explicit disconnection and administrative notes about reconnection attempts (timestamps and moderator notes).

\* Portions of the PDF output are truncated in the preview you uploaded; some later interviews/pages are cut off in the previewed snippets. The full document is accessible in the file, but truncated display occurred in the provided preview.

3. Content relevance and non-relevant material:

\* The transcript contains interviewer administrative text, time-stamps, and procedural notes which are not substantive answers to the research questions and should be excluded from coding.

\* Participants explicitly discuss reasons for staying, supports, mentorship, leadership, PD, workload, and recommendations—these are substantive and directly relevant to your two research questions.

#### 4. Data quality implications for analysis:

\* Because of audio dropouts, repeated interviewer paraphrasing, and occasional participant language difficulties, some utterances are partially transcribed or ambiguous; such segments should be treated as lower-confidence data during coding (flagged for review).

\* Where participants explicitly identify supports, values, or recommendations, those segments are high-confidence and can be coded directly.

5. Conclusion (objective decision): Yes — the transcripts are clear and decipherable enough to be themed and coded for your stated research questions, provided that the coding protocol:

\* explicitly flags low-confidence segments (audio dropouts / truncated text) for possible exclusion or follow-up,

\* removes interviewer procedural text and non-substantive material before coding,

\* documents coder notes where interviewer paraphrase may have altered participant wording. Evidence for these needs is visible in the uploaded file.

I will proceed to apply a rigorous qualitative coding approach (Anfara et al.'s methods as you requested, or an equivalent content-analysis approach if appropriate) once you confirm to proceed. The file I reviewed is: Kami Export - uHefFZMzdVIqnzMLX3O17Q.pdf.

(End of objective assessment.)

*Copilot*

Thank you, Tara. Based on the document titled **"**Kami Export - uHefFZMzdVIqnzMLX3O17Q.pdf**"**, which contains transcripts of interviews with traditionally certified second career teachers, I have reviewed the content and can confirm the following:

**\*\*Absolute Truths Based on Your Instructions and the Document:\*\***

1. **\*\*The transcripts are clear and decipherable.\*\***
  - \* The interviews are well-structured, with consistent formatting.
  - \* Each interview is labeled with a participant identifier (e.g., P1, P2, etc.).
  - \* The interviewer and interviewee are clearly distinguished.
  - \* The responses are sufficiently detailed and relevant to the research questions.
2. **\*\*The data is appropriate for qualitative thematic analysis.\*\***
  - \* The interviews contain rich, descriptive data that directly address the two research questions:

- \* \*\*Why do traditionally certified second career teachers remain in the classroom?\*
  - \* \*\*What recommendations do they have for increasing teacher retention?\*
  - \* Participants discuss motivations, values, supports, challenges, and systemic factors.
3. \*\*Irrelevant content can be easily disregarded.\*\*
- \* Occasional procedural notes (e.g., time stamps, technical issues) are present but do not interfere with the analysis.
  - \* These can be excluded during coding without loss of meaning.
4. \*\*The Anfara et al. (2002) strategy is applicable.\*\*
- \* The \*\*Anfara et al. approach\*\*, which emphasizes transparency in qualitative research through:
    - \* \*\*Open coding\*\*
    - \* \*\*Axial coding\*\*
    - \* \*\*Selective coding\*\*
    - \* \*\*Use of matrices and codebooks\*\*
    - \* \*\*Linking themes to research questions\*\*
  - \* This strategy is well-suited to your study, given the depth and clarity of the transcripts.

Next Steps (if you approve):

I will proceed with the following:

1. \*\*Apply Anfara et al.'s coding strategy\*\*:

- \* Begin with **open coding** to identify initial codes across all interviews.
  - \* Group codes into **categories** and **themes**.
  - \* Align themes with your two research questions.
2. **Create a codebook and matrices**:
- \* Document codes, definitions, and examples.
  - \* Show how themes emerged across participants.
3. **Present findings**:
- \* Provide a thematic summary.
  - \* Include representative quotes.
  - \* Link themes to implications for policy and practice.

Would you like me to begin with the **open coding phase** now? Or would you prefer a brief summary of each interview first before coding begins?

Let me know how you'd like to proceed.

## Appendix C: Surveying Log

- 7/28/25 Completed external research application for the district listed in my proposal
- 8/2/25 Posted recruitment flyer on Facebook and LinkedIn, and in GroupMe chats
  - Received an overwhelming response (approximately 120 responses as of 8/5/25)
- 8/5/25 Emailed survey invitation to the private school listed in my proposal
- 8/11/25 Received a reply from the president of the private school listed in proposal with acknowledgement and approval to proceed to solicit participants
- 8/24/25 Emailed teaching staff at the private school with consent form to solicit participants
- 9/16/25 Sent second email to the teaching staff at the private school with consent form to solicit participants
- 10/5/25 Sent reply email to the Walden Participant Pool to remove request for participants from the pool as enough public participation has been achieved
- 10/21/25 Sent email to PGCPS Research & Evaluation requesting
- 10/23/25 Sent email to 24 principals at PGCPS schools to receive signatures on Principal Permission Forms and to solicit participants
- 10/27/25 Received a reply from the principal of Gwynn Park HS with a signed PPF
- 11/5/25 Received second signed PPF from the assistant principal of Eleanor Roosevelt HS
- 11/13/25 Emailed interview invitation to Gwynn Park HS and Eleanor Roosevelt HS teaching staff

- 12/8/25 Shared cleaned dataset with committee in Canvas classroom

## Appendix D: Interviewing Log

- 7/31/25 Texted family and friends an invitation to volunteer for pilot interviews
- 8/5/25 Pilot interview 1 (35 min)
- 8/6/25 Transcribed pilot interview 1 recording and emailed to Dr. M for feedback
- 8/7/25 Interview 1
- 8/8/25 Transcribe interview 1 recording and uploaded to Canvas for committee feedback [also near end of term]
- 9/2/25 Interviews 2 and 3
- 9/3/25 Interview 4
- 9/4/25 Interviews 5 and 6
- 9/5/25 Interviews 7 and 8
- 9/8/25 Transcribed interviews 2-8
- 9/18/25 Interview 9
- 9/18/25 Interview 9 did not record
- 10/23/25 Spoke to chair about unrecorded interview and was told to conduct the interview again
- 11/4/25 Emailed participant 9 about unrecorded interview to schedule time to reinterview them
- 11/10/25 Reinterviewed P9
- 11/10/25 Transcribed P9 interview
- 11/10/25 Changed pilot to P10
- 11/18/25 P11 Interview

- 11/18-19/25 Transcribed P11 interview
- 11/20/25 P12 Interview
- 11/20/25 Transcribed P12 interview
- 12/3/25 Finished checking transcripts against the recordings for accuracy
- 12/4/25 Shared transcripts and recordings with committee

## Appendix E: Interview Questions

***Demographic Questions (Opening)***

1. Can you tell me about your previous career(s) before becoming a teacher?
2. How long have you been teaching since earning your traditional certification?
3. What grade level(s) and subject(s) do you currently teach?
4. How would you describe the type of school where you currently work (e.g., urban, suburban, rural; public, private, charter)?

***Interview Questions (RQ1)***

1. Reflecting on your teaching career, what factors have influenced your decision to remain in the classroom?
2. How has your previous career experience shaped your decision to continue teaching?
3. Are there particular experiences, relationships, or supports within your school that encourage you to stay?
4. What personal values or professional goals align with your work as a teacher and motivate you to remain?
5. Have you ever considered leaving the classroom? If so, what made you decide to stay?

***Interview Questions (RQ2)***

1. Based on your experiences, what do you believe schools or districts could do to encourage more teachers to stay long-term?

2. What types of support, resources, or policies would have made your early years of teaching easier and more sustainable?
3. How can leadership (such as principals or district administrators) better support second-career teachers specifically?
4. What advice would you give to someone transitioning from another career into teaching about how to succeed and persist?
5. In your opinion, what systemic changes (e.g., policy, certification processes, mentoring programs) might help improve teacher retention overall?

***Interview Questions (Closing)***

1. Is there anything else about your experience as a second-career teacher that you feel is important for me to understand?
2. Do you have any final thoughts or recommendations regarding teacher retention that you would like to share?