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Teachers' Narratives on Turnover in Focus County Schools

Deonne Beckwith
Walden University

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Deonne Lynn Beckwith

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Teachers' Narratives on Turnover in Focus County Schools

by

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MA, Walden University, 2008

BS, Oswego State University, 2006

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Focus County School District in the Midwest United States experienced a 12% teacher turnover rate over the last 2 years. The purpose of this study was to explore those factors that led to teachers leaving the district. Bandura's social cognitive theory was the guiding theory to examine and explain those factors that contributed to the district's teachers' attrition. Using narrative inquiry, the teachers' thick descriptions of their experiences were collected through the interview process. The data consisted of 9 personal interviews of teachers who left the district. The data were analyzed and coded through the 6-part LaBovian model of abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result, and coda. The semistructured interviews were analyzed with thematic analysis of the interviews. The 4 themes, developed inductively, were (a) lack of administrative support, (b) mentoring, (c) teacher preparation, and (d) salary. The results of the study prompted questions about how teacher careers might be sustained by considering each person's narrative stories. A policy paper project was created based on the findings of the study. The policy paper addresses teacher turnover in Focus County schools and ways to mitigate the turnover crisis. Positive social change will result from the school district being better positioned to improve teacher stability. Through increased teacher stability, the students will be situated for improved instruction.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Teacher turnover is an epidemic sweeping through educational practice, taking teachers away from school systems (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Highly qualified teachers are imperative in any educational institute, yet some institutes have a high teacher turnover rate and have difficulty retaining these teachers (Wattlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Feisher, 2010). According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (AFEE; 2017), half a million teachers in the United States either move schools or leave the profession each year. This attrition costs the United States up to \$2.2 billion annually (AFEE, 2017). The inability to retain teachers has resulted in a widespread issue of high teacher turnover rates (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Studies have been conducted to determine factors relating to the results of high teacher turnover rates in a variety of educational settings (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008).

The prominent factors of teacher turnover trending in current research are inadequate administrative support, low salary, poor induction programs, difficulties with student discipline (Gonzalez, Brown, & Slate, 2008), and weak mentoring (Russell, Williams, & Gleason-Gomez, 2010). Fall (2010) suggested that high quality teachers are leaving the schools, even the profession, in search of better opportunities. However, researchers have found that teacher turnover can be mitigated through structured and effective programs (Kang, 2011). These programs include providing effective induction programs for new teachers and providing a strong mentoring program that is used throughout the school system. Training for the administration was also recommended so

that building administrators are able to recognize signs of teacher burnout and possible turnover trends (Russell et al., 2010).

As a result of public attention to educational disparities, the federal government's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) raised expectations of highly qualified professionals. Teachers in charge of the classroom are required to obtain a highly-qualified status, especially for Title I schools (Department of Education, 2018). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; 2017), a Title I school is identified if at least 40% of a school's students are from low-income families. This allows the school to be eligible to receive supplemental federal funds to assist in meeting the educational goals for at-risk students (NCES, 2010). The problem of teacher turnover exists nationally, and the teacher turnover rates tend to increase in economically disadvantaged areas (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

The results of high teacher turnover can lead to a decrease in the quality of education and negatively affect society as a whole (The New Teacher Plan, 2012). The United States federal government, the individual states, and the local area clearly see the value of education and the importance of retaining highly qualified teachers (Sass, Flores, Claeys, & Perez, 2012). However, much of that effort has been focused on short-term improvements and documenting small scale demonstrations, rather than looking at the bigger picture of keeping highly qualified personnel (Strickland-Cohend, McIntosh, & Horner, 2014). Education prepares students to become productive citizens in order to strengthen the future. Poor education contributes to drop-out rates and learning gaps,

which can lead to poor living conditions and poor societal environments (National Education Association, 2008).

Description of the Problem

The high teacher turnover rate was evident in a rural school district in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States (referred to as the Focus County hereafter). Through data provided from the school board office of Focus County, they had a 12% teacher turnover rate in the years 2008 to 2014 (assistant superintendent, personal communication, March 18, 2015). As compared to the statewide percentage of 0.05% and the nationwide percentage of 7%, the teacher turnover rate in Focus County was prominent (Department of Education, 2018). The school district's former superintendent shared in a blog written in 2013 that novice teachers did not stay within the school district. A significant number of the novice teachers have left within 2 or 3 years, along with the investment in them. The former superintendent shared that Focus County had nearly 100 teachers with less than 3 years of experience (out of approximately 400 full-time teachers). The cause of the high rate of novice teachers is due to teachers leaving the county and the hiring of new teachers to replace their positions.

Definition of the Problem

The local problem that prompted this study was related to a high teacher turn-over rate in Focus County schools that was creating concern. Focus County schools had nothing in place to investigate the aspects relating to teacher turnover (special populations coordinator, personal communication, February 27, 2014). There were 11 schools that served 5,144 students in grades PK to 12 in Focus County. There were three

island schools, and the mainland schools included four elementary schools, two middle schools, and two comprehensive high schools, each with on-site career technical centers. The high school used a 4x4 block schedule to offer a variety of college level courses. Out of the 11 schools, six schools received Title I funding. Title I funding provides financial assistance to local educational agencies and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Schools with harder to serve students, such as low-income students, often face high teacher turnover (Kalogrides, Loeb, & Beteille, 2012).

Teacher turnover is a major concern in educational research because of the demand it creates for replacement teachers (Boe et al., 2008). There have been attempts to decrease Focus County public school teacher turnover rates by improving the teacher induction program and mentoring program (new teacher coordinator, personal communication, December 9, 2013). However, after surveys were conducted from the conclusion of the 2013 induction program, results showed that the program was somewhat helpful but needed some improvements (assistant superintendent, personal communication, March 18, 2015). A teacher induction program is defined as a systematic structure of support for beginning teachers (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2002). These programs can consist of new teacher orientation, mentoring relationships, support teams, workshops and training, and evaluations (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2002).

The assistant superintendent also shared similar information about the county, stating that the induction program was originally created to help mitigate teacher turnover

(personal communication, January 29, 2015). High teacher turnover has negatively impacted student achievement because the retention of high quality teachers has not been obtained (Duncan, 2014). In the last 5 years, academic achievements in the county have been declining. There were six out of 11 schools within the county identified as being in school improvement because they did not make the annual yearly progression set forth by the state (State Department of Education, 2014). *School improvement* describes schools that are identified as academically low performing schools. These schools are provided with assistance from the state department to implement effective instructional strategies and best practices to increase student achievement (State Department of Education, 2015). Teacher retention is needed in order to provide adequate instruction to the students of the county (State Department of Education, 2014). Despite attempts to increase retention rate, turnover has remained at 12% (assistant superintendent, personal communication, January 29, 2015). Teacher turnover is a major concern because it seriously compromises the educational capacity to ensure that all students have access to skilled teaching (AFEE, 2014).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

From 2003 to 2013, there were 524 teachers hired within Focus County schools. Subsequently, 267 (or 51%) of those 564 hired teachers left the county after their first year (new teacher coordinator, personal communication, October 8, 2014). Focus County pays \$1,145.50 per a new teacher hire. This created a total expenditure of \$600,242 spent on teacher induction programs from 2003 to 2013 (new teacher coordinator, personal

communication, October 8, 2014). Many current teachers have been involved in meetings and conversations regarding teacher turnover, thus identifying teacher turnover as a significant problem (new teacher coordinator, personal communication, October 8, 2014). Teachers try to work in grade level teams, and when there is a high fluctuation of teachers entering and leaving, it is hard to establish continuity (new teacher coordinator, personal communication, March 18, 2015).

Since the turnover rate was high, the county incurred increased monetary costs for each new teacher hire as opposed to redirecting the money to other funds (assistant superintendent, personal communication, March 18, 2015). Focus County had limited funding for education, and the expenditure of new teacher induction professional development sessions has required much of the funds. The assistant superintendent shared that Focus County has put many programs into place attempting to reduce teacher turnover, but none have been proven successful (personal communication, January 29, 2015).

The county provides a new teacher workshop the summer before the starting school year that includes a variety of professional development sessions and select mentors to explain certain programs and requirements. New teachers are required to attend the summer workshop and are paid each day. Focus County pays on average \$780 per new teacher during this summer academy (new teacher coordinator, personal communication, October 8, 2014). If the county were able to obtain a high retention rate, they would not have to have the extensive expenditures that they had due to new teacher preparation (Sass et al., 2012). Many teachers within this county felt as though money

should be allocated for higher teacher salaries in order to keep teachers rather than focusing the majority of its funding on recruiting new teachers who do not normally stay past the 3 year mark (teacher, personal communication, May 15, 2015; teacher, personal communication, June 2, 2015). As an example, one teacher decided to maintain residence within the county but to travel to an outside district in order to earn a higher salary (teacher, personal communication, February 13, 2015). It is important for the county to determine the main reasons explaining why teachers leave that could shed light on current and past teacher turnover rates.

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

Various studies have been conducted in order to determine the reasons underpinning high teacher turnover rates (see Kang, 2011; Kang & Berliner, 2012; Russell et al., 2010). Much of the research conducted identified the issue of teacher attrition with either a problem with individual factors, such as demographic features, or a problem associated with contextual factors (Pogodzinski, Youngs, & Frank, 2013; Schaefer, Long, & Clandinin, 2012). Kang and Berliner (2012) argued that one factor leading to teacher turnover is rooted in the quality of their induction programs. A significant amount of funding is channeled into new teacher induction programs. An increased number of teachers leaving the county will increase the number of teachers needed to take the teacher induction program (new teacher coordinator, personal communication, October 8, 2014).

Monetary-related. Russell et al. (2010) argued that wages and salaries are one of the most salient factors impacting teacher turnover. Garcia, Slate, and Delgado (2009)

demonstrated that high teacher turnover rates can also be directly connected with salary. Garcia et al. focused on teacher turnover rates for Texas public schools and what factors demonstrated the most influence and correlation with the turnover rate. Data collected implied that where salary was lower, the teacher turnover rate was higher, and the higher paying schools had the lower turnover rates (Garcia et al., 2009). There are many implications that suggest that teacher salary is directly linked to teacher turnover rates (Garcia et al., 2009). High rates of teacher turnover directly impact student achievement, teacher quality, and school/school district accountability and are a costly occurrence (Garcia et al., 2009).

Increasing salaries for all teachers and developing differentiated pay scales that reward teachers and those who take on specialized roles and responsibilities will increase the motivation to stay in current job settings (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Johnson, 2005). It is important to reward those willing to teach in high-need areas where teacher retention is problematic by giving them higher salaries (National Education Association, 2008). Money used on hiring new teachers could be considered when determining teacher salaries that would then make an improvement to the high teacher turnover rate (Garcia et al., 2009). Higher teacher salaries will reduce turnover and will increase the number of available teachers (Feng, 2014).

Mentoring programs. High attrition rates also result from inadequate mentoring programs. Darling-Hammond (2012) believed that one way to reduce the teacher attrition rate was to provide supportive induction and mentoring programs for new teachers. Along with mentoring programs, the availability of instructional materials,

class sizes, high-quality leadership, and professional learning opportunities also play a pivotal role (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012). The promotion of more individualized induction and mentoring can have benefits in the continuity and competence of qualified teachers. Teachers will be more invested in their school if they are supported through the mentoring process (Elliott, Isaacs, & Chugani, 2010).

Administration-related. Kukla-Acevedo (2009) demonstrated a positive link between administrative support and teacher turnover. The administration needs to set an example by providing individualized attention to each teacher. Individualized attention should be used to determine what each teacher needs and how they can be better supported (Elliott et al., 2010). With positive support from a supervisor, teachers feel more comfortable and distinguished in their profession. Teachers are less likely to quit schools when they feel supported by their administration (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009).

The purpose of this study was to explore the reasons why teachers leave their current teaching assignment in Focus County School District. A high teacher turnover rate has many negative consequences for the educational setting. Turnover may diminish teaching quality because replacing teachers can be difficult for administrators and quality may not be a priority. The teaching quality of an educational institution can directly affect the academic performance of a school system (Fall, 2010).

Definitions

Teacher induction programs: Programs provided that focus on student learning and teacher effectiveness. Strong programs include instructional mentoring by carefully selected mentors, professional learning communities for new teachers, engaged

principals, and supportive school environments and district policies (Kang & Berliner, 2012).

Teacher turnover: The rate at which personnel whose primary job is teaching leave or separate from the county. This rate is determined by comparing classroom teachers reported in the current year with the rate reported in the previous year (Department of Education, 2014). Ingersoll (2001) also defined teacher turnover as the departure of teachers from their teaching position.

Title I School: According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017), a Title I school is identified if at least 40% of a school's students are from low-income families. This allows the school to be eligible to receive supplemental federal funds to assist in meeting the educational goals for at-risk students (NCES, 2017).

Significance

The narratives shared from past teachers in Focus County have shed light on the gap in practice of policy implementation and the impact of teacher turnover in the Focus County schools. The results of this study will deepen the understanding of the critical factors of teacher turnover and will allow further analysis for how the county can retain highly qualified teachers and reduce teacher induction costs. Results of this study could be beneficial for reducing county costs, increasing standardized test scores, and improving teacher retention. A policy paper was created as a result of this study due to the relation of common factors related to teacher turnover. The most significant factors demonstrated through the data collection were that teachers have left primarily because of

lack of administrative support and low salary. The policy paper suggests an implementation of policies for administration to follow regarding educational protocol.

A high teacher turnover rate has many negative consequences for the educational setting, which in this case is Focus County schools. The teaching quality of an educational institution can directly affect the academic performance of a school system (Fall, 2010). The Focus County schools did not meet federal annual measurable objectives for the 2012-2013 school year (State Department of Education, 2014). Moreover, turnover carries substantial costs in order to recruit teachers and guide them through the induction process. Between 2003 and 2013, Focus County spent a total of \$600,242 on the teacher induction program (new teacher coordinator, personal communication, December 9, 2014). Money spent on the turnover cycle can be better spent on implementing programs to help retain teachers and the needs of the students in the school (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007). Teacher turnover may be mitigated by lessening the monetary and academic consequences.

Guiding Research Questions

There has been ample research on teacher turnover and the many facets that surround teacher turnover. I focused on a specific county in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States school system for this study. Specific data were collected about the systems in place at Focus County schools and what factors have a strong contribution to the past and current high teacher turnover rate. The research questions guiding this study addressed the reasons teachers left a position in Focus County public schools and reasons for why teachers have stayed in their current teaching position. Most teachers leave the

profession within the first 5 years of teaching (Adnot, Dee, Katz, & Wyckoff, 2017).

Therefore, perception into these initial years formed a basis for the narratives shared for why teachers left. These questions helped me determine what the major influences are for teachers to either leave or stay.

1. What are the contributing factors leading to teacher attrition within the rural Focus County schools?
2. How would teachers of Focus County public schools describe their decision to leave the school district?
3. What were the consistent factors among participants for why they decided to leave Focus County schools?

Review of the Literature

Search Terms

Education databases were used to research the topic of teacher turnover. These databases are available through the Walden University Library. The databases used were ERIC, Education Complete, and SAGE Premier. Keywords used to search these databases include but were not limited to *teacher turnover, high quality teachers, teacher turnover and problems, attrition, burnout, teacher turnover and salaries, mentoring, and induction programs*. After a thorough investigation of these databases for current and peer reviewed articles, Google Scholar was used as well. Current statistics and findings were used through the Virginia Department of Education and the United States Department of Education websites and documents.

Conceptual Framework

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

The theoretical framework guiding this study was Bandura's (1999) social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory is a framework for understanding human behaviors. Bandura believed that the human mind is generative, creative, proactive, and self-reflective, not just reactive. People operate as thinkers, and they construct their thoughts about future courses of action to evaluate situations (Bandura, 1999). Humans are knowers and performers. They are also self-reactors with the ability to guide, motivate, and regulate their activities (Bandura, 1999). Individuals anticipate the consequences of actions and set a decision path for themselves through goals and self-belief (Bandura, 1999).

The beliefs that people have about their capabilities are crucial when being successful at a certain task, such as being an effective teacher (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009). Bandura's social cognitive theory was based on the assumption that people are purposeful and strive to be successful (Erlich & Russ-Eft, 2011). One variable of the social cognitive theory is self-efficacy beliefs. Self-efficacy beliefs refer to one's confidence in completing activities in order to work towards a personal goal (Erlich & Russ-Eft, 2011). Self-efficacy can be used as a predictor of a change in behavior. This is a key aspect to educational improvement. If teachers are able to identify their goals and build confidence, they will be content with their current position. Teachers will then be able to learn how to better manage ill-structured problems that characterize teaching (Bullough, Young, Hall, Draper, & Smith, 2008). Self-efficacy is not only concerned

with the actual skills of the individual but with the individual's judgments of what he or she can do with the skills (Bandura, 1989). In other words, the teacher's self-efficacy of belief towards their teaching experience is a result of how they perceive their teaching skills and their ability to perform these skills. However, some factors can hinder their perceptions about teaching, such as the many factors previously stated.

Abilities to manage problematic factors present a cognitive challenge to teachers because they want to be successful (Bullough et al., 2008). Actions that produce positive outcomes are eagerly adopted, whereas those that bring unrewarding outcomes are generally discarded (Bandura, 1999). As a general rule, people do things they have seen be successful and avoid actions they have seen fail (Bandura, 1999). If teachers are not supported, or feel as though they do not have a positive working environment, then they will question their success. Their cognitive thinking process will provide them with a decision of whether to continue teaching, leave to a different school system, or leave the profession altogether (Bullough et al., 2008). Social cognitive theory describes in great detail the learning processes involved in purposeful, goal-directed behavior and motivation (Erlach & Russ-Eft, 2011). Self-efficacy can influence future actions of an individual to either choose to participate in tasks where they feel confident or to avoid tasks where they do not (Gryka, Kiersma, Frame, Cailor, & Chen, 2017). The teachers who do not experience self-efficacy gain a perception that leads to emotional burnout and attrition in the teaching profession (Prabjandee, 2014). Through further investigation of the social cognitive theory, the behaviors of teachers are identified in order to determine

why they decided to leave to go to another school system or leave the profession all together.

Content Literature Review

Researchers who have examined teacher turnover have used the term *turnover* as a general term to describe teachers who depart from their teacher jobs (Ingersoll, 2001). However, there have been many different terms relating to teacher turnover. To distinguish between the different terms, authors often use the term *attrition* to describe teachers leaving the teaching profession completely, and they define the term *migration* as teachers leaving one school or district to go to another while staying in the teaching profession (Ingersoll, 2001). In this study, I defined teacher turnover as teachers leaving their teaching jobs, whether to migrate to other schools or to leave teaching altogether.

There are many different reasons or motivators for the decision of teachers to leave their school and/or profession. High-performing teachers leave their schools and districts for a variety of reasons, some personal, but most related to attributes of their jobs (Adnot et al., 2017). Much of the research conducted identifies the issue of teacher attrition with either a problem with individual factors such as demographic features or a problem associated with contextual factors (Schaefer et al., 2012). Demographic features can refer to the need to move because of low salary, personal preferences, and many more. Contextual factors relate to areas of weakness relating to the work environment and/or procedures (Schaefer et al., 2012).

Induction programs. Kang and Berliner (2012) suggested that the contextual factors can be a result of weak teacher induction programs. Mullen (2011) and Walker

(2009) indicated that novice teachers have a strong fear of beginning their teaching career and a high need of support, and it is often hard for them to admit that they may need support. The challenges and demands of novice teachers are high and cause frustration for many (Andrews, Gilbert, & Martin, 2007). Induction programs can be put into place to provide the foundation for novice teachers to learn from other colleagues and be provided with instructional support.

In the analysis of teacher shortage, Ingersoll (2001) suggested that efforts to minimize the shortage should be focused on retaining teachers currently in the educational system. In order to retain teachers, there is a strong need for individually targeted teacher induction activities to help alleviate early career teacher turnover and retention statistics (Elliott et al., 2010). Howe (2006) found that teachers participating in combinations of mentoring and group induction activities were less likely to migrate to other schools or to leave teaching all together. Schools with the highest turnover rates and the greatest needs for highly qualified teachers are characterized by students with the highest need for competency. If teachers are not provided with individualized induction programs, they will lack the skills needed to deal with these students, both behaviorally and academically (Elliott et al., 2010). However, Roehrig, Bohn, Turner and Pressley (2008) indicated that all teaching jobs require teachers to become effective quickly even though many times it is not with proper guidance and training. Howe conducted research regarding the most outstanding teacher induction programs and found that exemplary programs emphasized skillful and trained mentors, comprehensive professional development, internship programs, and reduced teaching assignments and provided

gradual acculturation into the profession of teaching. When induction programs are implemented and maintained, they can greatly reduce teacher attrition among novice teachers.

Focus County provided teacher induction programs for new teachers, thus accounting for a significant part of the available funding (new teacher coordinator, personal communication, April 14, 2014). The assistant superintendent of Focus County schools shared that the induction program was one of the implementations the county put into practice to reduce the teacher turnover rate (personal communication, March 18, 2015). Despite this attempt, the new teacher induction program has been found to be ineffective to date due to its failure to mitigate the turnover rate (new teacher coordinator, personal communication, February 27, 2014). Surveys were conducted after the induction program each year and have demonstrated that the induction program was beneficial for networking and meeting other new teachers. However, the program's ability to increase confidence in career skills was weak. Some teachers noted that they were even more confused after the program. Further, they stated that the professional development sessions were not beneficial to them due to them not having experience with the Focus County population (new teacher coordinator, personal communication, February 27, 2014). Accordingly, the high teacher attrition rate increases the number of teachers needing the teacher induction program, resulting in a significant cost accrued by the Focus County schools, especially in light of the program being perceived as ineffective (assistant principal, personal communication, January 29, 2014).

Mentoring support for teachers. High attrition rates can also be affected by school or district wide mentoring programs. Many beginning teachers and veteran teachers have shared that inadequate guidance and support through mentorship are key factors relating to attrition (Maxwell, Harrington, & Smith, 2010). However, a reduction in attrition percentages was achieved in schools with effective mentorship programs (Abdallah, 2009). In an effort to infuse new teachers into the educational environment, districts and schools have developed mentoring programs in order to pair novice teachers with more experienced teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Morettini (2016) found that mentoring services given to first-year teachers was one of the reasons that new teachers decided to stay teaching in their current school. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) also noted that beginning teachers who were involved in effective mentoring programs were less likely to move to other schools and less likely to leave the teaching profession altogether. Darling-Hammond (2012) believed that one way to reduce the teacher attrition rate is to provide supportive induction and mentoring programs for new teachers. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) also stated that there is a strong link between mentoring participation and reduced rates of teacher attrition. Danielson (2002) identified well designed mentoring programs as support systems that are successful for beginning teachers. Mentoring also establishes collegiality, self-reflection, and learning new ideas from experienced teachers, all of which are factors for professional growth (Kang, 2011).

Effective mentoring programs can enhance the productivity, career advancement, and career satisfaction of faculty members (Morrison et al., 2014). Effective mentoring programs are successful if they include properly qualified mentors. Often, people are

chosen to be mentors to fulfill the mentoring position rather than putting emphasis on the quality of mentoring. Heller (2004) suggested that mentors begin the mentoring process by applying for the position. This requires that teachers who want to become mentors have to convince the selection committee to select them for their demonstrated mentoring qualities. Heller also stated that the prospective mentor should be required to submit three letters of recommendation from fellow colleagues supporting their conviction that they meet the requirements to be an effective mentor. Once these mentors are selected, there should be a mentor training program put into place in order to support mentors (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). McDonald and Flint (2011) found that effective mentors should possess excellent curriculum and pedagogical knowledge as well as be reflective practitioners and possess clear communication and personal skills. Effective mentoring programs for novice teachers need to include rewards for improvement opportunities as well as a peer-learning support group to increase skills and teaching strategies (Bang & Luft, 2013; Bell & Traleaven, 2011; McDonald & Flint, 2011). Along with mentoring programs, high-quality leadership and professional learning opportunities also play a pivotal role in acclimating new teachers (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

Inadequate salaries and wages. The inequitable distribution of well-qualified teachers to schools throughout the United States is a longstanding issue (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Research has consistently identified wages and salaries as one of the most prominent factors impacting a teacher's job decision relating to teacher turnover (Russell et al., 2010). There have been federal mandates set into place under the *NCLB Act* to ensure that schools are providing a range of incentives to attract teachers to

schools that are hard to staff or have a high turnover rate (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Feng, 2014). Despite these attempts to provide incentives there are still school districts such as Focus County that have a high teacher turnover rate. Turnover rates within all rural areas, such as Focus County, are at an attrition rate of 20% (Mullen, 2011). Ingersoll (2001) noted that most teachers incur out-of-pocket expenditures for the purchasing of additional classroom tools. Many teachers use their own salaries to purchase needed classroom items and teaching tools which then results in a lower take home pay that does not support the rising cost of living (Mullen, 2011).

Garcia et al. (2009) demonstrated that high teacher turnover rates can be directly connected with salary. The information provided focused on teacher turnover rates for Texas public schools and what factors demonstrated the most influence and correlation with the turnover rate (Garcia et al., 2009). Data collected implied that where salary was lower, the teacher turnover rate was higher. Higher paying schools had the lower turnover rates. There were many implications that suggested that teacher salary was directly linked to teacher turnover rates (Garcia et al., 2009). High teacher turnover rates directly impact student achievement, teacher quality, and school/school district accountability and are a costly factor (Garcia et al., 2009). Money used for hiring new teachers could be considered when determining teacher salaries that would then make an improvement to the high teacher turnover rate in Texas (Garcia et al., 2009).

Dowling's (2008) meta-analysis of retention research suggested that there was enough evidence to determine that teachers' perceptions of low compensation greatly influenced their decision to leave teaching. Boe et al. (2008) confirmed that financial

incentives, such as an increase in pay, must be offered in order to reduce teacher turnover. These incentives could also include fringe benefits and supplemental stipends (Boe et al., 2008). When teachers perceive they are not being compensated fairly, they direct this negativity toward the job and the workload. Teachers cannot meet their basic survival needs with the low income they get from the teaching profession; thus, they continue to look for better paid jobs and even move to other school systems for higher pay (Omidullah, 2015).

Teachers in high poverty schools are much less likely to be satisfied with their salaries or to feel they have the funding for materials needed to do their job (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012). They were also less likely to say they have influence over decisions concerning curriculum because of monetary restrictions (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Thoughts of this nature can affect the amount of self-efficacy the teachers feel about their abilities, which can hinder their desire to continue teaching. A study of these prominent factors provided information about the effectiveness of policies and programs put in place in hopes to deter high turnover rates in the Focus County schools. There are a range of incentives that can be used for recruiting teachers to high-need schools which address the low salary discrepancy. However, these types of incentives have been proven to be unsuccessful in recruiting a steady supply of well-qualified teachers to schools that suffer from high turnover (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Despite these acknowledgements, the problem of turnover still remains in many states (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

Administrative support. Researchers have extensive documentation on how school administrators affect teacher perception and their supportive behaviors influence teacher turnover. Gardner (2010) found in his study that teachers' perceptions of the level of support from their administrators exhibited the strongest influence on job satisfaction. Strong principals positively influence the school culture and the instructional quality of teachers through quality leadership (American Institutes for Research, 2015). The quality of leadership skills often influences teacher's perceptions of their work conditions and the amount of satisfaction they feel while working. For example, when Gardner (2010) examined the schools and staffing survey results from public and private schools, evidence showed that teachers felt as though their administrators had the power to improve teacher's perceptions of their work environment by their supportive or non-supportive actions. Mancuso, Roberts, and White (2010) also shared that supportive actions teachers seek from their administrators are demonstrating respect, willingness to work with them to develop the school's vision and mission, encouragement of collaboration among all staff, and to solve school wide problems with the best intentions. Despite these findings, there are still instances when it has been acknowledged that when administrative support is lacking, teachers leave their school.

Principals are the individuals who are most challenged by the daily realities of teacher turnover (Elliot et al., 2010). The principal or other building administrators are typically responsible for the hiring, evaluation, continuing professional development, and integration of teachers into the life of the school (Elliot et al., 2010). The more teachers that leave, the more teachers need to be hired and trained. The principal is ultimately in

charge of making sure these teachers are provided with the support they need (Mancuso et al., 2010). Building administrators are responsible for fostering growth and successful integration into the building. Continued support, supervision, and professional development are what ultimately result in teacher quality and retention (Elliott et al., 2010). Another important element related to work quality is the perceived confidence and self-efficacy of early career teachers (Elliott et al., 2010). Due to the lack of classroom experiences, these teachers may have less self-efficacy for teaching which leads to the desire to rely on administrative support.

The administration is in a significant position to provide a strong link between self-efficacy beliefs and the skills they are determined by because they have had diverse experiences with the teaching profession (Duncan, 2014; Elliott et al., 2010). Principals and other administrators are in the position where they need to be leaders of the teachers, as well as guide the learning within their schools (Robinson, 2010). The level of support needed from an administrator varies by a case by case basis. However, the leadership within each school must promote an open-door policy, as well as develop a trusting rapport with all staff. Increasing the retention of effective teachers would appear to be an obvious strategy to improve teaching effectiveness due to the research, yet over a third of high-performing teachers report that they received little or no encouragement from their principals to remain at their current school (Adnot et al., 2017).

Teachers expect to be given administrative support and to have a good rapport with their administration. Swars, Meyer, Mays, and Lack, (2009) conducted a qualitative study that suggested that perceptions held by some teachers were based upon feeling of

trust when their administrators openly shared parallel visions for school policies. When administration does not share the same values and views as teachers, the teachers perceived needs are not met and teachers are less satisfied with their jobs. Harper (2010) stated that teachers who left the profession cited reasons such as difficulty in being able to communicate with their administrators and poor administrative practices in overall management. These practices included long meetings with no clear agenda and a disregard for professionalism towards teachers (Harper, 2010). Ultimately, negative perceptions towards the support from administration can lead to unhappy teachers, which then will affect teacher turnover. Russell et al. (2010) found that those teachers, who perceived their director to be less skilled, less dependable, and less consistent, reported that they often thought of leaving their current job.

Administrative support is imperative when considering teachers' perspectives of their work environment. Burkhauser (2017) concluded that school principals can play a key role in improving teachers' perceptions of their school environment, which have been shown to affect their leaving decisions. Principals and other building level administrators should consider several factors when creating methods and programs to support early career teachers (Elliott et al., 2010). Individual teacher self-efficacy is critical when determining the success of a teacher and whether or not they will stay in their current teaching position. Conversely, teachers may also obtain a false sense of self-efficacy through lack of appropriate feedback from administration (Elliott et al., 2010). Thus, the administration and their provided support play a vital role in the growth and retainment of all teachers.

Mandates and accountability. Due to inequitable distribution of teachers because of teacher turnover, reformers have responded by mandating specific qualifications for teachers in all schools (Eckert, 2013). These federal and state mandates can have an impact on the teacher turnover rate (Eckert, 2013). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), better known as the Every Student Succeeds (ESSA) Act 2015, mandated that every teacher be highly qualified to ensure that all teachers were certified in the subject area they were teaching (Gonzalez, Brown, & Slate, 2008). These extra requirements meant for some, taking additional courses, completing state assessments and extra endorsements. All of these requirements demanded extra time and personal funds to complete.

These mandates set forth are not up for discussion or change from the working teachers. While mutual decision making can be encouraged by individual administrations, sometimes actual teacher contributions are never solicited (Brill & McCartney, 2008). Schools with teachers who perceived that they have a lack of input in decision making are more likely to experience high teacher turnover (Boyd et al., 2011). Teachers who perceive little control over policies are likely to leave teaching (Brown & Wynn, 2009). According to Brill and McCartney (2008), lack of input on student-centered policies has been reported as a primary reason for why teachers decide to leave the classroom.

State mandated testing is a requirement among elementary and secondary schools across the country due to the stipulations provided by the ESSA (2015). In many states, the test results are used as a primary measure of student achievement (Sass et al., 2012).

The student achievement rates are directly correlated with teacher performance. Teachers are feeling pressure from these mandates as they strive to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP). There is much evidence that testing mandates and accountability are directly linked to dissatisfaction among teachers and can influence their decision to leave teaching (Lopez, 2010). Due to the increasing standards, accountability, and measureable results, the emotional aspects of teaching are hardly considered in both research and practice (Wilkins, 2014). Teachers are feeling overloaded with mandates and demands in order to deliver proficient test scores according to federal and state mandates (Lopez, 2010). Teachers have noted that frustrations increase as they spend more time coaching students on test taking skills and teaching curriculum that is based on high-stakes testing, rather than the content they feel is more relevant to their area (Sass et al., 2012). Some critics argue that the attention given to test scores causes teachers to lose confidence and creativity relating to their teaching methodology and practices (Green & Munoz, 2016).

Federal mandates have led to alternative certification that might not be superior to the traditional certification implemented before the NCLB was put into place. High attrition rates can lead to schools creating alternative routes for teacher certification (Gitomer, 2007). There has been some controversy as to the benefits of the traditional teacher certification program as opposed to alternative teacher certification programs. The alternative certification program allows teacher candidates who have obtained a four-year degree outside the field of education to start teaching under a provisional certification. During the three years of provisional certification, teachers then complete the alternative certification program developed by that district. These measures were

taken to recruit quality teacher candidates into the classroom in place of completing the traditional coursework and preparation requirements (Helfeldt, Capraro, Capraro, Foster, & Carter, 2009). Despite federal mandates under the NCLB Act and the use of incentives to attract qualified teachers, the problem of high teacher turnover remains in many states (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

Stress and burnout. Burnout is one of the most important dimensions of an employees' well-being (Lu & Gursoy, 2016). According to the National Education Association (2008), government mandates have shown a lack of respect for the duties that teachers execute on a daily basis. This negative factor significantly impacts the amount of satisfaction perceived at a job, which could lead to burnout and additional stress. Maslach (1982), a leader in research regarding job burnout, defined professional burnout as a syndrome of bodily and mental exhaustion, which causes the worker to have negative associations to work. It has been noted that burnout is more likely to occur in teaching due to isolation and alienation that occurs in the teaching profession (Schaefer et al., 2012). Nazareno (2017) reported that many schools have a difficult time addressing the issue of the isolation of their teachers within classrooms. This isolation included teachers being left behind a closed door for an extended amount of time, daunting or excessive duties, limited opportunities for professional growth, and little or no voice about school matters (Berry, Smylie, & Fuller, 2008). All of these factors contribute to augmented sense of stress and burnout.

When a highly qualified teacher leaves a school system, it can take eleven new hires to find one teacher of comparable quality to the teacher who has left (The New

Teacher Plan, 2012). Yet schools tend to treat their best teachers as if they are expendable (TNTP, 2012). Teachers' job satisfaction and burnout have been directly associated with teacher turnover (Dagli, 2012). Teachers who have experienced stress and burnout have a higher likelihood of actually leaving the profession (Brunsting, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014). Dagli (2012) conducted a study using a job satisfaction and burnout scale which demonstrated that teacher burnout is a common factor for why teachers leave the profession. The stress factor of job related duties and demands is a continuous issue for teachers and some find that the only solution is to leave the profession.

Burnout is typical among novice teachers within their first few years of teaching (Anhorn, 2008). Teachers are described as experiencing burnout when the stress they encounter overcomes their abilities to cope adequately, leading them to feel exhausted, cynical, or unaccomplished in their work (Brunsting et al, 2014). There is a common misunderstanding that novice teachers are already prepared for taking on all aspects of the classroom; however, with a lack of experience and sometimes proper training, teachers feel overwhelmed and unprepared to complete all aspects of the job being asked of them (Anhorn, 2008). This mindset contributes to teachers being stressed out and being afraid to admit to needing assistance because of the fear of being considered less qualified (Anhorn, 2008). For many beginning teachers, the feeling of being secluded in a classroom with limited support from other cohorts is overwhelming and leads to additional stress (Fall, 2010). Therefore, it is not surprising that many teachers leave the profession during their first few years of teaching (Dagli, 2012). Dissatisfied teachers are

linked to high attrition rates. About 30% of teachers blamed the lack of support and stress level as justification for leaving the profession (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Riggs, 2013). Therefore, stress and burnout can be considered a substantial factor contributing to the high rates of teacher turnover.

Student behavior. Student behavioral challenges are another major factor of stress for teachers. Prior research has demonstrated that student misbehavior can contribute to teacher attrition (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). Torres (2016) also stated that there was a strong connection between teacher turnover and student behavior across all types of schools and that the explanations for this relationship vary based on the school, the individual, and the cultural or organizational context. Gonzalez, Brown, and Slate (2008) found that student discipline was an influential factor for leaving the profession. Students go to school with so many different problems that it can be very overwhelming for the teacher to handle. The study also showed that classroom management was a weak area for many new teachers and handling situations in the classroom can be trial and error (Gonzales et al., 2008). It has also been found that many times the classroom discipline issues were consistently blamed on the teacher despite many efforts to reduce the amount of classroom disruptions (Gonzales et al., 2008; Rice, 2014).

Data revealed that student behavior and discipline weighed heavily on teachers' decision to leave their teaching career (Greiner & Smith, 2009; Ingersoll, 2001; Stockard & Lehman, 2004). Teachers are likely to leave schools where safety becomes a concern (Losen & Gillepsie, 2012). The issue of school safety is a growing concern and unsafe work places attribute to concerns about teacher's personal safety. Ingersoll (2001)

similarly concluded that when schools have few student discipline problems, teacher commitment to their schools improves.

According to Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera (2010), students that attend schools with a higher percentage of minority and low income populations are more likely to be subject to repeated offenses in school. Gregory et al. (2010) have also suggested that schools with a higher discipline issue were more likely to experience high turnover rates, within the populations with low socioeconomics. Similarly, Green, Machin, Murphy, and Yu (2008) emphasized that student discipline problems are less likely to happen in private schools. Private schools tend to have more socioeconomically advantaged students as opposed to most public schools (Green et al., 2008). Green et al. (2008) also reported that teachers in public schools perceive that student discipline problems greatly influence their reasons for leaving the profession. Hanushek and Rivki (2007) suggested that students at lower-performing, lower-income, higher minority schools are more likely to have inconsistent staffing from year to year. Teacher turnover continues to be a worriment to the educational system as a whole.

Personal factors. While there has been much insight as to the contextual factors contributing to teacher turnover, there are also personal factors to consider. Teachers often are forced to leave their teaching profession due to personal reasons. These reasons may not be foreseen by the teacher or the school administrators and can lead to a panic to fill the position (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Ingersoll (2001) stated that as many as 40% of teachers reported that the reason for leaving the teaching profession was because of family or personal reasons. These family reasons can vary from death in the family,

illness, relocation, and birth of a child (Ingersoll, 2001). Borman and Dowling (2017) noted that teacher attrition could be caused by a number of personal factors and can change sporadically during a lifespan.

It has been reported that a personal factor that also contributed to teachers leaving was the cost of medical insurance (Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2007; Phillips, 2015). The insurance premiums were too costly and teachers did not take home enough pay to be able to manage their finances. Another large factor was the amount of time teaching took away from spending quality time with family (Kersaint et al., 2007). While teachers have longer vacations than some other careers, this does not make up for the time taken from family during the school year. Quality family time is given up by teachers on a daily basis due to additional job expectations such as attending PTA nights or having parent conferences (Sass et al., 2012). In addition, teachers who moved to obtain a teaching position that was farther away from their hometown were more likely to leave (Heineke, Mazza, & Tichnor-Wagner, 2014).

Conclusion

Many contextual and personal factors have been demonstrated to be relevant in relation to teacher turnover. Having an effective teacher can dramatically alter students' educational and economic outcomes (Adnot et al., 2017). Yet, many effective teachers are leaving Focus County schools. Myriad authors have attempted to identify the strongest contributing circumstance for high teacher turnover rates. To build upon the knowledge, it was time to take a serious look at teacher turnover and the reasons behind this phenomenon, rather than to continue to concentrate on the teacher shortage problem

and the effects of that problem (Brown & Slate, 2008; Heineke, Mazza, & Tichnor-Wagner, 2014).

Implications

This project study was designed to identify the common impeding factors and beliefs for why teachers decide to leave Focus County schools. The data collected from this study can be transmitted to Focus County schools to show the reasons why teachers leave the county. This will allow the County to provide efforts needed in order to reduce the teacher turnover phenomenon. The findings provided stakeholders the opportunity to identify these weaknesses in Focus County and assist them to critically consider why Focus County has a higher teacher turnover rate than comparative school systems.

The results of this study provided useful information for different types of programs that can be put into place in order to strengthen administrators' knowledge of contributing factors of turnover and how they can play a major role in decreasing the turnover rate. Additionally, this study provided enough insight to allow for there to be adjustments in district policies and programs currently utilized. After closely analyzing the data, a policy paper (Appendix A) was created to include recommendations for the prevention of future high teacher turnover. These recommendations stem from the areas of weaknesses identified from the collected data.

Summary

The inequitable distribution of well-qualified teachers throughout the United States is a longstanding issue (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Despite many attempts to maintain well-qualified teachers with federal mandates and a range of

incentives, teacher turnover rates remain a problem (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012). The National Center for Education Statistics (2017) showed that during the year 2011-2012, of the 3,377,900 public school teachers who were teaching, 16% of those teachers left their current position. This means that in one school year, 540,464 teachers had to be replaced. If this trend continues as it has in the past, the nation will soon be in dire need of educators to teach the increasing number of students in public schools (Gonzalez et al., 2008; Rice, 2014).

Research conducted by The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2010) solidified the literature on teacher turnover and demonstrated that all schools are affected negatively. This was also true in more current literature that teacher turnover affected the schools and participants of the school community in a negative way (Ronfeldt, Loeb & Wychoff, 2013; Mulera, Ndala, & Nyirongo, 2017). This negative outcome needs to be specified in order to address effective ways to help improve teacher turnover rates. The rationale for the local problem varied based on the different variables that directly affect why teachers leave their current teaching position. Teacher turnover has a high financial cost to many school districts. This money could have been better spent on retaining highly qualified teachers and focusing specific resources needed to reduce turnover trends in each system. These resources could include mentor programs, job enrichment workshops, and administrative training and induction support programs.

Section 2 provides details on the use of interviews in order to determine key factors as to why teachers leave Focus County schools. This qualitative study demonstrated evidence supported thus far by literature concerning the influences and

variables for teacher turnover. The turnover factors worth examining are: low salary (Garcia, Slate, & Delgado, 2009); lack of leadership and supportive communication (Kang, 2011); personal/family situations (Kang, 2012); lack of support/mentorship (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012); mandates and accountability (Gonzalez, Brown, & Slate, 2008); induction programs (Elliott, Isaacs & Chugani, 2010); stress and burnout (Schaefer et al., 2012), and student behavior (Losen & Gillepsie, 2012). The information collected by the interviews were coded and analyzed to determine common factors directly linked to teacher turnover in Focus County schools.

Section 3 provides a policy paper (see Appendix A) based on the outcome of the data collection. The project was based upon the findings from the research. A scholarly review of policy papers, along with an explanation of how the genre chosen is included to address the research problem and project study criteria. This section also includes possible social change implications for Focus County schools.

Section four demonstrates reflections and conclusions. Project strengths and limitations were addressed in the problem of teacher turnover in Focus County schools. It is here too, that recommendations for alternative approaches were documented. This section also includes a description of what was learned during the process of the data collection and presents reflective analysis about personal learning and growth of self as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. Included are recommendations for practice and for future research as seen as appropriate.

Section 2: The Methodology

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

Focus County schools have recognized that teacher turnover is a major concern for the school system (assistant superintendent, personal communication, March 18, 2015). The local problem has already been identified by many stakeholders and correlates with many studies located in current peer reviewed literature. The reason for this study was to identify common factors that have contributed to the high teacher attrition that continues to plague Focus County schools. The purpose of this study was aligned with the following guiding research questions:

1. What are the contributing factors leading to teacher attrition within the rural Focus County schools?
2. How would teachers of Focus County public schools describe their decision to leave the school district?
3. What were the consistent factors among participants for why they decided to leave Focus County schools?

Qualitative research is an umbrella term to refer to many different strategies that share similar characteristics. The data collected for qualitative research provide rich description of places, people, and conversations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In this study, data acquired from qualitative research provided insight to the teacher turnover phenomenon and provided deeper insight into the high teacher turnover rate in Focus County schools. However, there are some limitations to qualitative research traditions. Rigor is more difficult to maintain, assess, and demonstrate (Anderson, 2010). Since

qualitative research is observational and conversational, it is more difficult to show qualitative findings (Halkier, 2017). Qualitative findings can be gathered through interviews and are observational, which present anecdotal data rather than direct numerical data. This leads to the limitation that the volume of data makes analysis and interpretation time consuming (Anderson, 2010). Qualitative results through interviewing reflected more experiences and feelings towards the specific population of teachers who have left Focus County schools. Qualitative interviews often allow for large amounts of descriptive detail and individual stories directly from each participant's perspective (Creswell, 2012). Interviews were the proper tool for this study because teaching is deeply situated in a narrative conception of teacher knowledge and experiences (see Downey, Schaefer, & Clandinin, 2014).

The narrative inquiry approach best fit the purpose of this study. The main reason why narrative inquiry was selected was to acquire the teachers' stories and experiences regarding teachers who have left Focus County schools. The sequential process of narrative inquiry employs a logic-scientific reasoning process, which relies on replicable steps, including observation of phenomena, empirical data collection, and analysis with a report of findings (Clandinin, Cave, & Berendonk, 2016). This sequential process was used in the study to gain insight on personal experiences teachers had during their teaching careers. Chase (2005) argued that narrative inquiries offer a way for people to understand their own actions as well as the actions of others, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole picture, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time.

Narrative inquiry methods are used to express emotions and convey beliefs as provided by the specific population being interviewed (Fraser, 2004). The capacity to recognize people's strengths and engage people in meaningful dialogue helped me explore the social phenomenon of teacher attrition (see Fraser, 2004). Narrative researchers treat narratives as socially situated interactive performances for a particular audience and for particular purposes (Chase, 2005). The interviews in this study allowed for socially situated interviews that focused on the particular issue of teacher turnover in a specific locality. Through this approach, teachers have been given a voice regarding their previous experience in Focus County schools in an effort to learn what contributing factors played a role in their decision to leave. Through these understandings, it may be possible to advance the field of education by providing insight into ways to reduce teacher attrition rates locally and regionally.

A quantitative approach was not appropriate for this study because the primary purpose for this study was to explore teacher perceptions regarding the contributing factors leading to their attrition. Numerical data from a quantitative approach would not have provided the in-depth knowledge that can be gained from one-on-one interviews needed in order to understand this turnover phenomenon (see Creswell, 2012). A case study was not appropriate since the teachers had left, and they do not all belong to a specific group or organization. The participants from the study are individuals who have relevant information about reasons for why they left Focus County. Also, while the study was based on Bandura's social cognitive theory, the entire study does not test that scientific theory. Case studies also do not answer questions completely, whereas this

study required the answers to the research questions based on teacher turnover. Further, phenomenology was not an appropriate research method choice as it focuses on people's conscious experiences of their life-world (Merriam, 2009). These studies are often relating to intense human experiences such as love, anger, betrayal, and other emotions (Merriam, 2009). Phenomenology explores the essence of lived experience, how people make meaning, through iterative interviews from the research participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2012).

Participants

I reached out to twelve teachers who met the interview criteria; however, only nine teachers agreed to be participants in the study. Interviews were conducted until saturation occurred or until no new information was obtained. The snowball sampling was able to end at nine participants since there were reoccurring themes created and no new information was being obtained. The code saturation was reached at the nine interviews, whereby the thematic issues were identified (see Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2016). The criteria for selecting participants ensured that the individuals were not currently employed with Focus County schools. In order to obtain congruency among the data timeline, participants were selected based on leaving Focus County schools within the last 5 years. Contact information was obtained by the Teacher's Association. Initial contact was made by a password protected Facebook account through a private message in which only participant and I had access.

The qualitative study guidelines for nonprobability purposeful sampling were followed. The data collected in purposeful sampling is focused on a smaller population

and is not used to generalize to a larger population (Merriam, 2009). The information from this study could not be generalized to the population since generalization is not a goal of qualitative research (see Merriam, 2009). Patton (2002) argued that the reason and power of purposeful sampling is needed for information rich cases for an in-depth study.

Snowball sampling was used to expand the search for participants who met the requirements as closely as possible. This strategy involves locating a few key participants who meet the criterion-based list of attributes and those participants can be asked to refer other participants (Merriam, 2009). This method was used to obtain information from a few selected participants about contacts for other teachers who have left Focus County schools. These participants did meet the criteria in order to participate in the study and provided expanded information on the teacher turnover phenomenon in Focus County schools.

The first step in selecting participants through purposeful sampling was to list the criteria needed in order to qualify a person to participate in the study. Participants who have retired would not be included in the sampling due to the outside influence of career length. Since retirees are not included in the teacher turnover data, they were not included in the participant pool for this study. In criterion-based selection, a list of attributes is essential to the study in order to match participants to the list (Merriam, 2009). This list guides the selection process and will help determine if a person is qualified and able to participate in the study (Merriam, 2009). The inclusion criteria were participants who were full time, state certified teachers in the Focus County school

district and were no longer working for the district. The participants were not to be retired and needed to be considered highly-qualified, meaning that at that time they held a valid teaching license and were able to be employed as a teacher with the license they currently possessed. All participants had obtained a teaching job in another location after leaving Focus County schools that then verified that they currently held a teaching license. There were attempts to interview teachers from many different schools and grade levels within the county. To ensure data were correlated with current research trends, there was a limit set for participants to have left Focus County within the last 5 years.

The purposeful sampling was guided by personal communications with a local teachers' association at Focus County schools in order to obtain names of teachers who have left Focus County schools. Through those teachers, a snowball, chain, or network sampling procedure (see Merriam, 2009) was used to identify potential research participants. The procedures used to gain access to the participants included the use of social media. Teachers who met the inclusion criteria listed above were contacted via Facebook online through a password protected Facebook page. The introduction was communicated through private messaging so that the correspondences would be private and not on a public Facebook wall. A private message was sent to 12 teachers provided by the teachers' association in the county. This Facebook account was locked with a protective password at all times. The only people to have permission to view these communications were the researcher and participant (Facebook, 2015).

Researcher-Participant Working Relationship

Through private messaging, I developed an initial researcher-participant working relationship. It was then decided what type of communication would occur during the interview process, whether it would be through phone, in person, or chat. I was flexible and used the interview processes that were most convenient to the participant. All future communication needed was conducted in the same way. Allowing convenience to the participant increased the chance of a successful researcher-participant relationship.

Measures for Participant Protection

It is important to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants in the study (Creswell, 2012). An informed consent form in an attachment through Facebook and/or e-mail was sent to the individuals who had expressed interest in participating in the study. This informed consent did not require any special site or organization permissions due to the need to contact individuals who have withdrawn from the school system already. It also ensured that the interviews would cause minimal risk to all participants (Merriam, 2009).

Once the informed consent was read, signed, and agreed upon the interview process was started (Creswell, 2012). Electronic signatures were accepted. The informed consent included the subject of the project study and information about participation being voluntary and that the participants would have a right to withdraw at any time. The purpose and procedures were clearly communicated as well as the right to ask questions. The amount of time needed to complete the interview was communicated to the participant, as well as a description on how the data or results were used (Creswell,

2012). Information was also provided to the participant about how the data collected will provide benefits to the institution to make improvements (see Creswell, 2012).

Protection from harm was achieved by using a letter and number code in data collection and all public communications. All original documentation was saved in folders on a personal computer that is password protected. No one will be given access to these documents except the researcher and individual participants that pertain to that document.

Data Collection

Before any data collection took place, approval from Walden University's IRB was obtained, which included the approval number of 1723312. The data were collected solely from one-on-one interviews. Data included responses to specific prompts relating to teacher turnover. These prompts were aligned and developed from the research literature in the topic area in order to find common factors relating to teacher turnover. Collecting data using interviews was appropriate for narrative inquiry due to the nature of making sense of experiences from teachers who have previously taught in Focus County schools with first person accounts of those experiences (Merriam, 2009).

The interview protocol (see Appendix B) consisted of many components such as providing preliminary information, an introduction to the study, and then the actual questions. Once the informed consent was obtained, participants were involved in a semistructured interview that was guided by a set of open-ended questions to ask the participants and possible scripted neutral probes (Lodico, Spalding, & Voetgle, 2010). Probes are follow-up interview questions that are asked when more clarification is needed (Lodico et al., 2010). These open-ended questions provided the interviewee with a basis

for sharing the narrative or stories. The open-ended questions were based on the factors identified in previous research for why teachers have left their teaching position and allowed the responses to be focused, yet narrative. The purpose of the study was explained to the participant along with a reminder that the individual's identity will be kept confidential throughout the study and that the participant has a right to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions.

The interview protocol was structured in alignment with Creswell's (2012) interview guidelines. Turner (2010) presented interview protocol development, which was a resource utilized in creating the interview questions. A standardized open-ended interview was the best approach since these interviews asked identical questions, but were worded so that the answers are open-ended (Turner, 2010). The standardized open-ended interview was strategically structured; however, it allowed for open-endedness so that the participants could contribute as much detailed information as they would prefer which would allow for a narrative conception of teacher knowledge and experiences. Using an open-ended interview allowed participants to fully express their viewpoints and experiences (Creswell, 2012). These interview questions were created in alignment with the study's research questions, which focused on the factors for why teachers have left their teaching profession in Focus County schools. Through the use of an open-ended interview, the research questions were able to be answered providing many details and descriptions about the experiences the participant had in Focus County schools.

Access to participants was provided by the community Education Association. The Education Association provided names of teachers who have left the county. Using

those names, it was determined if they have a Facebook account and a private message was sent to them asking if they would like to participate. They were then asked for a working e-mail address so that the informed consent could be sent and signed with an electronic signature. Through interviews with these teachers, a snowball sampling was able to occur where other colleagues of the participants could be suggested. Additional participants were notified using the same process. These interviews were conducted by video media such as skype or Facebook private messenger. All 9 participants had left the area and were more apt to accept an interview if it was convenient to them, which is the reason for video media. These interviews were video recorded, with the participants' permission, due to the choice of communication by the participant. A phone interview was also an option if that was convenient to the participant as well. If a phone interview were to take place it would be audio recorded and transcribed. However, none of the participants chose a phone interview.

The reflective thinking process is one of the basic skills used to be successful in cases of complicated or unpredictable circumstances (Akkoyunlu, Telli, Cetin, & Daghan, 2016). Due to the unpredictable circumstances of the interviews, a reflective journal was utilized where I wrote my ideas, connections, and thoughts I had during each interview. I wrote some differences and comparisons of factors that I witnessed throughout the interview process that could possibly enhance the findings of my study. I also made note of specific times when the participant's tone of voice changed and certain expressions that occurred on their faces that a recording would not necessarily show.

Out of the nine interviews, five of them were over the phone, two of them were through Facebook messenger, and two of them were through skype. All of the participants were responsive to the questions being answered but there were two participants that were hesitant to expand on some initial responses due to being worried about negative outcomes from the administrative board in Focus County schools. Therefore, I felt as though I could have been provided with more insight to more specific details about situations if the participants felt more comfortable with sharing. At the conclusion of the interview, a summary of the interview was sent to each participant. All participants agreed with the summary and did not want to change any accounts given during the interviews. One participant did again ensure confidentiality of his statements due to the rank of his position previously in Focus County schools but felt comfortable after my assurance and explanation of participant protection put into place during all aspects of my study.

A hierarchical system was used in order to track and organize data. Items were electronically organized in folders and subfolders. This file organization allowed for similar items to be stored together. These data files were saved under a locked password under my documents on my computer. By saving these files under my documents, I was able to search by key words or categories.

Role of the Researcher

My past roles include being a second and third grade teacher at one of the elementary schools in the Focus County school district. During this time, I did not participate in any leadership roles or administrative tasks, such as being a Principal of a

school or a member of the school board. Currently I am a reading specialist at a Middle School in Focus County, which is a coaching position, not an evaluative position. The roles of the researcher did not affect the collection of data. If anything, the roles of the researcher allowed for the researcher to better align interview questions to the research questions due to working in the same region. Also, the community is familiar to the researcher which can lead to a better understanding of the interview responses and allowed for the close evaluation of the descriptive data provided by the interview process.

Data Analysis

The data collected during this study followed the analysis method of narrative coding (Patterson, 2008; Saldana, 2013). Chase (2005) emphasized that narratives go beyond just a chronological expression of experiences. He further stated that narratives also include expressed emotions, thoughts, and interpretations. Hence, narrative provides the ability to capture and describe the participants' holistic account of their grappling with leaving the school district as well as all that went into the decision to leave.

The specific data analysis used in this study was the 6-part Labovian model (Patterson, 2008; Saldana, 2013). The six-element structure is

- Abstract
- Orientation
- Complicating Action
- Evaluation
- Result
- Coda

Classifying the text in one of these elements provided the opportunity to offer a plausible, holistic account for the participants' decisions to ultimately leave the school district. Sutherland, Breen, and Lewis (2013) stated that attention is not only given to the participants' words being used in the interview, but to how people have made sense of their decisions including the larger, socio-cultural dynamics and how such events in the community and the workplace linked with and informed their decisions.

To create these narratives, I transcribed the interviews. After transcribing the interviews, I conducted member checking to ensure the validity of the transcription and to allow the participants the opportunity to change or add anything. Once the member checks occurred, the data were coded by color for each of the six parts of the Labovian model. After the transcriptions were color coded, each piece of data was organized into a table form matrix to combine the findings of each interview using the six parts of the Labovian model. These findings were organized in the matrix and common themes were identified.

The interviews were either audio or video recorded and then I transcribed the data after the interview process. All aspects of the video were noted in my reflection journal but only responses to the interview were transcribed. Once the transcribing of the interviews was completed, they were saved in a secure password protected computer file. The transcribed data provided from the interviews were documented and collected using both an electronic and hard copy cataloging. Hard copy files were needed in order to code the data into themes (Turner, 2010). Themes are consistent phrases or ideas that were common among research participants (Creswell, 2012). These themes were then

identified through color coding. The hard copies that were needed were locked in a file cabinet with access provided only to the researcher. All files were assigned a code and number for the purpose of confidentiality.

The data analysis process began with reading the first interview transcript including all responses, emotions, and notes taken during the interview. The process of making notations next to data that were relevant to the research question was also a part of coding (Merriam, 2009). Notes written in the margins were read and analyzed with the reading of the first transcript and all following. In moving to the next set of data, it was all read in the same way as the first transcript and it was checked for those same common groupings or factors as previously noted (Merriam, 2009). Coding was conducted manually (without the use of computer software) since it was a small scale study and manageable to the researcher (Merriam, 2009).

The 6-part Labovian model was conducted by use of color highlighters. Through an iterative process, the narrative responses were explored and built into each part of the Labovian model, providing a more holistic and deeper understanding of the teachers' decisions to leave the county school district (Saldana, 2013). By using the narratives format to present findings, I was able to access layers of information that provided a more in-depth understanding of the experiences that led up to the teacher's decision to leave Focus County Schools. Analyzed transcripts were saved in separate digital folders on a password protected personal computer based on thematic categories from the interview transcripts. My previous experiences, current experiences, and data collection experiences did not provide any bias during this study.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

To ensure that internal validity or credibility was obtained, member checks were used with all participants. Member checking can also be called respondent validation and it solicits feedback on the research findings from the research participants to confirm they have been accurately represented (Merriam, 2009). Each interview transcript and summaries were provided to the participant to ensure that each interview was transcribed effectively before any data were coded. These transcripts were sent as an electronic attachment with a letter that stated to make contact with the researcher if any revisions needed to be made or if any discrepancies had been identified. The e-mail also requested that the participants respond to the summary of the interview and determine if information needed to be added, removed, or revised. However, all nine participants responded that all transcripts and summaries were accurate and no changes needed to be made.

Further, during the interviews and data analysis procedures, I maintained a reflective journal. The reflective journal provided a more personal account of the interview (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The emphasis of the reflective journals was on speculation, feelings, problems, and ideas in order to clarify misunderstandings or mistakes during the interview process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant cases are those instances where new findings are beyond what the current discoveries illustrate (Erickson, 1986; Merriam, 2009). Hence, discrepant cases provide the opportunity to gain a deeper and broader understanding of the phenomenon

through increasing a more holistic picture (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Further, raw data do not simply exist as each research participant's experiences, behaviors, beliefs, and values inform the data (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that negative case analysis was a, "...process of revising hypothesis with hindsight" (p. 309). This means that the data collected through such means as interviews, observations, interactions, etc, are subject to the paradigms of those participants as well as of the researcher's (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I maintained procedures to manage discrepant cases that would contradict or disconfirm the hypothesis. No discrepant cases were found.

Data Analysis Results

The purpose for this narrative inquiry study was to explore the relevant factors that affected the teacher turnover in Focus County Schools. I explored the exits of nine teachers who have previously been highly qualified teachers in Focus County Schools. These teachers have voluntarily left the county within the last five years and done so at their own free will and were not asked to leave. Teaching requires various job skills and performance-based objectives that are constantly monitored and critiqued. While individual teachers struggle with various facets of the profession, I performed one-on-one semistructured interviews to better understand the complexity of their job and what factors contributed to the final decision to leave Focus County schools.

Each element of the Labovian model was analyzed to find common themes. These themes emerged by identifying common factors for why the participants had left Focus County schools. The themes that were identified related to the research question,

what are the contributing factors leading to teacher attrition within the rural Focus County schools? The common themes and/or factors that emerged were as follows: (a) need for administrative support, (b) mentoring, (c) teacher preparation, (d) salary.

The interviews furnished in-depth narrative stories that provided insight to the reasons for leaving. I had the unique opportunity to gain insight on the scope of the participant's educational journey before, during, and after teaching at Focus County school system. Section 4 will include applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendation of further research, reflections, and study conclusions.

Presentation of Findings

The data collection used semistructured interviews to gain in-depth understanding of the reasons for why the participants left Focus County. These interviews included guiding questions for the participants; however, they were open-ended for the ability to have the participants give narrative stories relating to the experiences they had at Focus County schools. These experiences then gave valuable insight as to which factors contributed to their decision to leave the County.

I conducted the interviews in a location of the participant's choice. The length of the interviews varied according to the different experiences of every individual and the length of their stories. Most of the interviews took approximately one hour and some exceeded an hour, based on the willingness to share narrative stories from each participant. After each interview was conducted, I immediately transcribed the interview and sent the transcription to the participant via e-mail asking each participant to member

check the transcription for validity and accuracy. I also sent a summary at the conclusion of the interview. Once all the interviews were transcribed, I then manually coded the data using the 6-part Labovian model (Patterson, 2008; Saldana, 2013).

I was able to organize my coding through highlighting color on the digital transcription. Once all interviews were color coded, I then cut and pasted the 6 different parts of the Labovian model into a matrix. This matrix was organized by participant, however the participants were identified as P1, P2, P3, etc. to protect identities. The transcriptions created a narrative for each participant that guided the process of finding recoccurring themes.

The sample of this study consisted of three males and six females. Eight of the participants were classroom teachers and one participant was a school board administrator. The grade levels represented, ranged from 1st grade to high school level. The participants taught at various schools in the Focus County School District and represented situations that took place at four different schools. All participants interviewed left Focus County schools 2-3 years before the interviews for this study took place. Through these interviews, common themes emerged for reasons why teachers left Focus County schools: desire for administrative support, mentoring, teacher preparation, and salary.

Participant Narratives

The interview of Participant 1 provided valuable insight with her experience as a teacher in Focus County Schools. The mother of Participant 1 is a teacher and that had a huge impact on her decision to become a teacher. She went to her mentor often for

support and reached out to administration as well. However, she did not receive the quality support she was hoping for from administration. Her mentor did help her as much as they possibly could. Her schedule was changed all the time due to state testing and she often felt as though she was unappreciated and replaceable.

Participant 2 had a positive experience in high school during an early childhood education class teaching preschool in an elementary school in the community. From that experience she was hooked on teaching and dedicated her career studies to the education field. She expressed feelings of constant changes in policies and educational programs under the directive of the central administration staff. She feels as though second and third year teachers slip through the crack and are forgotten after the initial new teacher orientation. The main reason for leaving was the feeling of being undervalued and not being trusted to make educated decisions for her students. Due to all the changes being made she felt like she was always recreating new tools and lessons which caused a lot of stress and time constraints.

Both parents of Participant 3 were teachers and influenced her decision to become a teacher. Despite going to a teacher focused college, she was not prepared for the realities of her first teaching job in Focus County schools and felt lost in the implementation of the state standards. She felt as though her teaching was focused on the state testing and she had no choice in being creative with activities to meet her students' needs. The number one reason for why she left Focus County schools was salary. She is now being paid \$15,000 more a year working 20 miles away from Focus County. She shared that the demand for high test scores was stressful and unreasonable. She

constantly spent her afterschool unpaid hours completing data paperwork. If these situations were different she would have loved to stay teaching in Focus County schools until retirement.

The third grade teacher of Participant 4 was her favorite teacher and she wanted to be just like her teacher when she grew up. Heading into her first year of teaching she felt as though she was not prepared to manage all aspects of a classroom. When she had questions she turned to a teacher in her grade level for advice. She felt as though she could not go to her assigned mentor because she did not think that her mentor wanted to take the time to mentor her. Her mentor never visited her classroom or asked her how she was doing. During her 4 years of teaching in Focus County schools she had three different principals. It was hard to start a new relationship with each one and learn their individual expectations. Her main reason for leaving was pay and she felt as though the additional stresses in Focus County schools were not worth the salary she was receiving.

Participant 5 had made many advancements in his career in Focus County schools. He has had the opportunity to present to aspiring teachers many times but always had to adhere to the outline given to him by his supervisor. He observed that the expectations of the new teacher mentors in Focus County schools were not clear and no accountability checks were put into place. He was involved with collecting and analyzing the information given from exit interviews of teachers who have left and the number one reason witnessed for teachers leaving is low teacher salary, with moving for family next. He moved to be closer to his family and to move away from the politics and

stress of Focus County schools. He is now back teaching in the classroom and enjoys teaching being his only focus.

Participant 6 has always dreamed of being a teacher since she was a child. She remembers her first year of teaching as being energized and excited to meet her new students. She often became frustrated with all the new initiatives that would be implemented during each year. When comparing her new school to Focus County schools she feels as though school community is missing from Focus County schools, along with effective leaders, competitive salary, parent support, and workshops modeled for literacy.

Participant 7 did not have a teaching license or any experience. However, he describes his defining moment when he put on a suit and tie and went to the school board office and asked for five minutes of time with the human resource director. He was hired through this exchange and felt unprepared due to no previous training or education. In his experience, lack of administrative support is the main reason for why teachers leave and low teacher salary. If he was given an increase in salary, he would have stayed in Focus County schools.

Working with students during college is what prompted participant 8 to become a teacher. However, her first year of teaching was very difficult and she felt as though she did not have support from her mentor or her building administration. She relied on the reading coach to help her most of the time. She feels like the lack of support wears teachers down and makes them feel as though they are not appreciated. She mentioned the 2-week long new teacher academy Focus County schools provides for new teachers

and how it could have been better utilized by giving teachers training in instructional strategies and expectations. If she would have been given more support and an increase in salary she most likely would have stayed teaching in Focus County schools.

Participant 9 realized he wanted to become a teacher when he was in high school helping tutor middle school students. He learned that helping others gave him much satisfaction and purpose. He had a great support system his first year of teaching with Focus County schools from his grade level team. However, he did not feel as though administration was supportive his first year. During his second year of teaching he was informed by his principal that his contract would not be renewed even though the proper support and procedures were not put into place beforehand. The principal was removed from the school and he was given a renewed contract but did not accept it. He wanted to leave and go to somewhere that had more positive outlooks, higher pay, and better benefits.

Theme 1: Desire for Administrative Support

Thibodeaux, Labat, Lee, and Labat (2015) found evidence that administrative leadership styles and behaviors have an impact on teachers' intent to remain in the teaching profession. The findings indicated that principal leadership plays a critical role in the retention of teachers (Thibodeaux et al., 2015). The findings also suggested that administrators should be aware of how their leadership style and behaviors impact the teachers that they lead (Thibodeaux et al., 2015). The qualitative data collected from nine participants shows that nine out of nine participants feel as though lack of administrative support contributed to the complications of their teaching career in Focus County

Schools. Participant 1 felt as though she were treated as if she were not valued by district level administration on many occasions and stated, “I wish I had more help and support from administration outside the school. I felt like I was treated replaceable and unappreciated.” There were also mutual feelings demonstrated from participant 5 who did not feel as though building level principals are “equipped with strategies to help teachers to engage students that then causes a discord in the scaffolding process.” While participant 5 shared this information, I noted in my reflection journal that he seemed very passionate about the need to support building level principals from the district administration level. This is also the point in the interview where I noted that he seemed a little nervous about giving too much information by the movement of his body and eyes.

Participant 6 revealed, “Principals who are better communicators, are more effective problem solvers, and are more consistent with student behaviors have a higher ability to build a positive rapport with their staff and create a collaborative team.” However, Participant 6 felt as though the positive rapport was not established at her school and micromanaged teachers rather than creating a positive learning environment for all students. All other participants also shared within their narratives that administrative support was not evident or not as efficient as they thought it should be. Participant 6, who used to be in a supervisor position at the district level, also shared that he/she believed that more professional development for the administrators would be important, as well as the district level administrators checking in more with the principals to make sure that all principals are provided with feedback to improve their practices just

as teachers do. Principals are often given evaluations but they are mainly from one primary data source or are reviewed at the end of the school year when the relevance is not as strong (Assistant Superintendent, personal communication, September 29, 2016).

There was a situation where Participant 2 had actual meetings with the superintendent of Focus County Schools and was assured that the concerns would be addressed and taken care of. That participant did not see any results from these meetings and decided that they no longer wanted to work under the supervision of the district administrators. Whereas, the participant did have a good working relationship with the building principal. It was shared that the principal had all the qualities of an effective leader but was not properly supported at the district level and things started to “fall through the cracks.”

Participant 6 listed lack of administrative support as the significant factor for why teachers leave Focus County. It was evident that Participant 6 thought new teachers especially, do not receive the quality of administrative support that they need in the emergent years of teaching. The last year of teaching, Participant 4 did not talk to the principal at all the whole year and felt as though the principal did not anyone to bother her. The participants also shared that they personally would have benefited from additional administrative support in the area of classroom management. They did not feel as though classroom management was as important to the administrators as curriculum design was. If any support was given it was in the alignment of the curriculum to the state standards.

There was a lack of consistency in the schools because initiatives were not supported by a strong and confident leader. This led to frustration in teachers at all experienced levels. A study conducted by Mohamadi, Asadzadeh, Ahadi, and Jomehri (2011) indicated that mastery experience, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion are effective factors that strengthen and increase teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Thus, if teachers are frustrated and do not have these positive experiences their self-efficacy will decline. When people do not feel supported in their profession their desire to stay in the profession is weakened.

It was clearly identified that lack of administrative support was the main reason for teacher turnover in Focus County schools by Participant 7. He felt as though school administration had such an extensive workload provided by the district level, that they do not have a lot of opportunity to support teachers. The narrative story provided by Participant 7 suggested that the lack of support from administrators wears teachers down and causes them to leave the county. Participant 8 also offered the reason for why teachers leave the county as being primarily from lack of administrative support. Participant 8 stated that during the first few years of teaching she "had very little relationship with administrators and when [she] did get to talk to administration, the principal did not have any professional advice to give". When specifically asking about a classroom management issue, the principal responded that with little experience dealing with six year olds it was not easy to support the teacher. Participant 3 felt as though the administrators dictated too much and they "felt like they had no choice in flexibility on

activities.” The participant was forced to teach to a test where everything was multiple choice and he was thoroughly disappointed he was not creating true learners.

The experiences shared from the participants shows that there were many instances where teachers felt as though they needed more support from building administration and school board office administration. Some participants even viewed the desire for administrative support as one of the main reasons why teachers decide to leave. Though each situation is unique, all participants displayed a desire for more administrative support.

Theme 2: Need for Formal Mentoring Program

Research shows that participation in mentoring programs not only provides an increase in job satisfaction, but is a necessity to combat the inexperience that exists within the teacher workforce (Callahan, 2016). Despite the precedence for a strong teacher mentoring system in the teacher workforce, the teachers of Focus County did not feel as though the mentoring system was a strong tool that teachers were able to utilize to deter frustration. Out of 9 participants, 7 of them listed the mentoring program as part of the complicating action that affected their decision to leave.

Participant 4 narrated that “I did not receive any support from my mentor my first year. I don’t think she wanted to be my mentor and she showed that.” She added that she never one went into her classroom to ask how she was doing. Participant 3 shared the feeling that new teachers were not provided a strong mentoring program in Focus County schools based on personal experiences and experiences shared by other new teachers.

A high percentage of teachers who leave the profession have felt under-prepared, overwhelmed, and under-supported, which then produces the frustration that inevitably leads to premature burn out (Callahan, 2016). Effective mentoring programs can reduce these factors, thus having a better chance of teacher retention as a result (Kang, 2011). Participants 4, 5, 8, and 9 demonstrated frustrations with the mentoring program that was in place at their teaching assignment. When applied to teaching, teacher efficacy is the teacher's assessment of their own capability to organize and execute teaching and learning processes (Zakeri, Rahmany, & Labone, 2016). When following the guidelines provided by Bandura, teachers' beliefs will vary about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events based on their experiences (1977; 1997). If teachers do not feel as though they have had positive experiences in Focus County Schools and have not been provided with mentoring practices they will demonstrate low self-efficacy and not perform as they would if they had had positive experiences. An example of this is shared when Participant 4 felt as though little support was received from the assigned mentor especially during the first year of teaching and that the mentor "never once came into my room and asked me how I was doing." The teacher that was assigned to be the participant's mentor did not want to be one and made that very clear from the beginning.

Participant 8 also felt a lack of support from their assigned mentor teacher and was left to figure things out on their own. She also concluded that mentors may not take the role seriously enough because there is not any monetary compensation for mentoring new teachers. There were also minimal expectations at the building level as to what

criteria each mentor was to follow. It was shared by Participant 9 that “administration should be aware of who they are assigning as mentors and make sure they are choosing people who want to be a mentor and who are strong in the area that they teach.” Callahan (2016) believes that teacher-mentoring programs must provide clear and concise goals for mentors to impart basic information and solicit feedback from the new teachers. The aspect of providing clear and concise goals to mentors has not been evident in any narrative stories during the interviews.

Participant 7 also felt as though the mentoring program in the county was weak and suggested that mentors be able to observe teachers during the instructional process in order to be able to provide feedback. This component is actually part of the mentoring program adopted by Focus County schools however, it is rarely utilized for a variety of reasons (New Teacher Coordinator, personal communication, June 2, 2014). The data implies that the mentoring system is weak at the building level and also at the implementation stage of the district level.

Theme 3: Need for a Focused Teacher Preparation Program

Teacher preparation programs are an important aspect of preparing new teachers for the workplace. The more prepared the educator is, the better chance of a successful outcome. Despite the significance of strong teacher preparation programs, many teachers who were interviewed do not feel as though the teacher preparation program they attended during undergraduate college provided adequate support for their first years of teaching. Adequate support is important considering there are significant gains to experience during the first few years of a teacher’s career (Goldhaber, Cowan, Hayes, &

Theobald, 2016). Participant 5 also demonstrated the same frustrations with teacher preparation programs and stated that, “I was not prepared for the reality of the practical application of pedagogy.” Participants also wanted more field work and varied experiences with observing lessons, teaching lessons, and having lessons modeled for them.

Six out of nine participants stated that weak teacher preparation programs were a complicating action for them during their years of teaching at Focus County Schools. Participant 3 shared that the teacher preparation program they were involved with “did not prepare (them) at all for what being a real teacher was.” Participant 3 also felt as though they were not taught about the rigor of state standards and the importance placed on standardized testing. Many of the new teachers that were hired at the same time discussed during the evaluations of the new teacher academy, that much of the academy focused on theoretical frameworks of education as previously learned in college. It was suggested by Participant 3 that the new teacher academy be more directly focused on needs at the local level such as the level of poverty in Focus County schools or instructional alignment with the state standards. Participant 4 “felt like they were not prepared on how to manage a class and that student teaching does not really show you what goes into working in a school.”

Participant 6 wished that they had more help with classroom management and training in that area. Likewise, Participant 7 felt completely unprepared since they had no previous educational training or education in teaching. Participant 7 was hired without a teaching degree and worked on it during their first years as an educator. Participant 2 felt

like there were so many changes with adopted programs that new teachers were never able to master the teaching of the programs and the quality of the training diminished as a new program was adopted. Good quality teachers, with up-to-date knowledge and skills, are the foundation of any system of formal education (Evagorou, Dillon, Viiri, & Albe, 2015).

Actual teaching experience for pre-service teachers can play a pivotal role in whether or not a teacher will be successful in their career (Hobson, Harris, Buckner-Manley, & Smith, 2012). Obtaining teachers who have been through preparation programs is an influential aspect considering the substantial teacher turnover rates in the past five years. The participants interviewed expressed the need for advanced teacher preparation programs and have communicated that they could be better prepared for their initial years of teaching. Therefore, Focus County schools could possibly benefit from providing additional training in the weak preparation areas of lesson planning and instruction alignment as identified by some participants during the interviews.

Theme 4: Need for Competitive Salary

Evidence has been shown that higher salaries are associated with higher teacher retention rates (Feng, 2014). However, the participants have shared in interviews that they made below the average salary amount in the state and nationwide. Along with salary being a complicating action, 7 out of 9 participants feel as though an increase in salary would be a sufficient resolution to the high teacher turnover rate in Focus County Schools. Participant 3 explained that “the number one cause of leaving is money. I am paid \$15,000 more (yearly) only 20 miles away from the school I taught at.” If

Participant 3 were to earn a salary from Focus County schools, she would be eligible for reduced lunch due to the low pay scale. Participant 4 also shared the same monetary figures because she too left Focus County schools to work in a district 20 miles away. They also heard many other teachers talk about the disproportionate ratio of how much the school board administrators are paid in comparison to the teacher salary scale. The superintendent of Focus County schools earns a pay raise each year however, teachers were frozen at a salary scale without any step raised for six years.

Participant 6 asserted that teachers are given a negative connotation to the relationship of salary to appreciation because “teachers are not given step raises each year like most other counties in the region provides.” The pay scale has remained stagnant for over five years and teachers who have provided five years’ worth of experience make the same amount of pay as a new first year teacher (Teacher, personal communication, November 17, 2016). Due to a low pay scale with few raises, Participant 2 felt undervalued and wanted to feel appreciated and respected for the amount of education that goes into obtaining a teaching degree. It was also suggested by Participant 3 that teachers should be provided with reimbursement for additional courses in order to advance their knowledge and further career goals. Many teachers have shared with Participant 3 that they cannot pay their undergraduate student loans on the salary provided by Focus County Schools and most definitely could not afford additional education courses.

All participants interviewed provided valuable insight to the salary factor in Focus County schools. Nine out of nine participants related the salary of Focus County schools

as one of the reasons for why teachers leave. Some participants shared insight provided through dialogue with other colleagues and their personal conclusions. A few even shared that the salary was the ultimate factor for why they personally left the county. While many participants think that salary is the ultimate factor that caused teachers to leave, a few participants also rank salary high but think that salary is not necessarily the ultimate factor. Participant 8 listed “salary as the second biggest factor for leaving” following desire for administrative support as the first factor (2016). My reflective journal notes also noted that when Participant 8 discussed her salary in Focus County schools her voice level raised and she became more physically stiffened. Her physical reactions showed her ill feelings towards the pay in Focus County schools.

Summary

The evidence provided shows that there may be a strong correlation between teacher turnover and the factors of a desire for administrative support, a need for a formal mentoring program, a need for a focused teacher preparation program, and a competitive salary. The research questions that were aligned to this study inquires about why teachers decided to leave Focus County schools. The third research question then examines which factors were consistent throughout the data.

Research Question #1

The first research question was as follows: What are the contributing factors leading to teacher attrition within the rural Focus County schools? This research question was answered during the interviews of all nine participants. Each participant provided insight as to what factors caused them to leave and that they could possibly have been the

same for others. These contributing factors emerged as the themes found during data collection and analysis which are: administrative support, mentoring, teacher preparation, and salary.

The feeling of needing more administrative support was stressed during narratives with all participants. Participant 9 stated that, “At (Focus) County schools I always felt on edge when school board office administration would visit the building. They seemed to focus on negatives and not praise what was working.” Participant 4 “did not talk with the principal at all because (they) didn’t feel as though she wanted anyone to come to her.” From an administrative standpoint, Participant 5 shared that “I will say that I don’t think our principals are equipped with strategies to help teachers to engage students which cause a discord.”

Mentoring is an important aspect of obtaining and growing highly qualified teachers (Mullen, 2011). An effective mentoring system could support teachers with the many quandaries that beginning teachers face. When discussing the mentoring system in place at Focus County schools, seven of the nine participants listed the mentoring program as part of the complicating action when narrating why they chose to leave. Participant 4 told that “I did not receive any support from my mentor my first year.” Participant 4 followed up by explaining that “I don’t think she wanted to be a mentor and she showed that. She never once came to my room and asked me how I was doing.” Since this was occurring it could also be a possibility that there was a lack of accountability for mentors to be sure they were doing the job that was assigned. Participant 5 showed frustration with this by sharing “from what I observed, the

expectations weren't very high of what the mentors were supposed to do. I often wondered where the accountability was for them, but I stayed in my lane."

The contributing factor of teacher preparation was also a reoccurring theme during the interviews. Seven participants identified a lack of teacher preparation as one of the contributing factors for why they think teachers leave or why they have left. Participant 9 narrated that the end of their teaching career with Focus County "was really devastating because I felt like I was making strides toward being the effective teacher I envisioned when graduating college." Although some participants felt as though they were prepared they were not adequately prepared for the realism of the many facets involved with teaching such as the paper work, state mandates, and testing. Participant 3 felt as though the teacher preparation program provided in college was helpful but not the preparation given at the building level. Participant 3 shared that "my teacher preparation program did not prepare me at all for what being a real teacher was. We were not taught about standards and the stress on testing." With the idea that teacher preparation programs may not be as efficient as needed it would benefit Focus County to identify these weaknesses and provide directed professional development, supporting administration teams, and a strong mentoring program.

While the themed contributing factors were concurrent throughout the interviews, there were also a few that were discussed briefly on an individual basis such as: family situations and career advancement. Participant 5 addressed the need to move closer to his children and be near immediate family members. He also shared that he now has a plan of starting a doctorate degree now that there was less responsibility in a different

educational role. Participant 5 was in a supervisory role in Focus County schools and decided to obtain a job as a classroom teacher. He will receive monetary support from his new workplace whereas Focus County will only reimburse two courses every five years.

Research Question #2

The second research question was: How would teachers of Focus County schools describe their decision to leave the school district? All 9 participants gave an account for why they decided to leave Focus County Schools. These accounts answered the research question regarding how teachers of Focus County school would describe their decision to leave the school district. These decisions were identified in the complication action section of the 6-part Labovian model used to organize the data that then brought to surface the emerging themes. The most common factor was desire for administrative support, followed by the need for competitive salary.

Participant 8 related teacher turnover in Focus County to salary. “When teachers can leave and go to a neighboring county and make a significant amount more and have better benefits, they are going to leave.” Participant 8 also stated that “appreciation for the work that they did might have influenced them to stay, but the difference is salary, benefits, and reimbursement for college courses were my biggest reasons for leaving.” Participant 9 also stated that in order for them to come back to work for Focus County “there would have to be a significant increase in salary and benefits, as well as a willingness to pay more towards furthering education.”

Participant 3 shared that the only exposure of administrative support he received were non-negotiable directives that left him feeling like there is no choice in how to teach the content and no flexibility on activities. Without being able to have a stake in his own instruction Participant 3 had great difficulty experiencing self-efficacy in his teaching profession. He reflected that “I had dreams of teaching my kids fun, hands on lessons but my first years I was forced to learn how to teach to a test. Everything was multiple choice and I was thoroughly disappointed I wasn’t creating true learners.” This dictation came from the administrative level in the building and was monitored very closely. Instead of feeling supported, Participant 3 felt like the teachers were being managed with no choice within the classroom. Another viewpoint on administrative support was provided by Participant 7 and shared that “administration has such an extensive workload and in turn does not provide a lot of opportunity to support teachers.” Participant 7 felt like the administrative team would have been able to provide support if they were not having so many directives from the school board administration.

Research Question #3

In regard to the research question three: What were the consistent factors among participants for why they decided to leave Focus County Schools, 9 participants identified the lack of administrative support as one of the ultimate factors for why teachers leave Focus County schools and all 9 participants also identified the need for a competitive salary as a significant factor as well. All nine participants narrated that the need for more administrative support was one prime factor for why teachers leave Focus County schools. Participant 1 believes that administration in Focus County has a bad

reputation and just cares about themselves and will allow for other teachers to look ineffective in order to make themselves look better. This is what prompted Participant 1 to apply out of the county and obtain a job within the same state but in a different county. Participant 5 also provided insight to the research question relating to the consistent factor that caused teachers to leave. Participant 5 said that “the biggest reason people leave is money” (2016). This statement from Participant 5 was based on information provided by exit interviews they had conducted as a school board administrator of teachers who have decided to leave Focus County schools.

In addition to the need for stronger administrative support, teachers also identified the need for a competitive salary as a prime factor for why teachers leave. Participant 7 agrees and shared that “pay and benefits have the most impact in this new education world of eliminating teacher tenure. Unfortunately, most teachers are starting to feel the risk is not worth the monetary reward” (2016). The viewpoint shared by Participant 7 reinforces Bandura’s Social Cognitive theory, by thinking that if teachers do not feel that their actions will produce positive results, then they tend to discontinue their efforts (Bandura, 1999). Participant 6 also agreed with the description of Participant 5 and acknowledged that salary is a considerable factor for why teachers have left especially since teachers can go to the next county over and earn a significant amount of money more than in Focus County. Participant 9 provided further evidence that “the deciding factor for me leaving was pay” (2016).

Summary

In conclusion, the data collected followed a valid and credible protocol which was used to organize the findings for this study. The findings will increase knowledge about factors that prompt teachers to leave and areas that could be improved to retain teachers. These firsthand data are imperative to provide insight on the local teacher turnover problem in Focus County schools. The findings were then used to create the policy paper (see Appendix A) addressing teacher turnover in Focus County schools.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

In order to attempt to create social change in Focus County school systems, a recommendation paper will be presented to the school board to present major findings from the literature on teacher turnover and the findings of my research. The 4 main themes that emerged from the findings were desire for administrative support, improved mentoring programs, teacher preparation programs, and competitive salary. Teacher interviews led to my findings of these four themes as main factors for why they left Focus County schools. The main factors identified can then answer the guiding research question: What were the consistent factors among participants for why they decided to leave Focus County schools?

The mission of Focus County schools is to provide a safe, engaging, student-centered environment where all learners are challenged, encouraged, and supported to maximize growth and be prepared for further education, citizenship, and work (District Website, 2017). Since the mission is focused on student achievement, the policy recommendation paper will focus on student achievement as being the desired result. The teacher turnover percentage could be reduced by evaluating the programs identified in the interviews as needing improvement. Some programs identified in the interviews were the teacher preparation program and the mentor program. The policy recommendation paper will include suggestions for how to strengthen the impact of the Focus County school's mission statement.

A policy recommendation paper is often referred to as a policy paper or a white paper. The goal of a policy recommendation paper is to identify a problem and design or redesign a plausible solution and/or proposal (Li, 2013). Proposals should be targeted toward the mission of the school being discussed (Lyons & Luginsland, 2014). Therefore, the proposals written in the recommendation paper for this study were a result of the analysis of data collected through interviews with the participants and will be aligned toward the mission of Focus County schools. In the policy recommendation paper, I will supply the findings of the study and provide recommendations on how to mitigate teacher turnover in Focus County schools. The main goals identified in the policy recommendation will be to implement effective teacher preparation programs for beginning teachers, produce effective mentoring programs, and make stakeholders aware of the teacher salary deficit.

Rationale

A policy recommendation paper was chosen based on the results of the data collection and analysis of the data collected from interviews of previously employed teachers of Focus County schools. The themes that surfaced from the data collection were that teachers left the county because of inadequacy in the county teacher preparation program, the current mentoring program, administrative support, and teacher salaries. A policy recommendation paper is a tool used by the public community in the policy-making process (Young & Quinn, 2002). The policy recommendation paper usually contains the following elements: (a) title, (b) table of contents, (c) abstract or executive summary, (d) introduction, (e) problem description, (f) policy options, (g) conclusion and

recommendations, and (h) executive summary (Young & Quinn, 2002). The policy paper that I created includes all elements listed above.

A policy recommendation paper is a reaction to a real world need or problem. The recommendations need to be goal-oriented, provide a course of action, a justification for the action, and a decision made (Young & Quinn, 2002). Due to the research results, a policy recommendation paper is the most significant project genre to follow this study. Teacher turnover is a clear issue in Focus County schools, and a policy paper can shed light on the specific themes that emerged from the collection of research data and the analysis of that data. Recommendations could then be made in the policy paper based on current literature and research findings. In order to make significant changes to the current structures of Focus County schools, a policy paper needs to be used to address concerns and some recommendations for change.

Review of the Literature

I conducted this literature review using the Walden Library and Google Scholar. Databases used included Education Research Complete, ERIC, and Academic Research Complete. Search terms used to reach saturation included varying combinations of the following search terms: *position paper*, *white paper*, *writing policy papers*, *policy paper in education*, *teacher turnover*, *induction programs*, *mentor programs*, *teacher salary*, and *teacher pay*.

I divided this review of the literature into two sections. The first literature review section was based on the chosen project genre of a policy recommendation paper. Peer-reviewed research literature on the topic of policy recommendations papers is limited.

Most articles address the distribution of the policy paper rather than the creation of one. Policy papers can be very difficult to locate because of the various sources in which they can be found, and most of the annotated bibliographies on public policy are older and date to the late 1970s and 1980s (Johnson, 2013).

The second part of the literature review addresses the content of my project, which is a focus on identified factors for why teachers decided to leave. Therefore, the factors addressed in the recommendation policy paper are a desire for administrative support, weak mentoring programs, weak teacher preparation, and low teacher salary. These factors were prominent in my data collection and are the focus during my recommendation policy paper.

Project Genre

Higher education agencies and other educational systems are commonly the intended audience for policy papers. These papers blend academic and professional skills (Powell, 2012). A mix of academic and professional skills makes a recommendation policy paper an ideal project for my audience, which would be the stakeholders within the neighborhoods of Focus County schools. This would allow me to focus on the academic and research basis for the recommendations to the problem, while presenting the information in a professional way that will be easily readable by my intended audience. When searching for policy paper research, a lot of policy paper examples are available that have been peer reviewed in a variety of topics.

A policy paper is defined as a formal written argument in favor of or opposing a particular set of policies or systems (Johnson, 2013). A mix of academic and

professional skills makes a policy paper an ideal project for my audience because it demonstrates the current literature findings that they may not be aware of. The policy paper includes recommendations to the stakeholders while presenting the information in a professional way that will be easily read and understood by many stakeholders, such as the members of the school board office and the school board administration. Lyons and Luginsland (2014) described a policy paper (white paper) as a synopsis of a research proposal inclusive of the research question to be examined and how the research will help address a need within the targeted agency. The elements included in the paper are (a) introduction, (b) historical contextualization of the specific organization one wishes to reform, (c) the problem or issue that one aims to rectify, (d) recommendations for rectifying the problem in question, (e) justifications for the recommendations and potential obstacles, and (f) conclusion (Li, 2013).

The information provided in a policy paper needs to concisely summarize the objectives of the proposed research while simultaneously providing sufficient detail of the overall strategy and approach of the research (Lyons & Luginsland, 2014). Policy papers are well-reasoned, visually appealing documents that resemble research papers but are actually strategically crafted to gain support for an idea (Powell, 2012). They usually consist of a brief background on the local problem, a brief description of the researcher's data collection and analysis, and the estimate of funding needed if applicable (Lyons & Luginsland, 2014).

A policy paper (white paper) is a quick way to communicate the relevant background for a proposal, the recommendations, and the estimated cost of implementing

the proposed recommendations (Lyons & Lunginsland, 2014). Young and Quinn (2002) recommended that the writer of the policy paper should become a member of the public policy community whom the writer is addressing. Membership in the public policy community is important when understanding its conventions and is the key to writing a policy paper (Young & Quinn, 2002). I will be able to have a sense of membership in the public as a resident of Focus County for 10 years.

A policy paper focuses primarily on a single problem and is research-based, resulting in a clear solution. White/policy papers should contain meaningful content that teaches the reader something new (Bly, 2010). The overall structure should include identification of the problem, background or history of the problem, a solid case for the solution, and a call to action (Powell, 2012). Chunking of the content with headings, subheadings, and/or chapters should be used to aid in readability (Powell, 2012). The visual appearance of the white paper is important. Powell (2012) suggested that writers use carefully thoughtout imagery, color, and white space to represent the content. There should also be a visually appealing cover page with the author, title, date, and graphical elements (Powell, 2012).

All of these elements of policy papers extracted from the research were taken into consideration with the creation of the recommendation policy paper targeted towards the Focus County school system. Some policy improvement suggestions as well as practical implications of the recent analysis can be extracted from the findings of my research (see Bjorn, Aro, Koponen, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2016). These implications are presented in a clear and logical manner to gain attention from the stakeholders.

Current Teacher Turnover Research

During the analysis of the data collected in this study four themes emerged as common impacts on teacher turnover. The common themes and/or factors that emerged were as follows: (a) lack of administrative support, (b) mentoring, (c) teacher preparation, (d) salary. The literature review information was collected purposefully to find the most current information available about each of these factors in regards to teacher turnover rates. All articles were peer reviewed and written within the last 5 years. The information will guide the recommendations of the policy paper. Research was conducted in order to provide additional material on the 4 themes that were identified as a result of the data collection that The common themes that were: (a) lack of administrative support, (b) mentoring, (c) teacher preparation, (d) salary.

Need for Administrative Support

In current research it has been identified that teachers' perceptions of their school working conditions influence their decision to leave. Principals may be in the best position to influence school working conditions (Burkhauser, 2017). The National Policy Board for Educational Administration identifies ten standards that define effective educational leadership. The standards include: developing and supporting school curriculum, hiring, supporting and retaining effective teachers, demonstrating a shared commitment to the mission and vision of the school, maintaining a safe and healthy school environment, promoting professional development of teachers, empowering and entrusting teachers to perform, and effectively managing staff resources (2015). Current expectations of principals include shaping school vision, leading instruction, cultivating

teacher leadership, managing people and processes, and ensuring a positive environment (Burkhauser, 2017).

Districts struggling with high teacher turnover might think about assessing teachers' perceptions of their working environments. If school environment ratings are low, districts should rely on the principal as an important aspect in improving the conditions at the school (Burkhauser, 2017). District resources could be used to establish a professional development plan for principals in schools with low school environment ratings and high teacher turnover rates. The professional development sessions may include teaching principals how to communicate effectively with teachers, or helping them to improve their adult leadership skills. It would also be beneficial for districts to recruit principals with a proven track record of improvements in teacher working conditions when hiring at schools that struggle to contain their teacher turnover rate (Burkhauser, 2017).

Teacher Induction Programs

Becoming a teacher is a continuous life-long process that includes critical stages. These critical stages include pre-service preparation, entry into the school system, and involvement in professional development throughout the teacher's entire career (Alhija & Fresko, 2016). When new workers are recruited to an organization, they usually go through a period of induction which helps them to effectively and efficiently cope with the demands of the new job (Baker-Gardner, 2015).

Teacher induction can be defined as a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by the school district to train, support,

and retain new teachers (Franklin & Molina, 2012). Teacher induction programs can provide valuable resources for these critical stages. A researcher has found that more than half the states require new teachers to participate in some form of induction program (Williams & Gillham, 2016).

The process of beginning teacher induction has gained widespread attention in the literature as a means to help teachers in the early years to avoid stress, burnout, heavy workloads, and lack of support (Kearney, 2015). A significant amount of research focuses on novice teachers due to the phenomenon that many beginning teachers feel depressed and discouraged and they choose to abandon the profession, with the most talented beginning teachers among those most likely to leave (Kutsyuruba, Godden, & Tregunna, 2014). There is evidence to suggest that teacher induction programs can curtail teacher attrition by up to 20% (Kearney, 2015). Based on this evidence, induction programs have been implemented to provide the support necessary for new teachers to develop competence (Baker-Gardner, 2015). Without a well-planned induction program, the newly qualified teacher can actually decline in competence, picking up qualities that are not conducive to teacher and student learning (Baker-Gardner, 2015).

Researchers have claimed that effective induction programs are capable of reducing teacher turnover (Franklin & Molina, 2012; Kutsyuruba et al., 2014). Other research has supported teacher induction programs showing data that teachers with five years of practice could become disillusioned, fall into a tiresome routine, and decide to leave the profession unless they get professional support (Eisenschmidt, Oder, & Reiska,

2013). Follow-up studies reveal that about 85% of teacher participants continue to teach in the year following their induction experience (Franklin & Molina, 2012).

Through the development and implementation of an induction program, new teachers in elementary and secondary schools have been able to become established in their new positions (Chan, 2014). Induction is upheld by stage theory which proposes that a teacher's career passes through numerous distinct stages (Baker-Gardner, 2015). Many local level induction programs are developed to orient teachers to the procedures of the school and to continue the process throughout the different stages (Franklin & Molina, 2012).

The development of many induction programs is based on the idea of investment in continuous support and originated from the conceptual framework of Deming's total quality management (TQM; Chan, 2014). Deming's TQM refers to the promotion of educational innovation and highly supports the training and continuous professional development of employees (Chan, 2014). The TQM consists of fourteen points which are (a) create constancy of purpose, (b) adopt the new philosophy, (c) case inspection, require evidence, (d) improve the quality of supplies, (e) continuously improve production, (f) train and educate all employees, (g) supervisors must help people, (h) drive out fear, (i) eliminate boundaries, (j) eliminate the use of slogans, (k) eliminate numerical standards, (l) let people be proud of their work, (m) encourage self-improvement, and (n) commit to ever-improving quality (Chan, 2014). All of these fourteen points are based around the philosophy that all employees need to achieve continuous improvement throughout their career.

While the importance of induction programs has been validated, there are some multiple variations as to what exactly makes an induction program successful. Variations of programs can include different duration, program components, funding sources, operation, target population, intensity, and comprehensiveness (Abu-Alhiha et al., 2016). Some even believe that induction programs lack a theoretical or conceptual foundation that fosters those early years of teachers' careers (Kearney, 2015). Kearney also believes that many organizations recognize the importance of induction programs but they often create induction programs without an understanding of what comprehensive effective induction entails (2015). The lack of understanding around induction at the school level results in arbitrary programs that do not have the desired effects and outcomes (Kearney, 2015). The New Teacher Center at the University of California identifies six elements of what it describes as a comprehensive or high quality induction program (Baker-Gardner, 2015). The elements are

- A multi-year program, spanning at least the first two years of teaching
- Sanctioned time for the mentor and new teacher interaction
- Rigorous mentor selection criteria
- Initial training and ongoing professional development and support for mentors
- Pairing of new teachers and mentors in similar subject areas and grade levels
- Documentation and evidence of new teacher growth

These elements are core foundations for a teacher induction program and need to be heavily considered and consistently implemented in order to obtain a high quality induction program. Furthermore, a study conducted in low socioeconomic schools concluded that inconsistently implementing a program had more negative effects on teachers than having no program at all (LoCascio, Smeaton, & Waters, 2016). This information is concerning especially since schools that are located in low socioeconomic areas have the highest turnover rate at closer to 50% (LoCascio et al., 2016). While a certain level of attrition within the teaching profession is necessary and healthy, early career loss of teachers is neither desirable nor sustainable as it costs school systems a lot of money and is detrimental to student learning (Kutsyuruba et al., 2014).

A necessary step toward decreasing teacher turnover is to provide induction programs tailored to meet the specific needs of individual teachers in their assigned school setting (Franklin & Molina, 2012). The time period between student teaching and becoming an instructional leader in the classroom is a pivotal transition (Franklin & Molina, 2012). Some of the most significant challenges faced by new teachers include the unfamiliar structure of schools, isolation, reality shock, inadequate resources and support, unclear expectations, intergenerational gaps, dealing with stress, lack of orientation to the school system, and instructional practices and policies that promote aggressive competition (Allen, 2014; Kutsyuruba et al., 2014). Therefore, it is plausible to conclude that effective induction programs can alleviate some of these challenges. Despite this empirical evidence, one study reported that less than 40% of new teachers participated in teacher induction programs (Franklin & Molina, 2012).

The average teacher spends only 2.7 hours a week in structured collaboration with other teachers and needs to rely on the teacher induction process for additional support (Allen, 2014). Induction programs have been found to enhance teacher effectiveness, provide higher satisfaction, increase commitment, improve classroom instruction and student achievement, and promote early career retention of novice teachers (Kutsyruba et al., 2014). Schools with integrated professional cultures where veteran teachers and novices worked together were key to beginning teachers' development and retention (Allen, 2014). In a study conducted by Alhija and Fresko, teachers reported positive perceptions of the impact of induction on their initial teaching experiences (2016). The teachers shared that they had received both professional and emotional support, had developed important professional relationships, developed teaching skills and knowledge such as integrating curriculum, performed action research, created a positive learning environment, developed professional attitudes, and developed leadership skills (Alhija & Fresko, 2016). Teachers who are successfully inducted into the school and the profession are more apt to become full members of the professional learning community that quality teachers belong to and are committed to (Kearney, 2015).

There is empirical support in research that providing effective induction programs to new and beginning teachers correlates to increased teacher effectiveness, higher satisfaction, commitment, and early career retention, as well as improved classroom instruction and student achievement (Kutsyruba et al., 2014). Teacher induction is beneficial since it provides an opportunity for new teachers to receive professional and emotional support. Induction programs can also affect the development of lifelong

relationships, foster the development of knowledge and skills, facilitate the development of leadership skills, and develop a positive attitude toward lifelong learning (Baker-Gardner, 2015). The literature is clear that induction programs for beginning teachers are an essential component to the continuation of teacher learning. Teacher induction has been proven in recent decades to help alleviate problems that beginning teachers face in the early years of their career and to be successful at arresting growing attrition among beginning teachers (Kearney, 2015).

Mentor Programs

Mentoring is the personal guidance provided to beginning teachers from seasoned veterans. A mentor serves as a guide, supporter, friend, advocate, and role model (Bradley-Levine & Mosier, 2016). Quality experiences that involve effective mentoring by capable professionals are critical to the development of highly skilled teachers (Bradley-Levine & Lee, 2016; Childre & Van Rie, 2015). Teachers who receive high quality mentoring to support application and evaluation of practice, improve their quality of instruction (Childre & Van Rie, 2015). Mentoring fosters teacher retention and provides a gateway for novice teachers to gain socialization into school contexts (Bower-Phipps, Klecka, & Sature, 2016). Mentoring is a cost effective form of professional development that can engage mentors in education reform which can promote growth for both mentors and mentees (Ginkel, Verloop, & Denessen, 2016; Hudson, 2013;).

In a review of over 170 empirical studies related to teacher mentoring, it has been determined that mentoring has many promising benefits for mentees, mentors, schools, and educational systems (Bower-Phipps, Klecka, & Sature, 2016). A few noted benefits

mentoring can have on novice teachers included job satisfaction, becoming agents of change that foster norms of collaboration, and increased professional efficacy (Bower-Phipps, Klecka, & Sature, 2016; Ginkel, Verloop, & Denessen, 2016). The mentor teachers themselves have reported experiencing positive impacts from the mentoring program as well. A few of these benefits are improved practice as a result of mentoring novices and being more involved in the educational community (Bower-Phipps, Klecka, & Sature, 2016). Mentoring can directly affect a school because there has been evidence that shows an increase in student achievement when teachers have been mentored or participated in a mentoring program (Bower-Phipps, Klecka, & Sature, 2016).

Implementing an effective mentoring program is imperative to all educational systems (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). It is estimated that 1.7 to 2.7 million new teachers will be needed in the United States within the next 20 years (Simos, 2013). Due to this high need of trained teachers, well supported new teacher induction programs which include mentoring are essential. Effective mentoring programs have proven their efficacy by developing the quality of new teachers and fast tracking the progress in exemplary teachers with the ability to positively impact student achievement (Simos, 2013). Researchers in Chicago public schools have found that first and second year teachers who participated in a mentoring program reported having a positive experience during their first year of teaching with the intention to stay in the same profession, at the same school (Bradley-Levine & Mosier, 2016). Therefore, mentoring programs are highly beneficial if they are implemented in an effective manner.

While 80% of new teachers have mentors, the effectiveness of mentoring to improve teaching varies widely. This is mainly due to how mentoring is conceived and implemented in various educational systems (Gardiner, 2017). Due to the central role mentor teachers play in the early years, it is important to learn how effective mentoring practices are articulated and shared among experienced teachers (Bower-Phipps, Klecka, & Sature, 2016). The construct of effective mentoring should conceptualize mentoring as individualized professional learning aimed at instructional improvement (Israel, Kamman, McCray, & Sindelar, 2014). Educative mentoring situates mentoring as part of a continuum of ongoing teacher professional development and is executed to improve the new teacher and student learning (Gardiner, 2017).

The role of a mentor is complicated because mentoring involves personal interactions which are conducted in different circumstances and in different schools (Bradley-Levine & Mosier, 2016). Since mentoring is so intricate, many mentoring programs focus on specific domains in order to ensure efficiency. Some mentoring programs are built upon Danielson's teaching framework: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities (Bradley-Levine & Mosier, 2016). It is important that mentors participate in training sessions before working with beginning teachers so that they can know how to use Danielson's framework to provide reliable feedback and learn ways to set goals with mentees based on data driven conversations (Bradley-Levine & Mosier, 2016). Listening and building a relationship is the first step to create positive mentor/mentee experiences and learning how to operate in the classroom is the second step (Bradley-Levine & Mosier, 2016).

New teachers benefit from having a safe space where they can collaborate with colleagues who have experienced similar situations and can help problem solve (Bradley-Levine & Mosier, 2016).

There have been six identified areas in which mentors can most effectively have a positive impact on their mentees (Nesheim, Moran, & Pendleton, 2014). The major components in which mentors can help mentees are: (a) pre-planning, (b) sharing of resources, (c) constructive feedback, (d) multi-modal feedback including written feedback, (e) modeling of effective practices, and (f) practices demonstrating trust and confidence (Bower-Phipps, Klecka, & Sature, 2016; Childre & Van Rie, 2015; Nesheim, Moran, & Pendleton, 2014). In order to ensure that all of these components are understood and addressed, mentor teachers should be carefully selected (Hudson, 2013; Nesheim, Moran, & Pendleton, 2014).

Some school systems have recognized the importance of an effective mentoring program and have created instructional coach positions. These coaches are hired under full release which means they were released from their teaching responsibilities in order to work exclusively with new teachers (Gardiner, 2017). Coaches should receive professional development prior to working with teachers and should be able to apply these learned practices while working with teachers. Coaches should be proficient in collecting observational data, facilitating reflective conversations, and negotiating challenging conversations to help teachers collect and analyze a variety of data in order to guide instruction (Gardiner, 2017). The central work of coaches is to help all teachers identify goals to improve their practice and to apply a range of coaching practices to

scaffold professional learning (Gardiner, 2017). Providing instructional coaches to teachers negates many hindrances that may occur during usual mentoring such as a lack of time. However, some school systems have not realized the importance of providing instructional coaches to new teachers.

Not all great teachers are great mentors; they need to be shaped and molded (Bradley-Levine & Mosier, 2016; Israel et al., 2014). The role of effective mentors is complex and they must be skilled at articulating teaching strategies, analyzing data evidence, and supporting teacher growth (Simos, 2013). The mentor has to have the ability to use indirect conversation techniques such as probing, summarizing, and responding to mentee concerns (Ginkel et al., 2016). A mentor should see learning to teach as a process of continuous development, and the mentoring relationship as a reciprocal exchange (Ginkel et al., 2016). It is also imperative that administration supports the mentoring process in each school and keeps a close eye on all the processes occurring (Nesheim, Moran, & Pendleton, 2014). If all mentors are following these modalities and addressing each component, they will have a more successful experience in the mentoring process.

Mentors who are educated about mentoring can advance the quality of new teachers and simultaneously advance their own skills (Hudson, 2013). Mentoring must be purposeful and guided by empirical evidence. However, mentoring is often unguided and disconnected, and lacks specific training for mentors on how to provide progressive support to mentees (Hudson, 2013). The reasons for this could be that there are not

enough properly trained mentors, mentoring programs utilized are missing a foundational framework, and/or there is a lack of administrative support and accountability.

Teacher Salary

Teacher turnover is directly linked to teacher salary in many areas (Hendricks, 2015). Higher base salaries can retain teachers for longer careers, which allow them more time to acquire valuable experience. A substantial body of literature has accumulated over the decades to validate the conclusion that teachers' overall wages affect the quality of those who choose to enter the teaching profession, and whether they stay (Baker & Weber, 2016). An analysis of the scholarly literature also shows that raising salaries helps attract more talented and qualified candidates to the teaching profession (Baker & Weber, 2016; Derkachev, 2015; Torres & Oluwole, 2015). Salaries can also affect the initial decision to enter teaching and the length of the teaching career.

Increasing teacher salaries is a task that has many layers and involves multiple steps. Funds for increasing teacher pay are allocated at all levels of management (federal, state, and local). Thus, the choices on the appropriate expenditures between various levels of management are important. Federal funding is a major source of budgetary revenue for a school district (Derkachev, 2015). The use of the Federal funding must be determined at the state level and then finally at the local level. The collaboration and alignment of these funds must co-exist in order to increase teacher pay.

Vigdor (2018) suggested that salary policies focus on an evidence-based salary schedule rather than rewarding teachers for degrees and years on the job. The evidence-based salary schedule would directly reward teachers when they demonstrate evidence of

greater effectiveness earlier in their career. This would advance teacher salaries during the beginning of a teacher's career rather than reaching an earning plateau close to retirement. This would slow down the increases in pay during the later years of a teacher's career but the savings could pay for the increased compensation for younger teachers and in turn reduce the teacher turnover rate (Salam, 2018). Other current proposals in the United States requires teachers to earn no less than state legislators. This would require an increase in state sales taxes by 2% on all retail goods. This additional tax money would be deposited into an achievement trust fund to be available for schools to pay for an increase in teacher salaries (Taylor & Cohen, 2017).

One way in which some foreign countries have attempted to increase teacher salary can be found with the use of the New Millennium Educational Prize. This incentive offered payment of an annual bonus to all staff members of the top 100 schools in regards to performance in 4th and 8th grade Portuguese and Math subject areas (Brooke, 2016). The top 50 schools earned 100% of the specified incentive amount while for the next 50 the prize was worth half this value. The purpose of the program was to promote recognition for higher performing schools, to improve the school environment by creating a climate of quality, and to encourage teachers to stay in their current school assignments (Brooke, 2016).

Another example of a salary initiative that has been put into place is a bonus pay concept. Schools that have an achievement rate of 100% of the target goal received a bonus equivalent to 20% of their annual salary (Brooke, 2016). However, this initiative addressed another goal of the accountability system, to reduce absenteeism of teachers.

To receive the bonus, employees had to have worked at least two thirds of school days over the previous year (Brooke, 2016).

From the years 2010-2014, the Teacher Incentive Fund provided grants to many school systems in the United States. The grants provided detailed specifications used to evaluate educators in order to receive the incentive based grants (Wellington, Chiang, Hallgren, Speroni, Herrmann, & Burkander, 2016). The grants were determined by measures of educator effectiveness. The school systems that qualified for the grants were required to measure the effectiveness of teachers and principals using students' achievement growth and at least two observations of classroom or school practices (Wellington et al., 2016). These grants promoted additional teacher and principal satisfaction with professional opportunities and increased opportunity for additional money (Wellington et al., 2016).

A failure to emphasize the role of financial disparities as a root cause of limited access to excellent educators, and the failure to mitigate those disparities, may increase teacher turnover rates (Baker & Weber, 2016). Since many findings have shown a correlation between teacher turnover rates and teacher salary, this factor deserves adequate attention. While many school systems are only allocated a certain amount of state and federal funding, there are other means in attracting and maintaining teachers such as grants and incentive-based opportunities.

Literature Review Conclusion

The policy recommendation paper allows me to introduce the current literature in regard to the factors for why teachers leave. These factors emerged during the data

analysis of narrative interviews directed towards systems in Focus County schools. The three factors that will be highlighted are teacher induction programs, teacher mentoring programs, and teacher salary. Addressing the problem of teacher turnover allowed me to make recommendations for each of these three factors based on the literature review.

Project Description

The research completed on teacher turnover in Focus County Schools resulted in a policy recommendation paper that provides a call to action (Appendix A).

Implementation of the policy recommendation paper will include a power point presentation to the Focus County school board during a public meeting. These public meetings are recorded and available to the public. Therefore, this information will reach the audience at the public meeting but will also be on file for stakeholders to listen to on a later date. The policy recommendation paper will be presented through a power point presentation to the key stakeholders of the school board office and will encourage a call to action by the school board following the recommendations provided in the policy recommendation paper. This section outlines the existing supports and resources needed, the barriers and potential solutions, an implementation timeline, and roles and responsibilities to adequately implement the project.

Existing Supports and Resources Needed

The existing supports for this policy recommendation paper are, a schedule of school board meetings and a designated area for each meeting and data that determines that Focus County schools have a higher teacher turnover rate than the state average. The school board meetings are scheduled in advance and are provided on the school board

website. The website also provides a recording of the meetings for anyone to replay the audio at their own convenience during that school year and the ability to attach documents to review.

Many resources are needed in order to circulate the policy recommendation paper. Many teachers and administrative members are interested in the findings of this study and have already expressed their desire to help with the implementation of this study. Additional resources that may be required are materials, time, meeting date and location, and teacher/administration support. Materials will include paper and a copy machine in order to provide the stakeholders and the audience with a copy of the policy recommendation paper. Time is going to be an important resource as well because I will have to align the presentation to one of the preselected dates of a school board meeting. Also, time would include the amount of time it takes to make copies of the policy recommendation paper and traveling to the school board meeting.

Potential Barriers

A potential barrier for disseminating the policy recommendation paper includes being able to manage a date when all support personnel can be available during one of the scheduled school board meetings. I would like to present the policy recommendation paper to as many stakeholders as possible. This includes members of the school board, as well as school board administration, and any person in the school community with a devoted interest. However, this barrier is curtailed by the fact that there will be predetermined meeting dates so that all school board members will already plan to attend.

Implementation and Timetable

The meeting date selected will be during the 2018-2019 school year once Walden University officially approves this doctoral study. Once a date is selected, I will attend the open forum of the meeting and sign up before the meeting begins as the meeting protocol states. I will also have supportive teachers help to pass out the policy recommendation paper at the meeting. At the conclusion of my power point presentation, I will offer to consult further on the implementations of the policy recommendation paper with additional follow up meetings if the stakeholders feel the desire. Evaluations will be distributed to all attendees to evaluate the presentation.

Roles and Responsibilities

I am ultimately responsible for the implementation of the project as the student researcher. The project will be presented to the appropriate stakeholders in a professional manner. The school board meeting is an open public forum which will not require having to establish a venue since the school board meeting location is determined ahead of time by the meeting coordinator. To ensure transparency I will be sending the policy recommendation paper to the Focus County superintendent beforehand for review. Many other school board personnel volunteered to be a part of the study and are anticipating hearing the results. I will ensure that these specific members be notified of the meeting date in which I plan to present so that they may attend if desired or hear the audio of that particular meeting online.

Project Evaluation Plan

Evaluation is an appraisal of something of value. To show value of my study, I have created a formative evaluation plan in order to assess the value of my recommendation policy paper. Formative evaluation helps the designer of a project to increase the probability that the final project will achieve its stated goals (Flagg, 2013). Therefore, a formative evaluation will be utilized to ensure that the policy recommendation paper is in the most proficient state. The policy paper will be distributed to at least 3 participants with experience in higher level education. These evaluation stakeholders will consist of professionals in the educational field but will not be currently working within Focus County Schools. This will help to reduce bias when reviewing the policy recommendation paper.

The stakeholders can include a building level Principal and two teachers who have completed some graduate work. The 3 formative evaluation participants will be provided a copy of the policy recommendation paper by an attachment through e-mail. Also included with the attachment will be a survey. This evaluation method allows the ability to address pertinent issues in a timely manner (Nolette et al., 2017). The evaluators will be asked to make any notes of improvements in regards to all aspects of the policy recommendation paper. This will include any grammatical errors and content specific concerns.

The evaluation tool (Appendix A) includes closed- and open-ended survey questions in regards to the participant's perception of the written recommendation policy paper. The participants who have completed the surveys will provide quantitative and

qualitative data in order to learn the weaknesses of the project so that I can improve it prior to disseminating it to the stakeholders. The survey includes some Likert scale questions and some open-ended questions. Since this survey is unique to this particular project study and presentation, I created my own survey. In order to analyze the closed questions, I will use descriptive statistics including frequency distribution and measures of central tendency for all survey responses (Lodico et al., 2010). The open-ended questions will be analyzed using the 6-part Labovian model as used previously in the study. This information will then be color coded and placed into a data matrix according to the 6 parts identified by the Labovian model (Patterson, 2008; Saldana, 2013).

The analyzed data will then be used to improve the policy paper and make any recommended revisions. Once these changes are made, the policy recommendation paper will be given to the school board members during a school board meeting. The goal of the policy recommendation paper is to persuade the school board stakeholders to implement some of the recommendations in the policy paper.

Project Implications

Teacher turnover has been recognized as a problem worldwide (Heikonen, Pietarinen, Pyhalto, Toom, & Soini, 2017). The consideration of leaving the teaching profession does not come from a single event, but is rather related to problematic experiences in teacher practice (Heikonen et al., 2017). In the United States about 30%-50% of new teachers leave the field within the first 5 years (Dassa & Derose, 2017). Teachers are leaving at a higher rate than there are teachers entering (Dassa & Derose, 2017). Due to this high attrition rate, school systems are often understaffed or cannot be

as competitive in the hiring process for highly qualified teachers. Current research has recognized this problem and many researchers have tried to determine the causes of this high turnover rate.

With Focus County experiencing a 14% teacher turnover rate in 2015-2016, it is imperative that these local factors be identified and improved (Human Resources Personnel, personal communication, July 2017). Each new hire requires Focus County school system to budget for the teacher induction program. These monetary expenditures include, but are not limited to, payment for the teachers working before their contract begins and the hiring of staff to complete the professional development sessions. It may be beneficial for Focus County to lessen teacher turnover so that they have additional funding available to use in other areas such as student growth. This is extremely concerning considering the turnover rate for the United States is 8% of all teachers each year (Westervelt, 2016). When the United States is compared to other high performing countries the turnover rate is higher. According to Ingersoll (2003), the teacher turnover rate was only ever 3% and at the very highest 4% in the United States during the previous ten years. In 2016 as stated by Westervelt, the statistic has not changed. The teacher turnover statistics of 3-4% are also applicable to high performing countries such as Finland and Singapore (Westervelt, 2016).

If educational systems in the United States can decrease the average national teacher turnover rate, then it is more likely that teachers will perform better and have greater job satisfaction (Heikonen et al., 2017). Teachers impact many students and are sometimes their only support system. The stronger and more successful we can make our

teacher support system, the stronger we can make our students and society. According to Data USA (2017) the poverty rate in Focus County is 19.6%. This is higher than the national average of 14.7%. Students of Focus County need a sufficient education in order to obtain careers that may be able to offset the poverty rate in the future. The poverty rate also verifies the need for funding to go towards student expenditure as opposed to new teacher hire allocations. This can also be true nationwide in order to mitigate the poverty rate.

The themes that emerged from my study were: (a) lack of administrative support, (b) mentoring, (c) teacher preparation, (d) salary. A mentoring program can bring about social change to bridge the gap between the age generations of teachers. The strengths of teachers from all generations can be used in order to work together to form a collaborative learning community. More experienced teachers can share their knowledge based on experience and training, while the newer teachers can share some updated newfound teaching approaches and strategies. Secondly, a mentoring program can effect social change by creating a culture that encourages professional development, and supporting educators who engage in mentoring interactions. An effective mentor program matters greatly. The mentoring program must focus consistently on professional development, extend the work begun at the university, and connect newcomers to a professional learning community (Simos, 2013).

Conclusion

The recommendation policy paper developed as the project associated with this research study will provide stakeholders a detailed summary of the narrative accounts

shared by the participants in this study. It will produce a summary of the data collected from teacher interviews and a discussion of implications for further research. The goal of the policy recommendation paper is to provide researched information to the stakeholders based on teacher turnover and how to reduce the current turnover rate for teachers. The consequent goal will be to have the stakeholders recognize the main factors for why teachers have left Focus County schools. The main factors can be identified from the interviews conducted with teachers who have left the local school system.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The project associated with this study is a recommendation policy paper suggesting a change in the Focus County schools' policies of the existing mentoring program, induction program, and salary. This suggestion is based on the findings presented in my study of why teachers have left Focus County schools. In this section, I address project strengths and limitations and provide recommendations to mitigate the limitations. This reflection section also contains suggestions for alternative solutions to the local problem and addresses project development. The reflection also includes what was learned about the processes of the project and contains a reflective analysis about personal growth as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. I end the section with an explanation of the influence the project may have in promoting positive social change, along with propositions for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The strength of the project is that the recommendation policy paper and the presentation of the recommendation policy paper to Focus County school leadership provides an informational symposium through which I can inform stakeholders of the evidence of the local problem and future recommendations. It is important to provide research that includes facts and comparisons to the current situation as well as to the alternatives (Frey, 2011). I conducted an extensive literature review to understand the proper structure and practices of a recommendation policy paper.

A strength of the project is that it will include an executive summary of the study and will also include recommendations. Creswell (2012) stated that the researcher should provide summary of the characteristics of the study along with the research findings and conclusions when the researcher presents the results of the research study to the community; therefore, the analysis of the interviews is included within the recommendation policy paper because they are relevant to policies implemented in Focus County schools. The project's recommendations are based on perceptions of the teachers who have left Focus County schools and other scholarly research studies. Fountain and Newcomer (2016) found that mentoring is useful for helping mentees with teaching, research, and career planning and that visible support for mentoring is important for its success. This foundational concept provided by Fountain and Newcomer will provide a structure for factors that should be included in an effective mentoring program. Teachers who participated in this study stated they had left Focus County schools because they felt they did not receive proper teacher preparation and mentoring support. Therefore, the recommendations contained in the policy paper include information to revisit and revise the current teacher preparation and mentoring programs in order to provide the support new teachers stated they needed when answering the interview questions. The recommendations found in the recommendation policy paper are also based on the current professional literature on teacher turnover.

A recommendation policy paper is the most appropriate genre for this study; however, there are some limitations. There are two limitations to take into consideration in regard to the recommendation policy paper and how to effectively reach all

stakeholders. First, stakeholders may not take the time to read the document thoroughly and could miss some of the key concepts. In making a presentation during the school board meetings, I must consider the time constraints of making this presentation (usually 20 minutes); therefore, between listening to my presentation and reading the policy paper, the stakeholders may have some difficulty finding time to comprehend all the details. To address this limitation, I have taken into consideration how much information to actually include in the recommendation policy paper, while making sure that I included the background of the problem and the current policy situation of the problem (see Frey, 2011). This is all provided in the executive summary section of the recommendation policy paper. The policy paper will be available to the stakeholders prior to the meeting to review before the presentation. I will also approach the presentation in a way that focuses on all the key points needed to relook at the current mentoring program and teacher preparation program. These key points will be visually displayed through a power point.

The second possible limitation to the project is that most of the research on salary as a factor of teacher turnover was conducted in foreign countries. The current research focuses primarily on teacher salaries and different ways to allocate money in the school budget. However, there is little evidence of recommendations for how to mitigate the issue of salary when linking it to teacher turnover until very recently. Studies implemented in other countries have demonstrated different ways the policy makers have been able to attempt to adopt changes to salary policies. For an example, in Brazil, the accountability policy allows for teacher bonuses and salary incentives based on school

performance scores (Brooke, 2016). Current literature from the United States provides a restricted amount of insight about salary policy options actually implemented in the United States. As Baker (2016) explained, the amount of funding available to any school district determines the amount it can spend on its schools and determines the wage competitiveness and staffing ratios the district can provide. Since the funding provided to each school district varies, it is difficult to implement a single policy for the entire United States. Therefore, the recommendations provided in the policy paper are based upon different approaches to salary structures in other countries and summaries of some suggested recommendations in the United States with little implementation at this time (see Salam, 2018).

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

I conducted a qualitative narrative inquiry study to gain insight on the factors that have influenced teachers of Focus County schools to leave the school system. The policy recommendation paper highlights the factors of why teachers left Focus County schools and factors that have been addressed in current literature. Due to the restrictions of data collected through interviews, a recommendation policy paper was the only reasonable project since there were not specific educational programs implemented and that needed to be evaluated. I focused on a time period in which the teachers were not employed at Focus County schools.

An alternative approach a future researcher may use to address teacher turnover is a case study. A case study could offer insights as to both aspects of why teachers have stayed in order to determine what programs are effectively implemented in the school

system. I would also recommend using a mixed method approach. It would allow for researchers to gather information on why teachers have stayed in the school system using a questionnaire and possible follow up interviews. The questionnaire tool would provide numerical data and the interview would provide rich descriptions from participants (Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016). This could provide a more comprehensive understanding of teacher turnover in the school system. Both tools could determine what systems are already in place and working well and what systems need to be restructured.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

The doctoral program in Higher Education and Adult Learning has profoundly affected my approaches to scholarship, project development, leadership, and change. I have studied new ideas and approaches to use when working with adult learners and what strategies could be used to communicate effectively. Due to the knowledge I gained during my course work, I am able to effectively coach teachers on the best instructional practices that are evidence based through my research.

Scholarship

At the start of my doctoral journey, I was never taught the difference between qualitative and quantitative research. Considering the number of scholarly journal articles I have read, I have a thorough understanding of how to conduct and analyze research. I was able to identify a local problem and research this problem in the literature and at the local setting. I also gained experience with collecting data, analyzing data, and creating recommendations in a recommendation policy paper based on the

aforementioned. I feel as though I have a more thorough understanding of scholarly work and can progress into the future of education with these newly acquired skills.

Project Development

The development of this project has been challenging and time consuming. There were many steps involved in writing Appendix A that included precise details and many edits to ensure that all aspects were addressed and perfected. In addition to many edit requests from my doctoral chair and second committee member, I have used exemplary project study examples to guide my project study. I initially wanted to research the mentoring program that was used in my school system, but that topic was discouraged by my past first chair, and it was recommended that I focus on a broader topic of teacher turnover. I knew that mentoring would be a strong contributor to teacher turnover, whether it had a negative or positive aspect. This then opened new possibilities for research designs.

Determining if teacher turnover was a problem in Focus County schools was attainable due to the information provided by the school district. Teacher turnover has been a continuing problem that steadily increases each year, and remedies for this problem had not yet been determined (assistant superintendent, personal communication, March 18, 2013). While I knew the problem being addressed was the high teacher turnover rate in Focus County schools, I went through many drafts of research questions before my project study committee was in agreement with them.

The interviewing process of my project study was an informative experience. While I had created mock interview practices in previous classes, I had not completed a

formal interview that included an actual certification in ethical approaches. I now feel with confidence that I can prepare and conduct an interview following all guidelines required by Walden University and other establishments.

Leadership and Change

Due to my experiences with leadership doctorate courses, I was able to be more competitive in being able to acquire greater leadership roles in my school system. I have been appointed chair of our school leadership team and have taken on a position which requires coaching adults in the classroom setting. I was able to help guide my school to create a needs assessment and apply that data to create a school improvement plan. I used many of my research methods courses to help compile school-wide data and analyze it to implement action plans. My course work has provided me with the experience of applying research-based strategies to applicable settings in order to achieve attainable goals. My experience and knowledge allowed for me to be able to share ideas and support these ideas with researched-based validations. Many new teachers relied on me to help guide them to use the best instructional practices and effective classroom management.

The literature review of teacher turnover also included various information on effective mentoring programs and teacher preparation programs. I utilized the information gained from completing the literature review to apply to my leadership role when determining the best ways to support new teachers. There were also times when members of my leadership team doubted the efforts that needed to be spent on mentoring programs and teacher preparation programs and my past research was able to add

additional aspects to the scholarly conversations. Updated research was reviewed for the creation of the policy recommendation paper since the prominent themes for why teachers leave were the weaknesses of mentoring and teacher preparation programs previously implemented.

Analysis of self as scholar. The professional knowledge I have gained from my doctoral study has given me a better appreciation for keeping up to date on educational issues. In the process of working on my project study, I was able to see how research has somewhat changed throughout the years and how new research is shaping the way educators are performing and the general views in the educational field. During my doctoral research, I learned to identify a peer reviewed article and primary versus secondary sources.

As I continue to grow as a scholar, I have the ability to make research-based decisions about the current issues I read about and put into practice. I will continue to make a positive impact in my community and be an advocate for making necessary changes that are data driven. I feel as though I have become a teacher turnover expert and can identify themes that arise in current literature for why some educational systems have high teacher turnover rates. As I am involved in the educational system I am able to take a step back and evaluate the current situation and can create research-based decisions in order to ensure that the choices being made are valid and beneficial to the community.

Analysis of self as practitioner. During my ten years of teaching I have been rated as an exemplary teacher in many areas of my teacher performance evaluation and

overall during summative reviews. While my knowledge base is extensive and my experiences have enabled me to be marked exemplary, I am grounded and I understand that each day I will continue to learn and grow. As a beginning teacher I did struggle with self-efficacy and I did have to rely on support from my mentors and supervisors to get through some hard times. I have never forgotten that need and I am fully committed to provide that same support to any and all educators who I am able to work with.

I always question whether or not others will view me as a scholarly individual, so self-confidence is a goal that I am striving toward continuously. The work that I have accomplished during this doctoral journey has given me additional experience reading scholarly work and knowing which artifacts are most reliable in finding strong, pertinent information. Due to the increase of my scholarly background knowledge, I now feel much more confident sharing the pedagogy aspect of my career with other educators and knowing that my suggestions stem from valid data.

Analysis of self as project developer. Through most of my career I was always the individual that was on the receptive side of all projects. Projects and plans were given to me and I was expected to execute them to perfection. Through the development of this project, I am now able to understand how to create a project based on data analysis results. Serving as the project developer, I reviewed the data analysis results from my study in order to determine the project that would correlate to the local problem and would have the most impact on the local stakeholders.

Due to the extensive literature I reviewed, I had a thorough understanding of the national crisis of teacher turnover. I was then able to make connections and identify

emerging themes with the problem at the national level to the teacher turnover problem at the local level. Without having any previous experience with in-depth research and data analysis, this background knowledge was critical. I was able to use the literature articles to develop a stronger scholarly voice and increase my awareness of the teacher turnover phenomenon. I was then able to make viable recommendations in the recommendation policy paper.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

A child's future is determined by his or her education. Providing highly qualified teachers and keeping them in the school system is a key factor in developing our future leaders. This concept promotes the idea that high rates of teacher turnover can hinder the ability for all students to achieve. The policy recommendation paper that I created addresses this issue and includes a variety of research-based ideas to strengthen educational programs to help build, grow, and retain successful teachers.

The suggestions I gave in the recommendation policy paper have the potential to decrease teacher turnover rates and gain improvements in many areas of the school system. Many other areas in the United States are experiencing these high teacher turnover rates as well and can use the recommendations in the policy paper in areas of weakness that may align with their local problem. Implementing some recommendations such as a stronger teacher preparation program can ultimately affect the entire educational community in a positive way. A lower teacher turnover rate will furnish teachers with the opportunities to collaborate and communicate more effectively, yield

better instructional tools to all students, increase self-efficacy for each teacher, and allow the community to financially stabilize.

Implications for Further Research

The narrative inquiry study and the affiliated recommendation policy paper have the potential to make a substantial decrease in Focus County's teacher turnover rate.

There are possible changes that could be made in current practice if Focus County schools decide to use the data analysis from my study to reassess and revise the current mentoring program, the current new teacher preparation program, and the allocation of funding into teacher salary. Changes in practice that may result from the findings of the study could lead to a decrease in teacher turnover rate, improved student achievement, improved self- efficacy, better prepared beginning teachers, and an increase in collaborative work among educators. The following section will highlight the potential impact of the study and possible directions for further research regarding teacher turnover.

There is a potential impact for positive social change with Focus County schools. The school system wants and needs to decrease their teacher turnover rate and keep the teachers they are training in the school system as highly effective teachers (Assistant Superintendent, personal communication, March 18, 2013). The narrative stories provided during the interviews of teachers who left Focus County schools aided in the development of themes of lack of administrative support, weak teacher preparation program, weak mentor program, and low salary. The identified themes will allow for the stakeholders of Focus County to gain first hand insight on why teachers have actually

left. These data are valid and relevant to the factors that impact teacher turnover in the Focus County community since the narratives came directly from the teachers who have had experience in the school system.

Focus County schools have been underperforming in the state standardized tests and not all schools are accredited by the state (Department of Education, 2018). The one elementary school that has been identified as a priority school has a teacher turnover rate of 73% (Human Resource Personnel, personal communication, June 2, 2017). A school is identified as a priority school if it performs in the lowest 5% on state assessments. Therefore, there could be a possibility that student achievement could be negatively affected by the high teacher turnover rate.

It would be beneficial for the school board of Focus County schools to implement new policies and programs to try to decrease this turnover rate and identify any correlations of student achievement to teacher turnover. Education is a process that brings forth changes in the behavior of society. The positive social change that could come from a decrease in teacher turnover rates could be extendable to many facets of education. Lowering teacher turnover rates could improve the highly qualified teacher shortage, improve school morale and community relations, increase student achievement and better prepare students for life long careers (Goldhaber et al., 2016).

Directions for Future Research

The analysis of the data of my study identified that there are some improvements that could be made in relation to teacher retention in Focus County schools. While many themes emerged such as: administrative support, student behavior, and personal

situations, the main causes of teachers to leave the district was the lack of an effective teacher mentoring program, insufficient teacher preparation, and low salary. Future research could be to examine if these factors are still as prominent after making some policy changes. Also, there are other environmental factors that may prompt changes and new themes may emerge from up-to-date interviews. These factors could include but not be limited to a change in family situations, natural disasters, and funding changes.

In addition to interviews, further research can include surveys to gauge whether or not the suggested recommendations to the programs have had a positive effect. For an example, if changes are made to the district-wide mentoring program, then surveys could be conducted to determine if these changes had a positive effect on the educational setting or not. Future research would be imperative to conduct until the teacher turnover rates are decreased in Focus County schools.

Conclusion

Teacher turnover is a world-wide phenomenon that needs to be addressed. Intentions for leaving teaching are related to problematic experiences in teacher education (Heikonen et al., 2017). It would be beneficial for each school system to identify weaknesses among their teacher support systems so that they can increase the amount of teachers who decide to stay in the same educational system.

While some teacher turnover is healthy, the high percentage of turnover nationwide is a crisis. The success of any educational system depends on the excellence of its teachers. Therefore, schools need to maintain their qualified teachers because they play a main role in transforming young minds (Imran, Allil, & Mahmoud, 2017). Highly

qualified teachers will guide our society to be prosperous, if we can encourage teachers to stay.

My policy recommendation paper provides detailed information on some support systems that can be investigated to determine if the programs currently in place are working at the highest rate of effectiveness. The recommendations outlined in the policy paper suggest that in order to mitigate teacher turnover, school systems should ensure that they are providing effective mentoring to teachers and providing them with a successful preparation experience when first hired into the district. The policy recommendation paper also gives examples of different ways to allocate funding to allow enough expenditure for teacher salaries in order to provide a competitive rate of pay. While these recommendations are supported by current literature, a needs assessment may show other trending evidence of areas that are in need of improvement. Each school system is unique to the needs of the surrounding community and should determine the individual reasons for the teacher turnover rate in that area and create an action plan to promote positive social change.

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Appendix A: Policy Recommendation Paper

Ways to Mitigate Teacher Turnover

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July 2018

Executive Summary

This recommendation policy paper was commissioned to examine why the teacher turnover rate in Focus County schools is higher than the state and national average. It also recommends ways of decreasing the teacher turnover rate in Focus County Schools. These recommendations are created from the information provided by teachers who have left Focus County school.

In the 2015-2016 school year Focus County Public schools experienced a 14% teacher turnover rate (human resources personnel, personal communication, July 2, 2017). The turnover rate for the United States is 8% of all teachers each year (Westervelt, 2016). Interviews were conducted with nine teachers who were previously employed as a teacher in Focus County schools. These interviews provide narratives of the teachers experiences while teaching in Focus County Schools. These experiences then gave valuable insight as to which factors contributed to their decision to leave the County. The common factors that emerged were: (a) desire for administrative support, (b)an improved mentoring program, (c) effective teacher preparation program, and (d) competitive salary.

The following are recommendations to mitigate the teacher turnover rate in Focus County schools:

- provide all building level principals with professional development on all aspects of supporting teachers
- implement an instructional coaching model to improve the current mentor program

- restructure the new teacher orientation program

Introduction

Retaining effective teachers is a necessary strategy for increasing the quality of schools (Fuller, Waite, & Torres-Iribarra, 2016). Despite recognizing the need for teacher retention, many school systems experience high teacher turnover rates across the nation. In order to increase the quality of schools, teacher turnover needs to be addressed. The information I obtained from current research suggests that there are themes that emerge that explain common reasons for why teachers leave. Some of those reoccurring themes are desire for administrative support, low salary and benefits, student behavior, ineffective mentoring, weak preparation training, and mandated testing stress. Focus County could benefit from addressing these themes and putting alternative policies into place where weak areas have been identified.

Although these themes are evident in current literature, each reason for why teachers leave is different for each school system. If school systems are going to attempt to decrease the teacher turnover rate, they need to look at specific factors in the local setting to determine what changes may need to occur. Therefore, I have conducted a personal narrative inquiry study to gain a deeper understanding of the teacher turnover phenomenon in a specific school setting. A personal narrative inquiry study allows the researcher to listen to narrative stories from the participants in order to gain a deeper understanding of the situations they experienced while working at Focus County schools. This study was conducted at Focus County Public schools, which is located in a rural region of the Eastern United States.

My study focused on teachers who have left the Focus County school system and reasons why they chose to leave. The conceptual framework for my study was based on Bandura's Social Cognitive theory. The Social Cognitive theory was utilized to better understand the reasons for why teachers left. These reasons can then be categorized into themes for reasons why teachers left Focus County schools. Based on the findings of my narrative inquiry study, I developed a policy recommendation paper addressing the reasons why teachers have left Focus County schools.

This policy recommendation paper I developed identifies reoccurring reasons for why teachers have left Focus County schools. In this policy recommendation paper I have provided recommendations for how the school system can address the factors identified by teachers who have left Focus County schools. I will also address the importance of retaining highly qualified teachers and possible ways to do so. Common reasons why teachers have left Focus County schools are identified in the policy recommendation paper and some ideas on how to improve these factors for teachers is discussed. The information contained in the policy recommendation paper will follow the elements identified by Lyons and Luginsland (2014). The recommendation policy paper consists of the following elements:

- introduction
- historical contextualization of specific organization needed reform
- the problem or issue
- recommendations for rectifying the problem in question
- justifications for the recommendations and potential obstacles

- conclusion
- executive summary

Historical Contextualization

Focus County schools is located in a rural environment on the East Coast of the United States. The district website provides information about how the community values its heritage and respects life sustained by water and land. Focus County schools serve approximately 5,000 students in 11 public schools. The school district is located on a peninsula with a body of water separating the peninsula from the mainland of the state.

The school board officers in Focus County schools are appointed and some have had teaching experience. In the last five years there have been at least 4 different superintendents of the school system. This has made it difficult to keep policies and programs static and regulated (Teacher, personal communication, September 29, 2017). Focus County schools was led by a temporary superintendent in the year 2015-2016 and did not meet all federal annual measurement outcomes (DOE, 2017). The current superintendent has served Focus County Schools as a teacher and administrator for 30 years.

School Quality Profile

According to the school quality profiles from the Department of Education, the 2015-2016 K-7 student to teacher ratio is 11.56:1 and the 2015-2016 grades 8-12 student to teacher ratio is 13.27:1. In the year 2015-2016, 10% of Focus County school's teachers were provisionally licensed and in the year 2016-2017 14% of all teachers obtained a provisional license (Department of Education, 2017). A provisional license is

awarded to professionals who have completed at least the minimum requirements of a bachelor's degree from an accredited college and have met the subject area coursework. This provisional license will allow for a professional staff member to obtain a renewable certification within three years. This may include taking additional course work, passing state assessments, or earning work experience credits (Department of Education, 2017).

In order to be considered a highly qualified teacher by the state, each teacher must obtain a professional teaching license and be fully licensed. The state in which Focus County Schools is located also requires that teachers exceed the federal highly qualified standard with an emphasis on content knowledge as well as pedagogy (Department of Education, 2017). According to the most recent report provided by the Department of Education, 4% of the teachers employed by Focus County schools are not highly qualified (2017). This percentage rate is significantly higher than the states percentage of core academic classes not taught by a qualified teacher at 1% (DOE, 2017).

The high poverty schools in Focus County schools have 19% of their teachers teaching core academic classes who are not highly qualified according to the state standards (DOE, 2017). This high percentage of teachers who are not considered to be highly qualified could directly correlate with the high teacher turnover percentage identified in Focus County schools (Polizzi, Jaggeranuth, Ray, Callahan, & Rushton, 2015). It is plausible that the new teachers who have been hired may still have the 3 years to change their provisional license to a professional license and not be considered as highly qualified yet. Further studies would have to be conducted to signify this correlation.

Teacher Turnover

According to Alliance for Excellent Education (AFEE, 2017), half a million teachers in the United States make a change in the teaching occupation they have obtained every year. This turnover costs the United States up to \$2.2 billion annually (AFEE, 2017). Due to a widespread issue of high teacher turnover rates, there has been an inability to retain quality teachers (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Heikonen, Pietarinen, Pyhältö, Toom, & Soini, 2017). While teacher turnover has been addressed as a concern in many studies, the annual rate of turnover continues to climb nationwide (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

About 90% of the nationwide annual demand for teachers is created when teachers leave the profession, with 2/3 of teachers leaving for many different reasons, but not including retirement. If school systems can address the factors that create high turnover, they can reduce the short supply and high demand for teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Teachers cite a number of reasons for leaving their school or the profession. In a study conducted by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, the most frequently cited reasons in 2012–13 were dissatisfactions with testing and accountability pressures; desire for administrative support; dissatisfactions with the teaching career; and dissatisfaction with working conditions. These kinds of dissatisfactions were shared by 55% of those who left the profession and 66% of those who left their school to go to another school (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). In conducting my research through personal interviews with teachers who have left Focus County schools, some of the participants in the study cited similar reasons for

why they left which include: dissatisfactions with salary, lack of administrative support, current mentoring program, and new teacher preparation.

Teacher Turnover at the Local Setting

In the 2015-2016 school year Focus County schools experienced a 14% teacher turnover rate (human resources personnel, personal communication, July 2017). The turnover rate for the United States is 8% of all teachers each year (Westervelt, 2016). The teacher turnover rate in the United States is higher than most other countries which have been found to have around a 3% teacher turnover rate (Ingersoll, 2001; Westervelt, 2016).

A high teacher turnover rate requires additional hiring of teachers new to the school system. This will result in increasing expenditures that the school system will have to incur in order to train the new teachers and to acclimate them with the county's educational practices. Districts with high turnover rates often face high costs to replace staff and pupils forgo sustained relationships with the teacher (Westervelt, 2016).

In addition to the increase of expenditure per new hire, there is also the possibility that Focus County schools will have more teachers teaching in core content areas who are not considered highly qualified teachers. Highly qualified teachers are defined as obtaining a professional teaching license and teaching in that licensed subject area. Being a highly qualified teacher is proclamation that all preparatory education has been completed and teachers have demonstrated the quality of their effectiveness through field work and state licensure assessments (Department of Education, 2017). Nearly all observers of the education process, including scholars, school administrators, policy-

makers, and parents, have identified teacher quality as the most significant institutional determinant of student achievement (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2008). Considering Focus County schools has had a past record of not meeting federal annual measurable outcomes, the quality of the teachers in Focus County schools needs to be considered in relation to the high teacher turnover rate produced as well.

Summary of Analysis and Findings

In order to gain an understanding for why teachers were leaving Focus County schools, I conducted semistructured interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of the reasons. There were nine participants that volunteered to cooperate in the study. These participants were once employed with Focus County schools and are no longer employed by the district. These teachers also needed to have left Focus County schools within the last five years prior to the interview. All participants needed to have an active Facebook account and e-mail for communication.

The interviews included guiding questions for the participants however, they were open-ended for the ability to have the participants give narrative stories relating to the experiences they had at Focus County schools. These experiences then gave valuable insight as to which factors contributed to their decision to leave the County. Themes emerged from the data to show reasons why teachers have left. These themes answer the research question of, what are the contributing factors leading to teacher attrition within the rural Focus County Public schools? The themes and/or factors that emerged were as follows: (a) desire for administrative support, (b) mentoring, (c) teacher preparation, and (d) salary.

Theme 1: Desire for administrative support. The qualitative data collected from nine participants' shows that 9 out of 9 participants shared a desire for stronger administrative support at both the school and the district level. Participant 1 felt as though she were treated as if she were not valued by district level administration on many occasions and shared that they would have appreciated more administrative support during her first years of teaching. There were also mutual feelings demonstrated from participant five who does not feel as though building level principals were provided the tools they need in order to supply all teachers with the level of support requested.

Participant 6 shared that "Principals who are better communicators, are more effective problem solvers, and are more consistent with student behaviors have a higher ability to build a positive rapport with their staff and create a collaborative team." All other participants also shared within their narratives that administrative support was not evident or not as efficient as they thought it should be. Participant 6 also shared that he believed more professional development for the administrators would be important, as well as the district level administrators checking in more with the principals to make sure that all principals are provided with feedback to improve their practices just as teachers do.

There was a situation where Participant 2 described meetings with the superintendent of Focus County schools and was assured that the concerns would be addressed and taken care of. That participant did not feel as though there were any results from these meetings and decided that they no longer wanted to work under the supervision of the district administrators. Whereas, the same participant did have a good

working relationship with the building principal. It was shared that the principal had all the qualities of an effective leader but could have utilized stronger support from the district administration members.

Participant 6 listed a desire of administrative support as the significant factor for why teachers leave Focus County. It was evident that Participant 6 thought new teachers, do not receive the quality of support from district administration that they need in the emergent years of teaching. The participants also shared that they personally would have benefited from additional administrative support in the area of classroom management. They did not feel as though classroom management was as important to the administrators as curriculum design was. If any support was given it was in the alignment of the curriculum to the state standards.

There was a lack of consistency in the schools because initiatives were not supported by all leaders in the same capacity. The lack of consistency within Focus County Schools lead to frustration in teachers at all experience levels. A study conducted by Mohamadi, Asadzadeh, Ahadi, and Jomehri (2011) indicated that mastery experience, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion are effective factors that strengthen and increase teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Thus, if teachers are frustrated and do not have these positive experiences their self-efficacy will decline. When people do not feel supported in their profession their desire to stay in the profession is weakened.

Participant 7 shared that he felt that one of the reasons why teachers leave is because their desire to obtain a high level of administrative support is not met. The teacher felt as though school administration had such an extensive workload given to

them from the district administrators, that they did not have a lot of opportunity to support teachers. The narrative story provided by Participant 7 suggested that the lack of support from administrators causes additional stress for teachers and causes them to leave the county. Participant 8 also offered the reason for why teachers leave the county as being primarily from lack of administrative support. She felt that during the first few years of teaching she had very little relationship with administrators. When Participant 8 did get to talk to administration, the principal did not have any professional advice to give. The teacher asked advice about how to deal with some classroom management issues and the principal responded that with little experience dealing with six year olds they could not offer any advice. Participant 3 felt as though the administrators dictated too much and they “felt like they had no choice in flexibility on activities.” The participant was forced to teach to a test where everything was multiple choice and he was thoroughly disappointed he was not creating true learners.

Theme 2: Mentoring. Research shows that participation in mentoring programs not only provides an increase in job satisfaction, but is a necessity to combat the inexperience that exists within the teacher workforce (Callahan, 2016). Despite the precedence for a strong teacher mentoring system in the teacher workforce, the teachers of Focus County did not feel as though the mentoring system was a strong tool that teachers were able to utilize to deter frustration. Seven of the nine participants listed the mentoring program as a factor that affected their decision to leave the Focus County school system. Participant 4 narrated that “I did not receive any support from my mentor my first year. I don’t think she wanted to be my mentor and she showed that.”

Participant 3 shared the feeling that new teachers are not provided a strong mentoring program in Focus County Schools based on personal experiences and experiences shared by other new teachers. A high percentage of teachers who leave the profession have felt under-prepared, overwhelmed, and under-supported, which then produces the frustration that inevitably leads to premature burn out (Callahan, 2016). Effective mentoring programs can reduce these factors, thus having a better chance of teacher retention as a result (Kang, 2011).

Participants 4, 5, 8, and 9 articulated frustrations with the mentoring program that was in place at their teaching assignment. Based on Bandura's (1999) social cognitive theory it is possible that if teachers do not feel as though they have had positive experiences with Focus County school's mentoring practices they will demonstrate low self-efficacy and not perform as they would if they had had positive experiences. An example of a possible self-efficacy situation was shared when Participant 4 felt as though little support was received from the assigned mentor, especially during the first year of teaching, and that the mentor "never once came into my room and asked me how I was doing." Participant 4 shared her feelings that the teacher that was assigned to be her mentor did not want to be one and made that very clear from the beginning. There were also minimal expectations at the building administration level as to what criteria each mentor was to follow.

It was shared by Participant 9 that "administration should be aware of who they are assigning as mentors and make sure they are choosing people who want to be a mentor and who are strong in the area that they teach." Callahan (2016) believed that

teacher-mentoring programs must provide clear and concise goals for mentors to impart basic information and solicit feedback from the new teacher. The aspect of providing clear and concise goals to mentors was not evident in any narrative stories during the interviews of the teachers who have left Focus County schools.

Participant 7 also felt as though the mentoring program in the county was weak and suggested that mentors be able to observe teachers during the instructional process in order to be able to provide feedback. This component is actually part of the mentoring program adopted by Focus County schools, however it is rarely utilized for a variety of reasons (new teacher coordinator, personal communication, June 2, 2014). The data collected and analyzed indicated trends that may suggest that the mentoring system is weak at the building level and also at the implementation stage of the district level.

Theme 3: Teacher preparation. Teacher preparation programs are an important aspect of new teacher preparation to any school system. The more prepared the educator is, the better chance of a successful outcome. Despite the significance of strong teacher preparation programs, many teachers who were interviewed in this study I conducted do not feel as though the teacher preparation program they attended provided adequate support for their first years of teaching. Participant 5 identified the same frustrations with teacher preparation programs and stated that, “I was not prepared for the reality of the practical application of pedagogy.” Participants also wanted more field work and varied experiences with observing lessons, teaching lessons, and having lessons modeled for them.

Six out of nine participants stated that weak teacher preparation programs lead to struggling times during their years of teaching at Focus County schools. Participant 3 shared that the teacher preparation program they were involved with “did not prepare (them) at all for what being a real teacher was.” Participant 3 also felt as though he was not taught about the rigor of state standards and the importance placed on standardized testing. Participant 4 “felt like he was not prepared on how to manage a class and that student teaching does not really show you what goes into working in a school.” Participant 6 stated that she had more help with classroom management and training in that area. Participant 7 felt completely unprepared since he had no previous educational training or education in teaching. Participant 7 was hired without a teaching degree and worked on their degree during his first years as an educator. Participant 2 felt like there were so many changes with adopted programs that new teachers were never able to master the teaching of the programs and the quality of the training diminished as a new program was adopted. Good quality teachers, with up-to-date knowledge and skills, are the foundation of any system of formal education (Evagorou, Dillon, Viiri, & Albe, 2015).

Obtaining teachers who have been through teacher preparation programs is a consideration due to the amount of experience they can bring to the school system. The participants interviewed expressed the need for advanced teacher preparation programs and have communicated that they could be better prepared for their initial years of teaching. Therefore, Focus County schools could possibly benefit from providing additional training in the weak preparation areas.

Theme 4: Salary. Evidence has been shown that higher salaries are associated with lower teacher turnover rates (Feng, 2014). To support this fact, the participants have shared in interviews that they earned below the state and national average salary. Along with salary being a factor, seven out of nine participants felt as though an increase in salary would be a sufficient resolution to the high teacher turnover rate in Focus County schools. Participant 3 explained that “the number one cause of leaving is money. I am paid \$15,000 more (yearly) only 20 miles away from the school I taught at.” If Participant 3 were to earn a salary from Focus County schools, they would be eligible for reduced lunch due to how low her salary is. Participant 4 also shared that her salary has increased about \$15,000 because she too left Focus County schools to a district 20 miles away. Participant 4 also heard many other teachers talk about the disproportionate ratio of how much the school board administrators are paid in comparison to the teacher salary scale.

Participant 6 asserted that teachers are given a negative connotation to the relationship of salary to appreciation because “teachers are not given step raises each year like most other counties in the region provides.” The pay scale has remained stagnant for over five years and teachers who have provided five years’ worth of experience make the same amount of pay as a new first year teacher (Teacher, personal communication, November 14, 2016). Since teachers are not being compensated with salary increases, some feel as though they are not appreciated.

All participants interviewed provided valuable insight in regards to the salary factor in Focus County schools. Nine out of nine participants related the salary of Focus

County schools as one of the reasons for why they left their job as a teacher. Some participants shared conversations they have had with colleagues who also feel as though salary was the key factor for why teachers have left Focus County schools. While many participants think that salary is the ultimate factor that caused teachers to leave, a few participants also rank salary high but think that salary is not necessarily the ultimate factor. Participant 8 listed “salary as the second biggest factor for leaving” (2016). The evidence provided shows that there may be a strong correlation between salary and teacher turnover.

The study has provided findings that demonstrate a need for change in Focus County schools. The teacher turnover rate of 14% is a strong indicator that there are some weaknesses in the school system (Human Resource Personnel, personal communication, July 17, 2017). The interviews conducted provided information about actual reasons why teachers decided to leave Focus County schools and can possibly be applied to the same reasons why other teachers have left in other educational systems throughout the nation. The reoccurring themes of: lack of administrative support, weak mentoring program, lack of teacher preparation, and salary could all be reasons why teachers have left the county. Therefore, it is important to look at each theme or reason to determine recommendations for rectifying the teacher turnover problem at the local setting

Recommendations

Desire for Administrative Support

Some possible recommendations can be made in the areas of increasing administrative support. The most direct and comprehensive way to do this would be to provide all building level principals with professional development on all aspects of supporting teachers. It has been identified that teachers' perceptions of their school working conditions influence their decision to leave (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Principals may be in the best position to influence school working conditions (Burkhauser, 2017). Therefore, providing administrators with professional development may strengthen their ability to lead their school in a more positive direction.

Districts struggling with high teacher turnover might think about assessing teachers' perceptions of their working environments. If school environment ratings are low, districts should rely on the principal as an important aspect in improving the conditions at the school (Burkhauser, 2017). District resources could be used to establish a professional development plan for principals in schools with low school environment ratings and high teacher turnover rates. If funding is not available to provide the professional development, the district could reach out to principals within the district that perform higher in certain categories on the school climate survey conducted at the end of every year to have them provide on-site professional development.

The professional development sessions may include teaching principals how to communicate effectively with teachers or helping them to improve their adult leadership skills. After providing the professional development sessions, the district would have to

follow up with the implementation of practices at each school. Improving leadership skills will be beneficial to the entire school and could impede unwanted teacher turnover. It would also be beneficial for districts to recruit principals with a proven track record of improvements in teacher working conditions when hiring at schools that struggle to maintain their teacher turnover rate (Burkhauser, 2017).

Improving the Mentoring Program

Aligning with the themes that emerged from this study, another possible recommendation would be to re-examine the current mentoring program and evaluate its effectiveness. Quality experiences that involve effective mentoring by capable professionals are critical to the development of highly skilled teachers (Bradley-Levine, Lee, & Mosier, 2016; Childre & Van Rie, 2015). Mentoring can directly affect a school because there has been evidence that shows an increase in student achievement when teachers have been mentored or participated in a mentoring program (Bower-Phipps, Klecka, & Sature, 2016).

There have been six identified areas in which mentors can most effectively have a positive impact on their mentees (Nesheim, Moran, & Pendleton, 2014). The major components in which mentors can help mentees are: (a) pre-planning, (b) sharing of resources, (c) constructive feedback, (d) multi-modal feedback including written feedback, (e) modeling of effective practices, and (f) practices demonstrating trust and confidence (Bower-Phipps, Klecka, & Sature, 2016; Childre & Van Rie, 2015; Nesheim, Moran, & Pendleton, 2014). In order to ensure that all of these components are

understood and able to be addressed, mentor teachers should be carefully selected and trained (Hudson, 2013; Nesheim, Moran, & Pendleton, 2014).

A more specific recommendation in how to strengthen the current mentor program in Focus County schools is to implement an instructional coaching model. Some schools have recognized the importance of an effective mentoring program and have created instructional coach positions. These coaches are hired under full release which means they were released from their teaching responsibilities in order to work exclusively with new teachers (Gardiner, 2017). Coaches should receive professional development prior to working with teachers and should be able to apply these learned practices while working with teachers. It is also imperative that they be proficient in collecting observational data, facilitating reflective conversations, and negotiating challenging conversations to help teachers collect and analyze a variety of data in order to guide instruction (Gardiner, 2017).

The central work of coaches is to help new teachers identify goals to improve their practice and to apply a range of coaching practices to scaffold professional learning (Gardiner, 2017). Providing instructional coaches to new teachers negates many hindrances that may occur during usual mentoring and can help strengthen the amount of support newer teachers are provided. The use of instructional coaches allows mentoring to shift to an individualized approach to supporting newer teachers.

Not all great teachers are great mentors; they need to be shaped and molded (Bradley-Levine & Mosier, 2016; Israel et al., 2014). It is imperative that administration supports the mentoring process in each school and tracks accountability on all the

processes occurring in the school (Nesheim, Moran, & Pendleton, 2014). Therefore, in order to provide a strong mentoring program, the regular evaluation of such programs is just as important. In conclusion, I would make a recommendation that a program evaluation be conducted on the current mentoring program.

Teacher Induction Program

A third recommendation stemming from the theme of a weak induction program would be to restructure the new teacher orientation program. During interviews, the new teacher program was identified as being ineffective in supporting teachers in areas for which they feel they need more support. Conducting a program evaluation of the current Focus County Schools' teacher induction program may help better prepare their new teachers.

There is evidence to suggest that teacher induction programs can curtail teacher attrition by up to 20% (Kearney, 2015). Teacher induction can be defined as a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by the school district to train, support, and retain new teachers (Franklin & Molina, 2012). Teacher induction programs can provide valuable resources for these critical stages. A researcher has found that more than half the states require new teachers to participate in some form of induction program (Williams & Gillham, 2016).

The development of many induction programs is based on the idea of investment in continuous support and originated from the conceptual framework of Deming's TQM (Chan, 2014). Deming's TQM refers to the promotion of educational innovation and highly supports the training and continuous professional development of employees

(Chan, 2014). The TQM consists of 14 points which are (a) create constancy of purpose, (b) adopt the new philosophy, (c) case inspection, require evidence, (d) improve the quality of supplies, (e) continuously improve production, (f) train and educate all employees, (g) supervisors must help people, (h) drive out fear, (i) eliminate boundaries, (j) eliminate the use of slogans, (k) eliminate numerical standards, (l) let people be proud of their work, (m) encourage self-improvement, and (n) commit to ever-improving quality (Chan, 2014).

All of these 14 points are based on the philosophy that all employees need to achieve continuous improvement throughout their career. Focus County schools could use the 14 points of Deming's TQM to determine if the current teacher induction program includes these components or if the program may need some improvements. It is suggested that Focus County Schools conduct a program evaluation of their current induction program to determine its effectiveness and to ensure that the program is created from a foundational model of management such as Deming's TQM plan.

Potential Barriers

The data collected and then analyzed in my study show that there is a need of positive social changes with Focus County schools. Teachers are being trained, which utilizes a significant amount of funding, and then they are leaving within the first 5 years of teaching. There may be two potential barriers to the recommendations listed above.

The first potential barrier is lack of interest from stakeholders such as school board members and central office staff. While the data collected and analyzed in this study presented evidences of reasons why teachers have left, there may be a resistance to

making changes in any of the current policies and programs. If the district level stakeholders are not willing to see that there is a current problem with teacher turnover in Focus County schools, then efforts to mitigate this problem will be limited.

The second potential barrier could be the lack of resources. In order to evaluate the current programs, there needs to be an understanding of proper program evaluation practices. There may be a potential situation where Focus County schools may not have individuals at the administrative level who possess the necessary skills to apply an effective program evaluation plan for the current mentoring program. If Focus County schools does not have individuals already working at the district level with evaluation experience they may need to hire an external evaluator. This would then cost more money and increase the expenditures for these programs. However, it could be argued that the evaluation of the current mentoring program and the new teacher preparation program could save money in the long term efforts of reducing teacher turnover.

Conclusion

If the stakeholders on the school board of Focus County schools were able to understand that the turnover rate in Focus County is at a higher rate than the state and the nations turnover rate, then they can make some improvements. Any of the recommendations provided in this policy recommendation paper would be a favorable response to the current teacher turnover rate. To quote John F. Kennedy, “Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future” (Kennedy, 1963). The school board members of Focus County schools possess the ability to make those changes to bring Focus County schools into a better future.

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Policy Recommendation Paper Evaluation Survey

Participant Name (optional): _____

Job Title: _____

Highest degree completed: _____

Date: _____

Section 1 Instructions:

Please circle your response to the items. Rate aspects of the policy recommendation paper on a 1 to 5 scale. Your feedback is greatly appreciated!

- 1- Strongly agree
- 2- Agree
- 3- Neutral
- 4- Disagree
- 5- Strongly disagree

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The concepts were clearly explained. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. The reason for the policy recommendation paper development was clearly explained. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Research is sufficient to support the policy recommendation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. The policy recommendation paper follows a logical sequence. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. The language of the policy paper is easy to understand. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Section 2 Instructions:

Make note of any ideas that come to mind when evaluating and answer the questions in as much detail as possible.

1. What new information has the policy recommendation paper provided for you?

2. Do you think the recommendations presented in the paper would work? Why or why not

3. What other comments do you have?

Notes:

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol**Preliminary Information:**

1. Describe study and review consent form to ensure full comprehension.
2. Request permission to record and take field notes during interview.
3. Reinforce that all participant beliefs and perceptions will contribute to the study.
4. Determine if the participant has any questions and if they would be available for follow up questions or clarification if needed by the researcher.
5. Obtain contact information to send transcribed interview to the participant for member checking.

Introduction to Study:

The purpose for this study is to be a voice for the teachers of Focus County schools for both current and previous teachers. Teacher turnover rates have had a significant impact on the school system and its successes. There has been much research conducted as to the reasons for teacher turnover and common factors have submerged. However, all socioeconomic statuses are not equal and this study is to show the direct factors for why teachers leave Focus County schools.

Participation in the study will provide this valuable insight. Participation is voluntary and you are not required to answer any question that you are not comfortable with. There are no anticipated risks with this study. All names and corresponding information will be kept anonymous and confidential. No individually identifiable data will be included in the findings and data will not be associated to a particular individual.

Participant: _____

Date/Time: _____

E-mail address or account name:

Interview Questions

These questions are directly related to the research questions for the study because they will probe the interviewees to evaluate their experiences they had with Focus County Schools. Through the use of semi structured questioning, the interview can be specific and directed. However, since narrative inquiry will be encouraged, related stories will also be appreciated.

1. Describe the defining moment when you decided you wanted to become a teacher.
 - What experience helped you to decide to follow this career path?
2. Describe what you remember about your first years as an educator.
 - Describe the extent to which you felt prepared.

- Tell me the extent to which your experience was as expected.
3. What advice would you give to first year teachers about teaching?
 - What types of things do you wish that someone told you?
 4. When you needed help, whom did you turn to and what types of things did they help with?
 - What do you wish you had more help with?
 5. What changes would have helped you become a better teacher?
 - What are some specific changes you would have made if you were given the ability?
 6. What kinds of relationships did you have with personnel?
 - Other teachers?
 - Administrators?
 7. From your perspective, what support are teachers provided?
 - From other teachers or mentors?
 - From administration?
 8. In your opinion, why do teachers leave this school?
 - What factors do you think have the most impact?
 - Why did you choose those factors?
 9. Describe for me what, if anything, that could have been done to get you to stay.
 10. What incentive or change would cause you to return?

Conclusion:

- To summarize our interview today...
- Did I summarize your thought correctly?
- Is there anything you would like to add or amend?

Thank you for attending.