A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY INVESTIGATING UTAH SCHOOL DISTRICT

APPROACHES TO BEGINNING TEACHER RETENTION

by

Katie Melinda Kimber

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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2018

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this multiple case study was to discover educator perceptions of Utah school district approaches to retaining beginning teachers. Throughout the study, the term "educator" collectively describes the study participants: district leaders, principals, mentors, and beginning teachers. The overarching concept that guided this study was Sher's (1983) Three Cs of Education framework which categorizes the factors that impact teacher retention into the following three groups: Characteristics, Conditions, and Compensation. The central research question for this study was: How do educators describe Utah school districts' approaches to retaining beginning teachers? The sub-questions for this study were: What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address teacher characteristics as an approach to retaining beginning teachers? What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address working conditions as an approach to retaining beginning teachers? What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address compensation as an approach to retaining beginning teachers? The methods used to collect the data included semi-structured individual interviews, a focus group interview, and documents from two school districts in the state of Utah. The data were analyzed using Yin's (2014) case study analytical techniques. The cross-case analysis revealed school districts main approaches to teacher retention included raising salaries and implementing mentoring programs. However, the participants emphasized the importance of feeling valued and garnering community support in retaining teachers.

Keywords: beginning teachers, mentoring, teacher attrition, teacher retention

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Dedication

I dedicate this to my supportive and pushy husband. I would never have ventured down this dissertation path if it was not for you. Thank you for believing in me when I did not believe in myself. I appreciate your assistance along this journey and allowing me to accomplish a goal I never thought possible. Thank you, honey!

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Dr. Tierce and Dr. Swezey for your patience, guidance, and expertise. You helped me through this process, and I could not have done it without you.

Thank you to my dad for being the first person to show interest in and read my manuscript. It meant the world to me.

Thank you to Liberty University for providing a format for a military spouse to earn a degree, regardless of location.

Thank you to my gracious Heavenly Father who has helped provide me strength and motivation throughout this journey. So many prayers have been heard and answered on my behalf.

Thank you to my family for your support, assistance, and understanding during this process. I have had to sacrifice time with each of you in order to accomplish this goal, and I appreciate your patience with me. Thank you to my mom for watching my daughter countless hours so I could work. A special thanks to my aunt and sister for lending their educational expertise and assistance throughout this process.

Thank you to my friend and fellow classmate, Susan. Having you to go through this process with has been a great blessing in my life. Thank you for all the messages, ideas, and encouragement along the way.

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Alternative Route to Licensure (ARL)

Alternative Teacher Preparation (ATP)

City District (CD)

English Language Learners (ELLs)

Entry Years Enhancement (EYE)

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC)

National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE)

National Council of Teacher Quality (NCTQ)

New Teacher Center (NTC)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Professional Development (PD)

Rural District (RD)

United States Department of Education (USDE)

Utah's Education Policy Center (UEPC)

Utah State Board of Education (USBOE)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Teacher attrition and retention are persistent problems in education (Boe & Gilford, 1992; Cowan et al., 2016; Huling, Resta, & Yeargain, 2012; Ingersoll & Perda, 2009; Walsh, 2016). When teachers leave the profession early it impacts the organization and ultimately the students (Burkhauser, 2017). Researchers continually find that student achievement is dependent upon the presence of experienced teachers (Bent, Bakx, & Brok, 2016; Gavish & Shimoni, 2013; Goodwin et al., 2014; Klassen & Tze, 2014; Monsen, Ewing, & Kwoka, 2014; Montgomery & Mirenda, 2014; Sharp, Brandt, Tuft, & Jay, 2016). Students benefit from knowledgeable and experienced teachers. Unfortunately, unqualified or inexperienced teachers can negatively impact student achievement for several years (Sharp et al., 2016). High teacher attrition rates have created a continuing influx of novice, inexperienced, and unqualified teachers costing districts money and fragmenting learning experiences (Schaefer, Long, & Clandinin, 2012; University of Utah Policy Institute, 2016). Although attrition and retention issues are not new, an existing gap in the literature indicated these issues deserve renewed attention. This qualitative case study investigated retention from the perspectives of district educators and provided insight regarding school districts' approaches to retaining beginning teachers in Utah.

Chapter One provides the background of the literature outlining the historical, social, and theoretical context of this study. My philosophical assumptions and motivation to conduct the study are described, while the problem statement and purpose statements formally explain the focus of the study. In addition, the significance of the study elaborates on its potential empirical, theoretical, and practical implications. Finally, the research questions and important definitions are provided.

Background

The attrition rate for beginning teachers is higher than any other group (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2016). Recently, a national study found that the highest rate of teacher attrition is among those who have been teaching for five years or fewer (Raue & Gray, 2015). Correspondingly, a state-wide study in Utah found that 56% of beginning teachers left the profession within eight years (University of Utah Policy Institute, 2016). The majority of teacher turnover research has concentrated on the number of teachers leaving and the reasons prompting their decisions (Allen, 2005; Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Buchanan et al., 2013; Burkhauser, 2017; Carlson, 2012; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Clandinin et al., 2015; Curtis & Wise, 2012; Gallant & Riley, 2014; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson, 2006; Mason & Matas, 2015; Menlove, Garnes, & Salzberg, 2004; Oliveira, 2015; Schaefer et al., 2012). Limited research exists focusing on why teachers remain in the profession (Bennett, Brown, Kirby-Smith, & Severson, 2013; Latifoglu, 2016). Absent from the literature are qualitative studies that convey perspectives of individuals involved in retention and the approaches districts are taking to retain teachers. This qualitative study fills the gap in retention literature and gives voice to school district educators, including superintendents, principals, mentors, and beginning teachers. The following sections provide an overview of the historical, social, and theoretical contexts that frame this study.

Historical Context

Issues with teacher quality, shortages, and retention are not new. Over 30 years ago the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) produced the report *A Nation at Risk* that outlined the areas the United States was failing in education. The commission warned that the "educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of

mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people" (p. 9). Included in the "mediocrity" was the lack of qualified, well-prepared teachers. Teacher preparation programs were found to have low standards for admission and failed to attract the best candidates. The courses offered to teachers were pedagogically-based, with little attention to content. In addition, teachers lacked voice in decision-making and received low salaries. The nation was at risk with districts forced to hire unqualified teachers due to shortages in math, science, special education, foreign languages, and English Language Learners (ELLs) (NCEE, 1983).

In the 1980s, *A Nation at Risk* and other reports clamored about a coming crisis of teacher shortages (Darling-Hammond, 1984; NCEE, 1983). Rather than an actual scarcity of teachers overall, however, the shortage of teachers varied by geographic region and content area (Boe & Gilford, 1992; Cowan, Goldhaber, Hayes, & Theobald, 2016; Ingersoll & Perda, 2009; Walsh, 2016). Boe and Gilford (1992) clarified the shortage, further explaining that quantity has never been a problem. Instead there is a shortage of quality and qualified teachers to fill the vacancies in certain subjects and locations (Boe & Gilford, 1992, pp. 30-31).

Unfortunately, scholars note the same issues are prevalent in the current educational climate (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2016; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016; Walsh, 2016). For example, mathematics and science positions are harder to fill. Special Education, bilingual education, and ESL teachers are other areas of concern (Boe & Gilford, 1992; NCEE, 1983; U.S. Dept. of Education, 2016). Researchers note the number of teachers available is not the problem; rather, the problem is the distribution, type, and quality of teachers (Ingersoll & Perda, 2009; Sutcher et al., 2016; Walsh, 2016). To fill empty positions, schools are forced to make concessions. Hiring standards are lowered to allow uncertified teachers into the classroom, or teachers are given

assignments that do not match their qualifications. Alternatively, districts have tried enticing new and veteran teachers into specific subjects with pay incentives (Liang & Akiba, 2015). Furthermore, class sizes increase if vacancies remain (Boe & Gilford, 1992; Sutcher et al., 2016). All these actions lessen the quality of education, leaving both teachers and students suffering.

Social Context

One state that has experienced difficulty filling teacher vacancies is Utah. Similar to the national studies, shortages in Utah are acutely felt in the areas of math, science, special education, and language. The state of Utah also has unique educational characteristics that create challenges for school districts and teachers. Compared to the national average, Utah pays teachers less, has larger class sizes, and spends the least amount of money per pupil (Utah's Education Policy Center, 2017; USOE, 2016b). Additionally, a recent study showed Utah with the highest student population growth in the nation (University of Utah Policy Institute, 2016). Coupled with a decrease in graduates from teacher preparation programs, Utah has experienced a shortage of qualified teachers (Teigen, 2016; UEPC, 2017). These shortages have caused Utah to allow the hiring of non-certified teachers to fast-track the process of getting teachers into the classroom (UEPC, 2017). The standards of highly-qualified teachers set forth by No Child Left Behind (2001) legislation over 15 years ago are being ignored in order to fill a growing number of teacher vacancies.

In a recent study commissioned by the Utah State Board of Education (USBOE) and the University of Utah's Education Policy Center (UEPC), researchers tracked a cohort of new teachers over the course of eight years. The findings revealed that over the eight-year period, the attrition rate of beginning teachers was 56%, indicating that over half of new teachers in Utah were no longer teaching within a few years of starting. These alarming results caused Rorrer, the

UEPC director to say, "It is imperative that teacher retention be part of our solution to the educator supply and demand issue" (Utah State Board of Education, 2017, p. 1). Furthermore, the 2017 news release indicated the need for more research focused on what school districts are doing to support and retain beginning teachers. Determining the current practices of districts, as well as the reasons why teachers decide to stay or leave the profession, is an important first step to solving the teacher retention issue Utah is facing.

Whether studies have investigated reasons for staying or leaving, certain common factors have been found to impact retention. One factor that impacts retention is the existence of a mentoring program. Mentoring has been found to help beginning teachers transition into and remain in teaching (Clark & Byrnes, 2012; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Petersen, 2017). In 2003, in response to NCLB (2001), Utah enacted the Entry Years Enhancement (EYE) program to, "develop in Level 1 teachers successful teaching skills and strategies with assistance from experienced colleagues" (Utah Administrative Code, 2017). EYE provides beginning teachers with support and gives them tasks to complete within the first three years of teaching. Included from the EYE program are the requirements to work with an assigned, trained mentor, pass a Praxis test, receive Highly Qualified status; complete a teaching portfolio based on InTASC standards, receive satisfactory evaluations, and any other district requirements (USOE, 2016a).

Despite its enactment over a decade ago, little research has been done regarding EYE. A total of two studies have been completed: one investigating portfolios (Denison, 2008) and another exploring the experiences of secondary novice teachers (Armstrong, 2009). With increasing attrition rates in Utah, and with beginning teachers representing the highest number leaving, EYE should be helpful in retaining teachers. Yet since EYE began in 2003, attrition rates have continued to be a problem (UEPC, 2017). More investigation is needed to determine

how districts are implementing EYE, the reasons impacting teachers' decisions to stay, and what other approaches districts are taking to retain beginning teachers.

Theoretical Context

According to Yin (2014), quality case studies are grounded in theoretical assumptions. The assumption grounding the present study is based on Sher's (1983) Three Cs of retention. Jonathan P. Sher earned his doctoral degree in rural education from Harvard University and authored several publications on rural education reform (American Reform, n.d.). In an excerpt from his book *Rural Education in Urbanized Nation: Issues and Innovations*, Sher (1983) developed three comprehensive categories to describe the issues related to teacher retention. The three Cs of teacher retention are (a) Characteristics, (b) Conditions, and (c) Compensation. The first C refers to the characteristics of the teachers themselves. These characteristics include where the teachers are from, the culture they bring with them, and the training they have received. Sher (1983) postulated that "really important teacher recruitment work may need to be done at the preservice training level" (p. 261). Seeking out candidates willing to be specific types of teachers could help to reduce shortages. The second C represents the conditions of the work environment, and includes schools that lack resources and proper facilities, are located in rural or poor areas, and have a harder time recruiting and retaining staff. While many conditions cannot be controlled due to location or budget, Sher (1983) argued that steps can be taken to improve any school environment, which will help recruit and retain teachers.

The final C is compensation. The annual salary teachers earn influences their decisions to remain in the profession. Studies have indicated the more teachers are paid, the less likely they are to leave (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2016). Unfortunately, teacher salaries are less than comparable occupations, making it difficult to attract teachers to the profession

(Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Consequently, districts often offer

incentives in an attempt to attract and keep teachers (Sher, 1983). Although compensation is

important, researchers have found that teachers do not list compensation as the most important

factor in retention decisions (Rose, 2012; Shuls & Maranto, 2014). Instead, teachers' decisions to

leave the profession are based on a combination of all three Cs (Clandinin et al., 2015; Mason &

Matas, 2015; Schaefer et al., 2012; Sher, 1983; Swai, 2013).

Teacher retention is a complex process that involves several components. Sher's (1983)

Three Cs of Education helps provide some clarity regarding the factors that influence teachers to

remain in teaching or leave the profession. Understanding retention factors has the potential to

guide school districts and policy-makers to find solutions for teacher attrition. The concept of the

Three Cs provides an overarching framework for this study to discover how Utah school districts

retain beginning teachers.

Situation to Self

Teaching is a complicated and influential profession. The complexity of teaching begins

in teacher preparation programs that are struggling to graduate teachers ready to meet the

demands of the classroom (Greenberg, McKee, & Walsh, 2013; Kindzierski, O'Dell, Marable, &

Raimondi, 2013; Montgomery & Mirenda; 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The

difficulty continues when beginning teachers struggle to make the transition from students to

teachers (Cooper & He, 2012; Garvis, Fluckiger, & Twigg, 2012; Kim & Cho, 2014).

Additionally, veteran teachers are feeling overwhelmed with constant changes and

underappreciated (Bennett et al., 2013). Teachers have minimal input regarding which students

are placed in their classroom, the mandates handed down from leaders, and the required

curriculum to teach. Yet, they are the ultimate decision makers for their classroom and determine

daily lessons (Parkay, Anctil, & Hass, 2014). Student success is repeatedly found to be dependent on the teacher (Bent et al., 2016; Goodwin et al., 2014; Klassen & Tze, 2014; Monsen, et al., 2014; Montgomery & Mirenda, 2014; Sharp et al., 2016). Therefore, how teachers are trained, the issues teachers deal with, and how teachers feel about their jobs all must be considered to create the best environment for students.

As a teacher, I personally understand the problems that teachers face. I believe that while there are many factors about teaching that cannot be changed, the one factor that can be changed is the individual teacher. The importance of teachers is the reason I wanted to investigate teacher retention and approaches that are being taken to help beginning teachers. If any change is to be made in improving schools, it must first begin with the teacher. How a teacher is prepared, how a teacher is inducted, and how a teacher is retained must be at the forefront of educational research.

All researchers bring certain personal views and opinions to their research. Although researchers try to remain objective, no one can ever remove themselves completely. Creswell (2013) explained that "whether we are aware of it or not, we always bring certain beliefs and philosophical assumptions to our research" (p. 15). Several philosophical assumptions are the foundation of my research. The ontological view is the belief that there are multiple perspectives to every situation (Creswell, 2013). I believe that each perspective is unique and important to understanding a situation. Therefore, during this study I interviewed district leaders, principals, mentors, and beginning teachers to understand their different perspectives on retaining teachers. The epistemological assumption illustrates the importance of the researcher hearing directly from the participants to get as close as possible to their perspective (Creswell, 2013). Hearing directly from the stakeholders in education was important to me. Often teachers' and administrators'

voices are left out of the conversation for educational change (Snyder, 2012). The main source of data collection for this case study was in-depth interviews to hear directly from the participants. I believe this approach was more meaningful than simply surveying participants from a distance.

Finally, the paradigm that helps shape this study is pragmatism. Creswell (2013) described pragmatism as the belief that multiple perspectives and final implications are important. However, pragmatism was originally championed by John Dewey, who explained pragmatism as ideas that lead to actions and will always "look to future consequences" (Dewey, 1908, p. 88). I believe the purpose of educational research is to find practical ways to improve education. Therefore, participants were interviewed to gain their varied and unique experiences. Multiple data collection methods were employed and then analyzed to determine practical implications for retaining teachers.

Problem Statement

Studies confirm that teacher attrition is a continuing problem in education (Boe & Gilford, 1992; Cowan et al., 2016; Huling et al., 2012; Ingersoll & Perda, 2009; Walsh, 2016). The teacher attrition rate in the United States of 7% is double the rate of many other countries (Sutcher et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). While retirement factors into attrition, 90% of teachers leaving are doing so prior to retirement (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2016). Specifically, in the State of Utah, the attrition rate of teachers is 12% (UEPC, 2017). Consequently, Utah school districts are facing teacher shortages that are financially and academically costly. High teacher attrition creates unstable learning environments and redirects attention and money away from other more important problems in education (Johnson, 2006). One report estimated that filling teacher vacancies costs urban school districts over $20,000 per vacancy (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2016). Money spent to recruit, hire, and train is

lost when teachers leave. Districts need to find ways to decrease attrition and increase retention (USBOE, 2017).

Narrowing the focus on attrition statistics further, beginning teachers leave the profession at a higher rate than any other subgroup. The attrition rate of beginning teachers ranges from 19-30% (Sutcher et al., 2016). Beginning teachers who feel unprepared and lack mentoring opportunities leave the profession at an even higher rate (Morrison, 2013; Sutcher et al., 2016). A recent Utah study found that over the course of eight years, 56% of beginning teachers left the profession (UEPC, 2017). Missing from the UEPC quantitative study are the reasons teachers left or stayed. Despite the clear teacher attrition problem in Utah, there are few scholarly research studies that focus on education in Utah, and most of them are very outdated (Armstrong, 2009; Denison, 2008; Menlove et al., 2004; Prater, Harris, & Fisher, 2007; Simmerman et al., 2012). No studies have investigated how school districts are attempting to retain teachers. Also lacking from the literature are the perspectives of those directly involved in teacher retention such as district leaders, principals, mentors, and beginning teachers. Without giving voice to individuals closest to the problem, it is difficult to find a solution (Snyder, 2012). Beginning teacher attrition costs Utah school districts money, creates teacher shortages, and produces unstable learning environments. Therefore, the problem of this study is Utah school district approaches to beginning teacher retention.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this multiple case study was to discover educator perceptions of Utah school district approaches to retaining beginning teachers. Throughout the study, the term educator is used to collectively describe the study participants: district leaders, principals, mentors and beginning teachers. Teacher retention refers to teachers that remain in the same

school as the previous year (Ni et al., 2017). Beginning teachers are defined as those who have taught for five years or fewer (Raue & Gray, 2015). The concept guiding this study is Sher's (1983) Three Cs of Education framework which categorizes the factors that impact retention of teachers into the following three groups: Characteristics, Conditions, and Compensation.

Significance of the Study

This study has empirical, theoretical, and practical implications. The present study adds to the research that explores teacher retention and attrition. The majority of existing studies focus on the number of teachers leaving the profession and the reasons for their departure (Curtis & Wise, 2012; Harfitt, 2015). Scholarly studies that have focused on retention typically focused on the reasons teachers remain in their positions (Bennett et al., 2013; Latifoglu, 2016). Missing in the literature were studies that investigate districts and school leaders approaches to prevent teachers from leaving. Also lacking was literature specific to the state of Utah. More research is needed to help determine the reasons for the high teacher attrition rate in Utah, and how districts attempt to retain beginning teachers. This study helped to fill that empirical gap.

This study also adds to Sher's (1983) Three Cs of Education. Sher's (1983) Three Cs explain the complex number of factors that can influence teacher retention and attrition. This study explored the perceptions of those who have the greatest impact on retaining teachers to determine how Sher's (1983) factors of Characteristics, Conditions, and Compensation impact the retention of teachers. To retain teachers, the factors that influence attrition and retention must be determined. Sher (1983) provided a simple categorical explanation for retention. However, it was unclear whether Sher's (1983) Three Cs encompasses all the reasons teachers stay. While there are a few studies that use Sher's (1983) concept of the Three Cs in regards to rural teacher retention (Oliveira, 2015; Swai, 2013), more research was needed to verify the applicability of

the three categories to all areas of teacher retention. Understanding the reasons behind retention will provide districts with practical applications to direct their efforts towards retention improvement. The factors behind retention must first be discovered before solutions can be determined.

There are multiple potential practical outcomes from the present study. This study could potentially improve both teacher preparation and induction programs by informing decision makers of teachers' needs. How teachers feel about themselves and about their jobs impacts their effectiveness. Therefore, for teachers to be effective, their personal feelings must be considered (Kassen & Tze, 2014). Improving teacher experiences, especially during the critical beginning years, is essential for teacher effectiveness. Improving the education and experience of beginning teachers, simultaneously improves the experiences and success of the students. Retaining quality teachers is essential in creating successful students.

Finally, understanding the reasons behind retention and attrition benefits all the stakeholders, including districts, teachers, parents, and students. Attrition is expensive for districts, wasting both time and money to fill vacancies (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2016). Students benefit from having experienced teachers in the classroom, and parents want the best education for their children (Sharp et al., 2016). Teaching is a challenging job with the potential to cause many teachers to leave the profession (Bennett et al., 2013; Chong et al., 2014; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Kim & Cho, 2014). Investigating the causes of teacher attrition has the potential to improve teacher experiences and solve the issues prompting teachers to leave.

Research Questions

This multiple case study was guided by the following central research question and three sub-questions.

Central Question

How do educators describe Utah school districts' approaches to retaining beginning teachers?

The first few years as a teacher are difficult (Cooper & He, 2012; Kim & Cho, 2014). In Utah, the beginning teacher attrition rate more than doubled the national average (UEPC, 2017; USOE, 2016b). While quantitative studies have tracked the numbers of teachers leaving the profession, no literature exists investigating the retention approaches of school districts. The central question guiding this study attempts to fill that gap by asking district leaders, principals, mentors, and beginning teachers their perspectives on retention approaches.

Sub-questions

SQ1: What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address teacher characteristics as an approach to retaining beginning teachers?

The three sub-questions stem from Sher's (1983) Three Cs of Education framework. Sub-question one focuses on the first "C," teacher characteristics. Teachers all come with their own traits and experience. According to Sher (1983), these characteristics have the possibility to impact teachers' decisions to remain or leave the profession. The purpose of this question is to hear the participants' perspectives of how the district is addressing the personal characteristics of teachers including: training, preferences, familial issues, and demographics.

SQ2: What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address working conditions as an approach to retaining beginning teachers?

Sub-question two focuses on Sher's (1983) second "C" of working conditions. The environment in which teachers work can impact their overall level of satisfaction (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Schools with high poverty rates or rural locations can have

a difficult time finding and keeping teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sher, 1983). Other conditions such as the level of support, difficult workload, and feelings of isolation have been found to impact retention (Schaefer et al., 2012). The purpose of this question is to determine how participants perceive working conditions are being addressed in an effort to retain beginning teachers.

SQ3: What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address teacher compensation as an approach to retaining beginning teachers?

The final sub-question focuses on Sher's (1983) final "C" of compensation. Money has the potential to influence teachers' decisions. Often teachers leave because of low salaries (Curtis & Wise, 2012; Schaefer et al., 2012). This sub-question seeks to understand how the participants believe Utah school attract and retain teachers through compensation avenues.

Definitions

1. *Beginning teacher* – Beginning teachers is the term used to describe teachers who have taught 1-5 years (Raue & Gray, 2015).

2. *Characteristics* – In this study, *characteristics* refers to the personal traits and factors of teachers that influence their decisions, including demographics, training, motivations, preferences, and familial issues (Sher, 1983).

3. *Conditions* – In the context of this study, *conditions* refers to the working environment of teachers that include the school buildings, location, resources, school atmosphere, administration, classroom factors, student population, and policies (Sher, 1983).

4. *Compensation* – *Compensation* is the word used throughout the study to describe salary and other monetary incentives offered to teachers (Sher, 1983).

5. *Educators* – Throughout the study, the term educator was used to collectively describe the study participants: district leaders, principals, mentors, and beginning teachers.

6. *Induction process* – The induction process refers to any support, services, training, programs, or mentoring that is provided to beginning teachers to assist in their first few years of teaching (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

7. *Mentoring* – Mentoring is when beginning teachers are assigned veteran teachers, either at the local or district level, to provide guidance, support, and training to help beginning teachers succeed (Clark & Byrnes, 2012; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

8. *Teacher attrition* – Teacher attrition refers to "the loss of teachers from the teaching profession" (Raue & Gray, 2015, p. 1).

9. *Teacher preparation program* – Teacher preparation programs are university-based programs that result in a bachelor's degree and teacher certification (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2016).

10. *Teacher retention* – Teacher retention refers to teachers that remain in the same school as the previous year (Ni et al., 2017).

11. *Teacher turnover* – Teacher turnover is when teachers leave their current position. This includes leavers, movers, and retirement leavers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2016).

Summary

This chapter provided a description of the historical, social, and theoretical background of this study. The issue of teacher retention is not new, but it is a worsening problem in the state of Utah (UEPC, 2017). One possible explanation for the reasons teachers leave, is Sher's (1983)

Three Cs of retention. Sher (1983) argued that teacher retention is influenced by teacher characteristics, working conditions, and compensation. Determining how these three categories impact beginning teacher retention in Utah sheds light on the problem of the study.

As a teacher, I believe it is important to focus on teachers to improve education. I also believe that hearing from multiple perspectives is essential to fully understanding a problem. Therefore, I have also explained the philosophical assumptions and theoretical underpinnings for my study in this chapter. While my assumptions were the reason I chose to do this study, I attempted to keep them from biasing my judgement.

The problem statement and purpose statement sections clearly articulated the need for this study. Utah teachers are leaving, and the reasons for doing so are unclear. Beginning teachers face a daunting task as they transition from the university to the classroom. The attrition rates of beginning teachers in Utah have alarmed educational leaders, leading them to argue for research to investigate the causes (UEPC, 2017). The significance of study section presented the potential empirical, theoretical, and practical implications. Teacher retention impacts everyone involved in education: state and district leaders, principals, parents, and most importantly, students. Ultimately the implications for the present study are most relevant for students.

This chapter also delineated the research questions and definitions specific to this study. The questions are an important guiding component of this case study (Yin, 2014). This first chapter provides the basis for the present study that sought to discover how school districts in Utah retain beginning teachers. There is a definite need to determine how to improve teacher retention.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Teacher retention is a complicated, multilayered issue. To fully understand and improve retention, a myriad of factors must be investigated. Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework upon which this study is grounded. Sher (1983) attempted to explain the factors that surround teacher retention by categorizing them into Characteristics, Conditions, and Compensation. The related literature section follows with a synthesis of relevant literature about (a) teacher preparation programs, (b) beginning teacher experiences, (c) mentoring and induction programs, and (d) teacher retention and attrition and how these areas of investigation relate to my study. A concise summary concludes the chapter.

Theoretical Framework

The reasons that teachers leave the profession are as diverse as the teachers themselves. Simply attributing attrition to one factor is inaccurate. Schaefer et al. (2012) explained "existing research presents narrow views" (p. 115) of teacher attrition by only focusing on pieces of the problem, rather than the whole issue. Individual and contextual factors need to be considered to fully understand attrition and retention. According to Sher (1983), there are three categories that intertwine to influence teacher retention. The "Three Cs" include: Characteristics, Conditions, and Compensation (Sher, 1983, p. 261). Originally Sher (1983) presented this idea to explain teacher retention in rural areas. However, the concept is applicable to teacher retention in any location. The Three Cs provide a foundation for this study that seeks to discover how school districts in Utah retain beginning teachers.

Characteristics

The first "C" refers to teacher characteristics. The teacher that is hired "depends on the composition of the pool of available teachers" (Sher, 1983, p. 261). Teachers come from a variety of backgrounds and bring with them their own unique set of traits, opinions, and perspectives. Other differences include gender, race, age, and experience. All of these factors can influence the decision to become and remain a teacher (Schaefer et al., 2012). Both personal demographics and home-life issues play a role in teacher retention.

One key characteristic of teachers is the amount and quality of training they have received. Sher (1983) explained that how teachers are trained impacts their decision of where to teach. Those that are trained in urban schools are more likely to teach in urban schools. The same is true for rural education. Sher (1983) suggested that teacher recruitment needs to begin during the teacher preparation program. This logic also applies to the current teacher shortages occurring in certain subjects. Scholars argue that more effort needs to be made to encourage teachers to major in high-demand subjects (Greenberg et al., 2013). Additionally, teachers that receive more training feel better prepared, more resilient, and leave the profession at a lower rate (Doney, 2013; Sutcher et al., 2016). The personal factors, demographics, and knowledge that beginning teachers bring with them influence their decisions to remain in the classroom.

Conditions

The second C refers to the working or environmental conditions of schools. Sher (1983) expressed, "Common sense suggests that teachers will be attracted to certain kinds of schools and communities and will find others unappealing" (p. 261). There are many school conditions that cannot be altered such as climate, geographical location, or even inadequate buildings that

districts cannot afford to fix. Regardless of the circumstances there are many steps that can be taken to create a safe and enjoyable school environment (Sher, 1983).

One key factor in establishing the overall climate of a school is the leadership. Teachers that feel supported by administration are less likely to leave than those who feel unsupported (Curtis & Wise, 2012; Schaefer et al., 2012). Leadership attitude and supportiveness is a condition that could be easily changed, whereas other conditions that impact retention such as schools with high rates of minority or poor students cannot (Sutcher et al., 2016). Conditions including the location of the school, the level of administration support, and school demographics, have the potential to impact retention.

Compensation

The final C focuses on the compensation and financial incentives teachers receive. Compensation influences who is initially attracted to teaching, and who can afford to remain in the profession (Sher, 1983). The areas of math, science, and technology often lose potential teacher candidates to higher-paying professions. To attract and retain teachers, districts often try to offer incentives. Types of incentives include higher salaries, stipends, lower class sizes, and career advancements (Sher, 1983). While salary may not be the main factor why teachers leave, it is one of the significant reasons (Schaefer et al., 2012; Sutcher et al., 2016). Often this "C" is the characteristic that states and school districts focus on the most for improving retention (Sher, 1983). However, compensation alone is usually not the cause of attrition (Schaefer et al., 2012). Instead, attrition is caused by a combination of all three Cs: Characteristics, Conditions, and Compensation.

Related Literature

The Three Cs explicated by Sher (1983) provide a clear organization of issues surrounding teacher retention. The personal characteristics influence how teachers perceive and cope with the experiences during their first years teaching. Influential to developing teachers is the type of training and experience they receive during teacher preparation programs. Therefore, the first section of literature discussed in the present study focuses on teacher preparation programs. Next, beginning teachers experiences are examined. Beginning teacher experiences vary as much as the varied characteristics they possess. Then, mentoring and induction program literature is reviewed. Induction programs impact the initial working condition of beginning teachers. Finally, the last section details the issues surrounding teacher retention and attrition using Sher's (1983) Three Cs to organize the literature.

Teacher Preparation Programs

Before teachers become teachers, they are students. The training teachers receive determines their characteristics as teachers (Sher, 1983). Teaching is a complex job. Therefore, preparing quality teachers is equally complex. Teacher preparation programs need to prepare teacher candidates "pedagogically, intellectually, and psychologically" (Kim & Cho, 2014, p. 79). Prospective teachers are as diverse as the students they are expected to teach. They come with, "different backgrounds, experience and knowledge. This means that beginning teachers will have varying degrees of need to prepare them to be effective for their professional career" (Buabeng, Conner, & Winter, 2016, p. 49). Unfortunately, many teachers are graduating from preparation programs lacking the skills necessary to meet the demands in a real-world classroom (Greenberg et al., 2013; Kindzierski et al., 2013; Montgomery & Mirenda; 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Due to this lack of preparedness, new teachers are experiencing

difficulty transitioning from the theoretical, university setting into the actual classroom. This causes them to feel frustrated, overwhelmed, and leave the profession at high rates (Cooper & He, 2012; Garvis et al., 2012; Kim & Cho, 2014;). Clearly there is a disconnect between the university preparation program setting and the real-world, classroom environment.

To bridge the gap between the university and the classroom, developing and retaining quality teachers should be a top priority. However, teacher preparation programs are not adequately preparing teachers to meet the countless challenges they face (Greenberg et al., 2013; Kindzierski et al., 2013; Montgomery & Mirenda; 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). States have made numerous improvements and adjustment to education but have left teacher preparation programs untouched (Greenberg et al., 2013). A large review of over 1,000 teacher preparation programs was performed by the National Council of Teacher Quality (NCTQ) over the course of eight years. Rated on a four-star scale, only four programs earned every star, and less than 10% earned three or more. The report indicated that programs had low acceptance standards, failed to prepare teacher candidates in content and effective teaching strategies, and lacked quality student teaching experiences. Ultimately teaching preparation programs, "have become an industry of mediocrity, churning out first-year teachers with classroom management skills and content knowledge inadequate to thrive in classrooms with ever-increasing ethnic and socioeconomic student diversity" (Greenberg et al., 2013, p. 1). This study shed light on the quality and condition of preparation programs.

The research regarding teacher preparation programs is somewhat inconsistent. Some studies indicated that teacher candidates graduate feeling unprepared, (Buabeng et al., 2016; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Kindzierski et al., 2013; O'Neill & Stephenson, 2013; Petersen, 2017), while others indicate that candidates were satisfied with their programs (Bledsoe, Trotti,

Hodge, & Talber, 2016; Chong, Loh, & Mak, 2014; Conderman, Johnston-Rodriguez, Hartman, & Walker, 2012; Dharan, 2015; Gorard, 2017; Latifoglu, 2016). Some studies stressed the importance of training (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Goh, Yusuf, & Wong, 2017; Klassen & Tze, 2014; Shepherd & Alpert, 2012), while others argued on-the job experience is more influential (Dharan, 2015; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2011). Some studies declared the preparation route matters, (Shepherd & Alpert, 2012; Zhang & Zeller, 2016) while others claimed no difference (Gorard, 2017; Guili & Zeller 2016). The following sections include a discussion of literature on teacher preparation programs by looking at the routes offered, self-efficacy relating to preparedness, and the feelings of preparedness and concern.

   Routes to certification. In response to *A Nation at Risk* (1983) and to gain quality and qualified teachers, different routes to teacher certification emerged. The traditional route is through a university school of education that offers coursework and practicum experiences, culminating in a degree. The alternative routes vary somewhat from state to state, but include those earning their license while teaching, or after earning a degree in another field (NCEE, 1983; U.S. Dept. of Education, 2016). The route that teachers take to earn certification does not seem to matter. Studies that have investigated the differences between routes have found that the route taken to certification makes no difference in teacher satisfaction, retention (Guili & Zeller, 2016), or effectiveness (Gorard, 2017; Parsons, Vaughn, Malloy, & Pierczynski, 2017). The results should be somewhat worrying to teacher preparation programs whose purpose is to mold prospective teachers into well-prepared teachers. However, the quality of the program matters in preparing effective teachers (Greenberg et al., 2013; Shepherd & Alpert, 2012). The type of program can also have the potential to impact the feelings of teachers. Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2011) found that traditional-route teachers felt more prepared than alternatively-prepared

teachers and Shepherd and Alpert (2012) found that the type of program had a significant relationship to the dispositions of student teachers.

There is also potential that the route taken could matter over time. In a longitudinal study, Zhang and Zeller (2016) found that during the first three years of teaching there was no difference in retention rates among traditionally-prepared teachers versus those that earned their license while teaching. But, by year seven traditional routes had higher retention rates. The laterally-prepared teachers that left teaching explained their lack of preparation was a major factor in their reason for leaving the profession. More longitudinal research regarding routes needs to be performed to determine the solidity of this finding.

Self-efficacy. One thing that matters in teacher preparation is the self-efficacy teachers have in their own ability. Self-efficacy is defined as the confidence teachers feel in their own skills and ability to perform the job. How teachers feel about their own ability influences how effective they are (Bandura, 1995). Teachers that have high self-efficacy are more effective, have a more positive attitude, and possess more job satisfaction (Garvis et al., 2012; Montgomery & Miranda, 2014). With high attrition rates in the teaching profession, how teachers feel about their abilities and their job are important considerations (Kindzierski et al., 2013).

A major factor that influences self-efficacy is a feeling of overall preparedness. When teachers feel prepared, they have higher self-efficacy (Lee et al., 2012). However, many teachers have reported they were not adequately prepared to differentiate instruction, support English Language Learners, or meet the needs of students with disabilities (Montgomery & Miranda, 2014; Parsons et al., 2017). Many preparation programs only offer one special education class, if that. Yet repeatedly research has indicated that those that receive more training feel more prepared and consequently, have a higher self-efficacy (Ahmmed, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2012;

Monsen et al., 2014; Montgomery & Miranda, 2014). Having a higher self-efficacy has also been shown to lessen the shock new teachers face (Kim & Cho, 2014). To improve teacher self-efficacy, and therefore teacher effectiveness, more training needs to be provided for special education, ELLs, and differentiation.

Feelings of preparedness and concern. There are many studies that have investigated preservice teachers' views on different aspects of their preparation program (Cooper & He, 2012; Gorard, 2017; Kindzierski et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2012). Cooper and He (2012) interviewed preservice teachers before and after their student teaching experience. Researchers found the main concern before student teaching was classroom management, but after the issues varied including connecting content, relationship with students and families, and professionalism. Cooper and He (2012) stressed the importance of hearing from preservice teachers in order to improve the preparation programs.

Studies have indicated mixed results regarding preservice teachers' feelings of preparedness. Although Gorard (2017) found preservice teachers were overall satisfied with teacher preparation programs, Kindzierski et al. (2013) found that over half of their participants were unhappy with theirs. Despite differing feelings of satisfaction, many studies indicated that preservice teachers believed there are areas of their preparation programs that need improvement (Buabeng et al., 2016; Cooper & He, 2012; Gorard, 2017; Kindzierski et al., 2013). Common responses included more training for special education, ELLs, classroom management, literacy, best practices, and content (Buabeng et al., 2016; Cooper & He, 2012; Gorard, 2017; Kindzierski et al., 2013).

Another common complaint of teacher education programs was the gap between theory and practice. Programs present candidates with a plethora of good ideas without the time or place

to practice them. There is a lack of communication between universities and schools (Norwich & Nash, 2011). One suggestion to close the theory-practice divide is to embed field experiences throughout the program, rather than leaving all the practicum to the end (Chandler, Chan, & Jiang, 2013; Hamman, Lechtenberger, Griffin-Shirley, & Zhou, 2013). Embedding could also be useful for special education content and other areas of concern (Gao & Mager, 2011).

The NCTQ reported that there has been a shift in how preparation programs view their role. The concept of "training" teachers is avoided so that teachers develop their own way of teaching instead of using prescribed strategies, which leaves the training of beginning teachers to the schools that hire them. Greenberg et al. (2013) argue, "By abandoning the notion that teacher educators should arm the novice teacher with practical tools to succeed, they have thrown their own field into disarray and done a great disservice to the teaching profession" (p. 93). Rather than training teachers with the best strategies possible and providing them with a solid content base, preparation programs are graduating teachers that feel unprepared and unable to meet the needs of their students. Buabeng et al. (2016) interviewed physics teachers that described their concerns for the lack of content taught in preparation programs. Additionally, researchers interviewed teacher educators who indicated it was the responsibility of the students to fill in any gaps in their content knowledge (Buabeng et al., 2016). Preparation programs have shifted the focus from content to mainly pedagogy, which has left many teacher candidates lacking the content base needed for quality teaching.

Beginning Teacher Experiences

Beginning teachers face the daunting task of succeeding as a teacher while simultaneously helping their students succeed. The National Council for Teacher Quality (2016) explained, "Being a teacher is harder today than it has ever been. Today's teachers must instruct

the most diverse group of students in America's history and lead them, sometimes against all odds, to graduation" (p. 1). Understandably, the first few years of teaching are considered highly challenging (Bennett et al., 2013; Chong et al., 2014; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Kim & Cho, 2014). Common expressions used to describe this time in a teacher's career include "trial by fire," "sink or swim," "reality shock," or "survival years" (Chong et al., 2014; Kim & Cho, 2014). Kim and Cho (2014) explained the reason for this stark new reality: "Teaching is complex and challenging… novice teachers' reality shock is associated with the significant discrepancies between theories and practices, unexpected obstacles imposed by the teaching environment, the complex role of the teacher, and the heavy workload" (Kim & Cho, 2014, pp. 76-77). It is not surprising then, that the highest rates of attrition are attached to beginning teachers who have been teaching for five years or fewer (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

There are many issues that new teachers face. Beginning teachers are expected to turn theoretical knowledge gathered in preparation programs into practical skills. They become the primary decision makers for the curriculum that is taught in their classroom and must determine the most suitable instructional strategies to meet the needs of their students. Despite being the educator, beginning teachers are "very much a learner" in their new position (Clark & Byrnes, 2012, p. 44). Not everything needed for the teaching profession can be taught before teachers assume their role. Many skills are learned when they begin working. Beginning teachers must learn how to communicate with parents, determine the needs of their diverse group of students, and maintain professional relationships with colleagues (Clark & Byrnes, 2012). Recognizing the multifaceted roles that teachers play helps to shed light on why the first few years of teaching are so difficult. Studies that have focused on their experiences offer insight into how to help beginning teachers succeed in their profession.

Interestingly, beginning teachers often reveal contradictory feelings about their preparedness (Bledsoe et al., 2016; Chong et al., 2014; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Gorard, 2017). While there seems to be a clear consensus that the first few years of teaching are difficult, there are discrepancies among different studies on whether beginning teachers feel prepared. Several studies that focused on beginning teachers found the teachers felt satisfied with their preparation and level of preparedness (Bledsoe et al., 2016; Chong et al., 2014; Gorard, 2017). In one study of beginning teachers in Singapore, Chong et al. (2014) found that teachers felt confident in their knowledge of teaching competencies which included lesson planning; informational and communication technologies; instructional strategies; classroom management; and assessment and feedback. Similarly, Bledsoe et al. (2016) found that teachers that had graduated from a Texas university felt prepared in all seven areas they addressed that included content knowledge, instructional skills, assessment, using data, diverse learners, communication, and commitment. However, despite their feelings of preparedness, both studies cite how difficult the transition from student to teacher is and provide suggestions from their participants on how they could have been better prepared. Chong et al. (2014) suggested teachers needed more support from colleagues and mentor teachers. The teachers in the study by Bledsoe (2016) explained their desire for more practical training such as dealing with parents or handling the gradebook.

Conversely, a study by Dias-Lacy and Guirguis (2017) found that feelings of unpreparedness beginning teachers felt were a major cause of stress and anxiety. They explained the importance that preparation can have on new teachers staying in the profession. According to Dias-Lacy and Guirguis (2017) the "less preparation a teacher has received prior to entering the field, the more likely this will lead to a rate of two to three times as high of attrition than with

candidates who finished their preparation program before teaching" (p. 265). Clearly, how prepared beginning teachers feel is important to consider if school districts want to keep teachers from leaving the profession.

Mentoring and Induction Programs

To provide immediate support to beginning teachers and combat the high rate of attrition, states and school districts have implemented formal induction programs. While the types of programs vary, they usually include assigning mentors to the beginning teachers. The goals of mentoring programs are to provide support, ease the transition into the profession, and develop meaningful relationships between veteran and novice teachers (DeCesare, Workman, & McClelland 2016; Wasonga, Wanzare, & Dawo, 2015). The origin of the word mentor comes from the ancient Greek story *The Odyssey*. Odysseus had a friend named Mentor, who was responsible for taking care of his son while he was away. Mentor helped develop the son "morally, spiritually, emotionally, and mentally" (Wasonga et al., 2015, p. 3). The modern view of a mentor is somewhat the same as the word's ancient etymological roots. Mentors are expected to help beginning teachers cope with the challenges of the first few years of teaching (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017), assimilate into the school culture (Dharan, 2015), and develop skills to become proficient teachers (Clark & Byrnes, 2012). Undoubtedly, mentoring is a difficult task.

Despite the challenges that mentors face, mentoring programs have proven to be successful in retaining and training beginning teachers (Clark & Byrnes, 2012; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). While teacher preparation programs provide the initial pedagogical training and content knowledge instruction, the schools teachers begin their career at have a major impact on shaping the identity of beginning teachers. Dharan (2015)

argued that the learning and experiences beginning teachers receive during their induction process are more powerful and influential than university preparation. If Dharan's (2015) premise is accurate, then school districts should be very concerned with establishing quality induction programs. Induction programs need to be organized, focused on developing new teachers, and employ well-trained mentors (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; New Teacher Center, 2016). The success of the induction program relies on the quality of implementation.

Types of induction programs. The types of induction programs vary from state to state. Some programs are state-funded, while others are locally funded by districts or schools (Polikoff, Desimone, & Hochberg, 2015). The structure and design of the programs vary as well. Some programs use employed veteran teachers who have at least a few years of experience—usually at least three or more. Other programs hire full-time mentors that are usually given several mentees to work with (DeCesare et al., 2016; Polikoff et al., 2015; NTC, 2016). Within the last few years new online formats of induction programs have emerged. One study that compared an online induction program to a traditional one, found that those who spent time with mentors face-to-face, considered mentoring more helpful (Mitchell, Howard, Meetze-Hall, Hendrick, & Sandlin, 2017). Conversely, in another study that compared three different technology-based programs with one traditional one, Bang (2013) found online formats proved better at enhancing the beginning science teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge. Nevertheless, the traditional program established better relationships between mentors and mentees and provided time for them to discuss school events (Bang, 2013). School districts need to determine the goal of their induction programs and seek to develop the best program to meet that goal.

Mentor role and characteristics. Regardless of the type of mentoring program, the most important component is the mentor. Quality mentors possess certain traits and skills that help

them to be successful. However, a few misconceptions regarding mentors exist. One misconception is that good teachers automatically make good mentors. Researchers note this is not always the case (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017). Another inaccurate assumption is that although experience is considered an important factor in a quality mentor, more experienced teachers do not always make better mentors. (DeCesare et al., 2016; Hong & Hong, 2013; Huling et al., 2012; Wasonga et al., 2015; NTC, 2016). When asked, beginning teachers express that they want to learn from experienced mentors (Sadiq, Ramzan, & Akhtar, 2017). But experience alone does not qualify one for good mentorship.

There are certain characteristics of quality mentors or the mentoring process that have been defined by the literature. First, mentors need to be trained (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; NTC, 2016). Teacher training is different than mentor training. Therefore, mentors need to be taught how to be good mentors. Another important component is the proximity of the mentor. Mentors that are in the same school and easily accessible by the mentee greatly improve the mentoring process (Polikoff et al., 2015; Wasonga et al., 2015). Close proximity allows for mentors to have more interactions with their mentees and more time to develop stronger relationships. Mentors that were also in the same grade level or content area were found to be especially helpful (Wasonga et al., 2015). The more similar the position between the mentor and mentee, the more specific and pertinent assistance can be given. Although, even if mentors are outside of the same area, they have still been found to be helpful (Ellis, 2016). Mentors need to be trained, they need to be accessible, and they need to have similar experience to provide appropriate assistance.

For mentors to be able to help their mentees, they need to have time to meet with them. The majority of mentoring programs pull their mentors from full-time teachers (DeCesare et al.,

2016: NTC, 2016). While this is convenient, and often solves the problem of proximity and common content knowledge, it adds another layer of difficulty: finding time to meet. DeCesare et al. (2016) surveyed schools in five different states and found that 69% of mentoring was provided by full-time teachers without any release time given. Release time is defined as time given during the workday to observe or meet together. For full-time teachers this often means that someone must cover their class duties and the class of the mentee in order for them to meet. This obviously costs districts money and manpower and could therefore be a reason why many school districts do not provide release time. Time has been found to be one of the biggest obstacles that challenge the mentor relationship (DeCesare et al., 2016; Latifoglu, 2016). Yet those that are given time to meet find the mentoring relationships more helpful and meaningful (Polikoff et al., 2015). Those that have been dissatisfied with their mentoring programs blame the lack of opportunity to actually meet with their mentors (Latifoglu, 2016). For mentoring relationships to be successful, the members must be given time to meet.

The relationship between the mentor and mentee is another key factor in successful mentoring partnerships (Ellis, 2016). The success of the mentee is dependent on the mentor; thus, mentors must determine the best strategies to help those they mentor (Mitchell et al., 2017). The beliefs and attitude of the mentor can impact the success of the induction process (Ellis, 2016). Mentors who are confident in their abilities usually have more positive beliefs about mentoring (Foor & Cano, 2012). Therefore, finding the right mentor, rather than just any available mentor, is critical. Unfortunately, often districts have a limited pool of trained mentors and assign mentors based on availability rather than the right fit (Ellis, 2016).

There are certain personality traits that are more favorable in what are considered "good" mentors. Several studies ask beginning teachers what types of qualities they want to see in their

mentors (Chou, 2010; Sadiq et al., 2017; Wasonga et al., 2015). Beginning teachers want

mentors with experience and knowledge (Chou, 2010; Wasonga et al., 2015). Mentors also need

to be models of good teaching. Beginning teachers want to observe and learn from good

examples (Sadiq et al., 2017). Mentors need to possess intrapersonal skills to develop

relationships with their mentees such as being caring, a good listener (Chou, 2010), and patient

(Wasonga et al., 2015). One group of researchers even suggests that mentors should share the

same gender, race, and culture as their mentees (Wasonga et al., 2015). Mentors that offer ideas

or lighten the workload empower beginning teachers (Chou, 2010; Wasonga et al., 2015). While

no established set of requirements exists regarding what makes a good mentor, there are certain

qualities that seem to be more advantageous in creating beneficial mentoring relationships,

thereby improving the success of the mentoring program.

Differences in implementation. Despite the widespread knowledge that induction

programs are important for beginning teacher success, there are no set standards for what

programs should include or how they should be implemented. Currently there are only 29 states

that have policies requiring formal induction programs (NTC, 2016). Each state decides what

that program looks like and how it is structured. If there are no state policies, then it is up to the

school districts or individual schools to create their own programs (Polikoff et al., 2015). This

creates a large amount of variation among induction programs across the country and even across

states. Even when there are state policies, how districts implement them often varies. Several

studies have found that the induction policies are not implemented as intended (Ellis, 2016;

DeCesare et al., 2016; Hong & Hong, 2013; Polikoff et al., 2015). The majority of programs only

offer support for the first year of teaching (DeCesare et al., 2016; NTC, 2016). Only a few states,

including Utah, offer support into the first three years (NTC, 2016). Beginning teachers that are

given support for at least two full years are found to be more effective in improving student achievement (DeCesare et al., 2016). This finding indicates more research into the length and type of mentoring programs is needed.

Other variations that occur among induction programs include the type of mentor (NTC, 2016; Polikoff et al., 2015), the time spent with the mentor (Ellis, 2016; NTC, 2016; Hong & Hong, 2013), and the existence of stipends or funding (DeCesare et al., 2016; NTC, 2016). If states wish for induction programs to be implemented as intended, clear goals, communication, and training must be provided to the school districts (Ellis, 2016). In one study that investigated three districts in Connecticut, Ellis (2016) found that districts were all consistent in "procedural elements" such as having an action plan, training mentors, and assigning mentors (p. 8). However, the districts varied in "substantive implementation" due to differences in resources, district organization, and perspectives on mentoring (Ellis, 2016, p. 8). The researcher also found that the state-wide goal of mentoring was for student achievement, but the local levels' perspective was more teacher-centered (Ellis, 2016). Discrepancies in the ultimate goal of the program and differences in district characteristics are going to impact how induction programs are implemented. The only way to reduce "great variations" is the establishment of "common standards for all schools when offering implementing support services such as induction programs to novice teachers" (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017, p. 270). While common standards could help decrease variations nation-wide, the real differences occur in how districts implement the programs, and it is unclear how to create consistent implementation.

Effectiveness of induction programs. Induction programs that offer mentoring and support to beginning teachers are found to be beneficial (Chou, 2010; Clark & Byrnes, 2012; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Huling et al., 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Polikoff et al., 2015;

Sadiq et al., 2017; Sebald & Rude, 2015; Wasonga et al., 2015). The benefits are not reserved only for the beginning teachers. Mentors benefit from the relationship as well (Wasonga et al., 2015). Wasonga et al. (2015) further suggests that mentoring benefits the "education system as a whole" (p. 9). Participating in induction programs helps beginning teachers transition and cope with the challenges of the first few years of teaching (Huling et al., 2012; Petersen, 2017; Polikoff et al., 2015). When teachers are given support, it can remove feelings of frustration and lighten the burden of a heavy workload (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017). Obviously, teacher preparation programs are unable to prepare teachers for everything that occurs in a real classroom. A majority of learning happens once teachers begin working. However, induction programs help to fill in the theoretical-practical divide and provide beginning teachers with the tools to succeed (Clark & Byrnes, 2012).

In a review of mentoring literature dating from the 1980's to the present, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) found that, "Almost all of the studies we reviewed showed that beginning teachers who participated in some kind of induction had higher satisfaction, commitment, or retention" (p. 225). Furthermore, the review of literature demonstrated teachers involved in induction programs were more successful in managing their classrooms and more effective at improving student achievement. Induction programs benefit teachers and students by improving retention, increasing teacher effectiveness, improving teacher quality, and consequently, improving student achievement (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The benefits of mentoring have the potential to reach far beyond the first few years of teaching. Beginning teachers can be strengthened and molded, student achievement can be improved, and mentors can feel more confident in their abilities. The induction process has the potential to be a very powerful tool in education and a possible tool in retention.

Teacher Retention and Attrition

Beginning teachers have the highest rates of attrition. The cost of attrition is both financial and personal. Schools in the United States spend over two billion dollars every year on replacing teachers that have left (Schaefer, et al., 2012). Locally that costs each school district roughly $20,000 (Caver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). In an already underfunded enterprise, every dollar lost makes a big impact. Also impacted are the students. High attrition rates create an unstable learning environment and provide students with beginning teachers who have not mastered the profession. This lowers achievement and causes gaps in learning (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Schaefer, et al., 2012). Understanding the reasons why teachers leave and why they decide to stay is important to finding a solution.

Teacher retention is not one-dimensional. According to Sher (1983) and several other researchers, (Clandinin et al., 2015; Mason & Matas, 2015; Schaefer et al., 2012; Swai, 2013), the retention issue is caused by an interweaving of many factors. The reasons that teachers leave are influenced by personal characteristics, contextual conditions, and availability of compensation (Sher, 1983).

Characteristics. The first category that Sher (1983) identified to explain teacher retention is teacher characteristics. Essential to understanding the factors influencing retention, is understanding the characteristics of teachers themselves. Both demographics and personal factors influence retention. Teacher characteristics include personality, training, experience, gender, race, age, and familial obligations. The age of teachers has been found a consistent factor in teacher attrition. Younger teachers leave the profession more than any other age (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Hughes, 2012; Schaefer et al., 2012; UEPC, 2017). Furthermore, those that have less experience leave at higher rates. Teachers who have taught five years or fewer, have

the highest attrition rates (Raue & Gray, 2015; Schaefer et al., 2012). At the other end of the spectrum, those that are reaching retirement age are also leaving (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012). But 90% of teachers leaving the profession are due to attrition, not retirement (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond; 2017). Although it is clear that younger teachers leave more often, it is unclear whether that is because they are also inexperienced or if it is simply their age. Another demographic factor is gender. Females leave the profession more often than males (Schaefer et al., 2012). The fact that more females leave could be that the proportion of female teachers is much greater than males, or it could be that males have been found to have a more positive attitude towards being a teacher (Ahmmed et al., 2012). Race might also play a factor, but the results are mixed. One study found that teachers of color had higher turnover rates (Sutcher et al., 2016), while another found that Caucasians left more frequently (Schaefer et al., 2012). Demographics are important when identifying commonalities or patterns that exist in teacher retention.

Perhaps even more influential than demographics in teacher retention, are the personal elements such as motivation and personality. Teachers enter the field of teaching for a number of reasons. Many want to make a difference or a positive contribution to society, while others value education or simply enjoy working with children (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012: Curtis & Wise, 2012). Sometimes teachers enter the profession for the flexible schedule that allows them to spend time with family or have summers off (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Bennett et al., 2013). Additionally, some teachers feel "called" to teach or they have a strong passion for teaching (Bennett et al., 2013). While extrinsic motivating factors may influence the decision to enter the field of teaching, Ashiedu and Scott-Ladd (2012) argued it is the personal, intrinsic factors that are the most important in attracting and retaining teachers.

The level and type of training that teachers receive influences their decision to accept and remain in teaching positions (Sher, 1983). Those that feel better prepared are more likely to stay teaching (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sutcher et al., 2016). One study found that those that lacked preparation were two or three times more likely to leave the profession than those that felt fully prepared (Sutcher et al., 2016). Similarly, the type of training also matters. Teachers that were prepared through alternatively licensed routes were 25% more likely to leave than those prepared through traditional programs (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Likewise, teachers of certain subjects have higher level of attrition than others. Teachers who teach math, science, special education, and languages are found to leave at higher rates (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sutcher et al., 2016). The amount of, and type of training, can impact retention.

Equally important are the personal life considerations of teachers. Teaching is considered a difficult profession, and many have a hard time balancing work and home obligations (Bennett et al., 2013; Chong et al., 2014; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Kim & Cho, 2014). Difficulty finding this balance impacts job satisfaction and decisions to remain or leave (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Clandinin et al., 2015). Long hours, heavy workloads, stress, fatigue, and frustration are problems that make work life difficult and impact home life (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Buchanan et al., 2013). Finding a balance between work and home is difficult for beginning teachers and can influence retention.

Many teachers are also not completely satisfied with the position they are in because they took the first job opportunity presented to secure a job. This often means that teacher preference and expertise are not aligned with the position (Clandinin et al., 2015; Swai, 2013). Teachers who are in "out-of-field" positions are more likely to be unsatisfied with their position and

therefore more likely to leave (Latifoglu, 2016). Lacking knowledge and skill adds to the difficulty that teachers experience during the first few years of teaching.

Teachers often have an idealized notion of what teaching will be like that is vastly different from the realities of the day-to-day classroom experience (Gallant & Riley, 2014; Harfitt, 2015). Many teachers enter the field excited to work with other teachers but are shocked to find it a very isolated profession (Harfitt, 2015). Buchanan et al. (2013) explained that isolation can come in four different varieties: physical, geographic, professional, and emotional. If teachers feel isolated, they will struggle even more. The relationships built with other teachers help foster resilience, which has been found to help retain teachers (Doney, 2013). Teachers that feel supported are more likely to stay in the profession (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Buchanan et al., 2013; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Clandinin et al., 2015; Harfitt, 2015; Latifoglu, 2016; Sutcher et al., 2016). The level of satisfaction and support that teachers feel definitely impacts their decision to continue teaching (Sutcher et al., 2016).

Ultimately, there are a number of personal characteristics that influence teachers' decisions to stay or leave the classroom. These characteristics vary by individual and include demographics, family relationship issues, level of training, and personality preferences. All of these intertwine to influence how teachers handle and react to the challenges presented in the first year of teaching.

Conditions. One of the most important factors influencing teacher retention is the school environment. Sher (1983) explained some conditions are controllable, while others are not. Conditions that cannot be controlled include the condition of the facilities, the geographic location, and the composition of the student population. Multiple studies have found that teacher turnover is higher for schools with high poverty rates and higher numbers of minority students

(Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Schaefer et al., 2012; Sutcher et al., 2016). However, one study found teachers were more likely to stay in high poverty schools (Hughes, 2012). Hughes (2012) conjectured the results were due to the rurality of schools and teachers lacking other career options. Geographic location is a retention factor with mixed results. Some studies and reports claim that attrition is higher in rural schools (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Holzhouse, 2017), while others say urban schools have higher attrition rates (Schaefer et al., 2012; Sutcher et al., 2016). What ultimately matters is how the teachers perceive the school conditions. If they think the school is good, they are more likely to remain (Schaefer et al., 2012).

Other work conditions can be altered and seem to have more of an impact on teacher retention (Schaefer et al., 2012). The level of perceived support that teachers feel has been found to be very influential on teacher retention (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Buchanan et al., 2013; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Clandinin et al., 2015; Doney, 2013; Harfitt, 2015; Latifoglu, 2016; Sutcher et al., 2016). Levels of support include both collegial and administration. Both types of support have been found influential in teacher retention (Buchanan et al., 2013; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Clandinin et al., 2015; Curt & Wise, 2012; Gallant & Riley, 2014; Schaefer et al., 2012; Shaw & Newton, 2014). The relationships that teachers build with their colleagues are important, and the level of support teachers receive influences their decision to remain teachers (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Buchanan et al., 2013; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Clandinin et al., 2015; Doney, 2013; Harfitt, 2015; Latifoglu, 2016; Sutcher et al., 2016). According to Buchanan et al. (2013) the level of support teachers feel has the potential to keep teachers who are "wavering" from leaving (p. 118). Alternatively, Clandinin et al. (2015) found that support helped teachers survive the first year,

yet the support did not impact their decision to stay. However, Clandinin et al. (2015) also reported that teachers that felt support were more certain in their decision to stay than those that were lacking support. In addition to collegial support, the support of administration is also a major factor of teacher retention (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Curt & Wise, 2012; Gallant & Riley, 2014; Schaefer et al., 2012; Shaw & Newton, 2014). Teachers who lack support from the administration are twice as likely to leave the profession (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). The administration sets the tone for the school and implements the induction process. Thus, support may not be the single determinant for staying, but it does impact whether teachers "have a stress-free or difficult start to their teaching" (Latigolu, 2016, p. 64). Shaw and Newton (2014) outlined the importance of administration in retention, stating that efforts and money spent on training quality teachers is pointless without leaders "who can cultivate and retain great teachers" (p. 106). The role of administration is key in retaining beginning teachers and creating a positive working environment.

There are also classroom components that impact teacher retention. Teachers are expected to be behavior managers, data analysts, curriculum developers, and parent negotiators. Challenges dealing with the curriculum, time management, and discipline create a difficult work environment (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017). One thing that is often not taught in teacher preparation programs is dealing with parents which causes beginning teachers anxiety and uncertainty of how to interact with parents effectively and respectfully (Bledsoe, 2016; Clark & Byrnes, 2012). Teachers also mention student behavior as a reason for dissatisfaction with the profession (Buchanan et al., 2013; Curtis & Wise, 2012; Latifoglu, 2016). While the students themselves cannot be changed, teachers can be taught behavior management techniques to assist in dealing with difficult behaviors. The administration also needs to be consistent and supportive

in dealing with behavior issues. Otherwise teachers are left with a feeling of "powerlessness" and dissatisfaction (Buchanan et al., 2013, p. 121).

Some of the main reasons teachers are leaving the field include stress, lack of support, and feeling unprepared to handle all that is included within teaching (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017). A study by Bennett et al. (2013) specifically asked beginning and experienced teachers why they stay in the field. The teachers described both the negatives and positives of the job. The negatives of teaching included the following: no mentoring offered, being overwhelmed, lacking time, too much paperwork, behavior management issues, and lacking instructional approaches. A common complaint among beginning teachers is the workload (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Clark & Byrnes, 2012; Kim & Cho, 2014; Schaefer et al., 2012). Although they do not specify how to reduce beginning teachers' workload, many researchers suggest that reducing the workload would help beginning teachers succeed and potentially stay in the profession (Buchanan et al., 2013; Farrell, 2016; Latifoglu, 2016). Understanding the factors that influence teachers' decisions to stay or leave are important for improving the work environment and increasing retention.

Compensation A final factor that influences teachers' decisions to remain in the profession is a financial one. Compensation is not limited to salaries, but it also includes financial incentives and advancement opportunities (Sher, 1983). Although compensation is just one of the many elements impacting retention, it is the most common way that governments try to attract and retain teachers (Sher, 1983). Schaefer et al. (2012) explained that viewing salary as an isolated variable is challenging because many other issues impact retention. Most retention research encompasses all the related factors together rather than individually. All areas of

compensation need to be investigated and explored to figure out the potential impact on retention.

The importance of compensation varies with the motivating factors for each teacher. Some teachers are motivated by "teacher-centered incentives," while others are motivated by "student-centered incentives" (Shuls & Maranto, 2014, p. 244). Compensation improvements will be less effective for teachers motivated by student-centered incentives (Shuls & Maranto, 2014). Although compensation may not be a motivating factor for all teachers, Rose (2012) cautioned many teachers might be dishonest in describing the importance of compensation due to the altruistic teacher stereotype. Rose (2012) also suggested the majority of teachers are married females, and therefore salary might not be as important as it otherwise would be in a dual-income home. Regardless, it is important to note that teachers are paid less compared to other careers of similar education level and have fewer career advancement opportunities. Studies show teachers are paid 20% less than their counterparts in undergraduate degree positions (Podolsky et al., 2017). Unfortunately, "Teachers reach the top of their salary scale eight to eleven years after entering the profession" (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012, p. 21). Consequently, teachers that remain in the profession are not rewarded for their time and have fewer incentives to stay. While most potential teachers are aware the pay is lower, it is unclear the extent that influences decisions to enter or remain in the profession.

Although the extent to which compensation impacts retention often varies from state to state, district to district, and even teacher to teacher, it is clear that the amount teachers make impacts retention (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Curtis & Wise, 2012; Liang & Akiba, 2015; Schaefer et al., 2012; Sutcher et al., 2016). While some researchers note that compensation is a "decisive factor for teachers' career decisions" (Liang & Akiba, 2015, p. 713), others say that it

is not (Rose, 2012; Shuls & Maranto, 2014). In a study by Rose (2012), teachers were asked which motivators kept them teaching or enticed them to leave. Monetary related answers were always rated lowest. The author explained that, "pay has limited effectiveness in motivating teachers to seek new careers, stay in teaching, or become better teachers" (Rose, 2012, p. 191). More important motivators were related to personal teacher characteristics and working conditions. However, changes to characteristics and conditions are much more difficult than increasing salary: "If raising those levels was easy, it would have been done a long time ago" (Rose, 2012, pp. 193-194). Similarly, Shuls and Maranto (2014) found that nonmonetary incentives were more important for increasing retention rates in high-poverty schools. They explained these results indicated that teachers who are motivated to teach in high-poverty schools are most likely doing it for the "public service mission", rather than for the salary (Shuls & Maranto, 2014, p. 239). The type of incentive is dependent on the specific job and is not the solution for every situation.

While money may not be the most important factor in retaining teachers, it is clear that teachers paid more are less likely to leave (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Fulbeck, 2014). For example, Hughes (2012) found that teachers satisfied with their salary were almost twice as likely to stay in their positions when compared to those who were dissatisfied. Along with salary, financial incentives or bonuses can influence teachers' decisions to remain in the profession. However, the amount of incentive is important. If the value is too small, or if it is just the possibility of more money, the impact on retention is weaker. Fulbeck (2014) found that incentives over $5,000 were associated with a 50% decrease in district departures. A more moderate level of incentives decreased attrition by 36%. If districts can afford large incentive packages there is potential for huge reductions in attrition rates. Considering teacher attrition can

cost schools $20,000 per teacher (Podolsky et al., 2017), a $5,000 incentive may be advantageous. Liang and Akiba (2015) found school districts with initial higher salaries and more students, were more likely to offer incentives. Rural districts were 32% less likely to give incentives than urban/suburban districts (Liang & Akiba, 2015). The lack of incentives could explain why rural and high-poverty districts experience difficulty in preventing teachers from leaving.

School districts often vary the types of incentives offered and to whom they are offered with the aim of more strategic compensation approaches. A common salary-boosting strategy is to move teachers up a level on the predetermined pay scale. This can be more enticing than a one-time cash bonus (Liang and Akiba, 2015). Other financial incentives include loan forgiveness programs for new teachers, stipends for advanced degrees or certificates, bonuses for professional development, signing bonuses, or retention bonuses (Bennett, 2013; Liang & Akiba, 2015). According to a study summary by Bennett (2013), research has shown that focusing pay raises on beginning teachers is more effective than experienced ones. More often, experienced teachers receive the financial incentives (Liang & Akiba, 2015). Bennett (2013) argued that limited district funds would be better spent on new teachers. Correspondingly, Hendricks (2015) found that incentives had less impact on teacher retention decisions the more experience a teacher had. Teachers with experience are typically given the majority of incentives, but researchers suggest that targeting beginning teachers with incentives instead could increase career longevity (Liang & Akiba, 2015).

Compensation factors have the potential to attract more people to the teaching profession. The amount teachers are paid, along with additional bonuses, career advancement prospects, and professional development opportunities have all been found to attract teachers to the field

(Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Curtis & Wise, 2012; Fulbeck, 2014; Hughes, 2012; Liang & Akiba, 2015; Schaefer et al., 2012; Sutcher et al., 2016). However, it is unclear if these incentives have the power to retain teachers (Swai, 2013). While teachers may not admit that money impacts their decision to stay, it is clear that compensation exerts some influence on retention (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Curtis & Wise, 2012; Fulbeck, 2014; Hughes, 2012; Liang & Akiba, 2015; Schaefer et al., 2012; Sutcher et al., 2016). According to research, compensation does not appear to be the most important factor for keeping teachers (Rose, 2012; Shuls & Maranto, 2014). Nevertheless, large incentives and those targeted at beginning teachers could be a helpful step in lessening teacher turnover (Liang & Akiba, 2015). Improving compensation alone will not solve the retention problem but ignoring the problem will make retention more difficult.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of Sher's (1983) Three Cs of teacher retention, which is the theoretical framework for this study. Teacher retention is influenced by personal teacher characteristics, work environment conditions, and compensation. Examining retention components in isolation does not provide complete understanding because the reasons teachers stay or leave their positions cannot be defined by a single factor. All Three Cs of retention, and how they interrelate, must be investigated to fully understand the complexities of the issue.

The next section presented a synthesis of related literature. Teacher characteristics that impact retention begin with teacher preparation and beginning teacher experiences. While some studies indicated preservice teachers were satisfied with their teacher preparation programs (Bledsoe, 2016; Chong, Loh, & Mak, 2014; Conderman et al., 2012; Dharan, 2015; Gorard,

2017; Latifoglu, 2016), others identified preservice teachers lacking necessary skills to succeed in the classroom (Buabeng et al., 2016; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Kindzierski et al., 2013; O'Neill & Stephenson, 2013; Petersen, 2017). Despite discrepancies in the research, many researchers agreed that improvements could, and should be made to teacher preparation programs (Buabeng et al., 2016; Cooper & He, 2012; Gorard, 2017; Kindzierski et al., 2013). Teachers that feel more prepared receive continued learning opportunities and support when they enter the career and are more likely to remain in the profession (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sutcher et al., 2016). Additionally, characteristics such as demographics and personal life elements influence teachers' decision to continue teaching (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Hughes, 2012; Schaefer et al., 2012; UEPC, 2017).

The compensation teachers receive, and the conditions of the work environment, are other influential factors in determining job satisfaction and job retention. Although studies have found that compensation alone will not determine teachers' decisions to remain in teaching, compensation does impact retention (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Curtis & Wise, 2012; Liang & Akiba, 2015; Schaefer et al., 2012; Sutcher et al., 2016). Teachers that are paid more are less likely to leave (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Fulbeck, 2014).

More important to teacher retention than compensation, however, are the working conditions. Repeatedly, mentoring and induction programs have been found beneficial in retaining beginning teachers (Chou, 2010; Clark & Byrnes, 2012; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Huling et al., 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Polikoff et al., 2015; Sadiq et al., 2017; Sebald & Rude, 2015; Wasonga et al., 2015). Furthermore, the level of perceived support from principals highly influences teachers' decisions to stay or leave teaching (Bennett, 2013; Boyd et al. 2011; Buchanan et al., 2013; Burkhauser, 2017; Carlson, 2012; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond,

2017; Curtis & Wise, 2012; Farrell, 2016; Gallant & Riley, 2014; Hughes, Matt, & O'Reilly, 2015; Jackson, 2012; Schaefer et al., 2012). The role of administrators is an important factor in retention. Lacking from the literature, however, is the role superintendents play in retention. As the decision-makers for school districts, understanding their potential influence over retention, either directly or indirectly, should be examined. Also missing from the literature are the specific approaches that principals and superintendents are using to retain teachers. Extant research on retention has largely focused on why teachers leave or stay, rather than on the specific approaches used to keep teachers in their positions.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this multiple case study was to discover educator perceptions of Utah school district approaches to retaining beginning teachers. The term "educator" was used throughout the study to collectively describe the study participants: district leaders, principals, mentors, and beginning teachers. Teacher retention refers to teachers that remain in the same school as the previous year (Ni et al., 2017). Beginning teachers were defined for the study as those who have taught for five years or fewer (Raue & Gray, 2015). In this chapter the design is explained, the research questions are restated, the setting is defined, and the participant sample is described. Then the procedures are delineated in a clear and concise manner. The clear description helps with transferability and establish accountability (O'Leary, 2017). Following the procedures, my role as the researcher in this study is provided. Finally, data collection methods and data analysis procedures are outlined, and the strategies used to establish trustworthiness and ethical considerations are explicated.

Design

Qualitative research begins with a problem and places the researcher in the natural setting to interpret and analyze the data (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, the type of research most appropriate for this study was qualitative because it allowed me to immerse myself in the natural context, speak with individuals, and provide a rich description of the problem. More specifically, this qualitative study employed a multiple case study design. Case study research consists of an in-depth study of a phenomenon, in the natural setting, for a set period of time (Creswell, 2013; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010; O'Leary, 2017; Yin, 2014). O'Leary (2017) explained, "A case study

is all about depth; it requires you to dig, and to dig deep" (p. 215). Case study researchers delve

deeply into a phenomenon to provide a detailed description and elicit understanding.

The type of case study design chosen for this study was a multiple case study. Multiple

case studies are appropriate when the focus of the study involves more than one case (Yin,

2014). One benefit to using a multiple case study design is that the results are "often considered

more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust" (Yin, 2014,

p. 57). Similar to the benefits of repeated studies, multiple cases allow for more information

about the topic and increase the transferability of the results. Since the focus of this study was

looking at how school districts in Utah retain beginning teachers, a multiple case design was

appropriate because there are multiple districts in Utah. Simply exploring one district would not

have provided enough information. However, investigating all 41 districts in Utah was not

feasible for this study. The two cases selected provided more information without sacrificing the

depth required for case studies.

One of the purposes of case studies is to describe a phenomenon (Yin, 2014). In the

present case, the phenomenon was beginning teacher retention in Utah. Perspectives from district

educators provided insight into the retention issue and information about district retention

approaches. Yin (2014) explained that each case study must be bound by defining who is

included, where the study will take place, and when the study will occur. This study was

bounded to two Utah school districts and included participants who are educators actively

involved in the retention of beginning teachers such as: district leaders, principals, mentors, and

beginning teachers. Each case was studied in its own setting and context. Data was gathered

from multiple sources to achieve triangulation, thereby strengthening the study (Creswell, 2013;

Yin, 2014). Collection methods for this study included individual interviews, a focus group

interview, and documents. The study occurred after permissions were obtained from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and school districts.

Research Questions

Central Question

How do educators describe Utah school district approaches to retaining beginning teachers?

Sub-questions

SQ1: What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address teacher characteristics as an approach to retaining beginning teachers?

SQ2: What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address working conditions as an approach to retaining beginning teachers?

SQ3: What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address teacher compensation as an approach to retaining beginning teachers

Setting

The setting for this study included two different districts in the state of Utah. One district was suburban, and the other was rural. Yin (2014) explained that in multiple case studies the notion of replication logic is applied. These two cases were chosen to be "theoretical replications" because the results would likely vary (Yin, 2014, p. 57). Past research has indicated there are differences in retention between urban/suburban, and rural districts (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Schaefer et al., 2012; Sutcher et al., 2016). Investigating two different districts, in two different locations provided a broader understanding of how districts are retaining teachers.

The first district was a suburban district in the north-central part of the state. The City

District (pseudonym) has a population of about 3,540 students and employs 118 teachers. There is one high school (10th-12th grade), two junior high schools (7th-9th grade), and six elementary schools (K-6th). The average class size is 25 students. Currently 35% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch, and 11% of students have an IEP. The demographics of the teachers are 60% White, 30% Black, 8% Hispanic, and 2% Asian, with 30% male and 70% female. All teachers are considered "highly qualified" and vary in experience from 1-32 years of teaching.

The second district was a rural district in the north-western part of the state. The Rural District (pseudonym) covers 7,286 square miles and serves a population of about 16,000 students. The average class size is 22 students and approximately 39% of students are on free or reduced lunch. The district has 15 elementary schools, three junior highs, four high schools, one K-12 school, one online school, and one alternative school. According to the most recent test scores, 38% are proficient in reading and 40% are proficient in math. The student population is 81% White, 13% Hispanic, 0.7% Black, 0.7% Native American, and 0.4% Asian, with 52% male and 48% female. Currently employed in the district are 677 teachers.

Participants

An essential step in case study research is to define and bound the case. Defining the case includes describing participants that are included and those who will be excluded from the study (Yin, 2014). The research sampling techniques that were utilized in the present study to identify the best participants included purposeful sampling, criterion sampling, and maximum variation sampling. Purposeful sampling was used to identify the specific participants and ultimately the sample size (Creswell, 2013). The cases for this study included two school districts in Utah purposefully selected to include both rural and urban/suburban perspectives. The participants included 16 educators selected from the targeted districts. Criterion sampling narrowed the focus

of possible participants. Criterion sampling is appropriate when participants or cases are chosen based on certain characteristics (Creswell, 2013). The criterion for participant selection in this study incorporated educators involved in the retention of beginning teachers such as district leaders, principals, mentors, and beginning teachers. The beginning teachers selected were limited to beginning teachers who had taught for five years or less (Raue & Gray, 2015). The participants interviewed for the City District included: one assistant superintendent, one human resources director, one principal, two mentors, and two beginning teachers. Participants from the Rural District included: one superintendent, one human resources director, three district mentors, one principal, one school-level mentor, and two beginning teachers.

One purpose of qualitative research is to understand the phenomenon under investigation by hearing directly from the people involved (Creswell, 2013). Yin (2014) argued that a central aspect of understanding cases is collecting a variety of perspectives. Gathering information from a variety of sources and from a variety of perspectives aids in providing a complete description of the case. Therefore, using maximum variation achieved a more complete description of the cases. Maximum variation occurs when participants and sites are chosen to include as much diversity as possible (Creswell, 2013). Participants chosen for this study came from a variety of educator positions within the district to gather information and hear from a variety of perspectives. Additionally, snowball sampling aided in gathering participants based on participant suggestions of other willing and appropriate participants (Creswell, 2013). The superintendents gave recommendations of which district employees and principals should be contacted. Participants shared contact information of other teachers that fit the criteria and would be willing to participate.

Procedures

The procedures for this study began with seeking preliminary permission from two Utah School Districts as part of the process to seek approval from the Liberty University IRB. Appendix A contains a list of the procedures for this study. Both districts were contacted via email containing the permission form, purpose of the study, and to confirm willingness to participate (See Appendices B and C). Following a successful proposal defense, permission from the Liberty University IRB was gained to conduct the study (See Appendix D). Once approval from the Liberty University IRB and school districts was granted, the City and Rural school districts were contacted to determine when the research would officially begin for each district. In accordance with multiple case study protocol, one district was investigated at a time.

The protocol for conducting the study was replicated for each district (Yin, 2014). However, the districts varied in their approach to participant selection. First, the superintendents were contacted to schedule an individual interview. The superintendents were the first participants interviewed in each district because they are the leaders of the districts and were able to provide direction for the selection of additional participants. Prior to their individual interviews, the superintendents were asked for suggestions of district employees, school principals, mentors, and beginning teachers to contact. The City District assistant superintendent provided a list of beginning teachers and mentors. Additionally, he connected me with the HR director's contact information. The Rural District superintendent put me in contact with a district employee who contacted the principals, mentors, and beginning teachers prior to sending me their contact information. Once the potential participants agreed to participate, then she forwarded their information for me so that I could set up interviews.

Individual interviews were conducted in a location and at a time that was convenient for

the participants. Consent forms were signed at the time of the individual interviews that described the purpose of the study, voluntary nature, ability to withdraw, and assured anonymity (See Appendix C). The individual interviews were audio-recorded for transcription. During the individual interviews, principals, mentors, and teachers were asked for their willingness to participate in a focus group interview—the second type of data collection for this study. I personally transcribed both the individual interviews and the focus group interviews.

The final form of data collection for this study was documents. Pertinent documents were gathered throughout the entire collection phase. Documents were gathered from the district office, Internet, and directly from the participants. The participants were asked for any relevant documents prior to the interviews and were asked to bring them to the interview.

After the data from the individual interviews and documents were collected and analyzed from the first district, the process began again with the second district. Then, for those participants who agreed to participate in a focus group interview, an email was sent out inviting them to attend. The focus group interview was held at a location that was central to both districts. Following the focus group interview, a cross-case analysis was performed. The data was analyzed based on Yin's (2014) guidelines and in relation to Sher's (1983) Three Cs of retention. The data was aggregated into generalized themes to create an overall description of the cases (Creswell, 2013).

The Researcher's Role

My role in this study is as a researcher, interviewing and gathering information to discover what school districts in Utah are doing to retain beginning teachers. I have no relationship with the participants, which allowed me to hear their stories and pay attention to their answers without bias. Although I attended schools in the City District during my formative

years and am familiar with the context, I graduated from high school over a decade ago, and I have not remained in contact with any teachers. Furthermore, the superintendent and principals have all changed since I attended school in the district, as have many of the teachers. I have no connections to the Rural District. Although I grew up in Utah, I have lived and taught outside the state of Utah for almost a decade, and feel very much like an outsider coming in. This perspective helped me to remain objective and discover the retention approaches these districts are utilizing. My experiences as a beginning teacher may have influenced how the data was analyzed. However, I kept my personal notes separate from the data, as Yin (2014) suggests, to let the data speak for itself.

Data Collection

Three different types of data collection methods were utilized in this study, including individual interviews, a focus group interview, and documents. Using three different data sources not only strengthened the validity through triangulation, but also provide a detailed, thorough description of the phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). The data collection process initially occurred independently for each case, and then collectively. The individual interviews were conducted, and documents gathered for one district at a time. Collecting the data in this manner allowed me to provide a detailed description of each case (Yin, 2014). After the data was collected and analyzed for the first district, the process was replicated in the second district. Finally, participants met collectively for a focus group interview. A cross-case analysis and synthesis were completed to generate overall themes and conclusions.

Individual Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were the main source of data collection for this study. Interviews are considered by Yin (2014) to be the most important form of data collection for case

studies. Participants for the interviews included superintendents, district employees, principals, mentors, and teachers. The interviews were conducted at a date, time, and location that was convenient for the participants. Each interview lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed by me for data analysis.

There was a list of questions to guide the interviews that focused on retention approaches and beginning teachers' experiences (See Appendices E and F). The interviews began with questions that eased participants into "guided conversations rather than structured inquiries" (Yin, 2014, p. 110). Then, the questions focused on the participants' perspectives of beginning teachers and district policies related to faculty in general. Finally, the questions explored teacher retention and the approaches districts are using to retain teachers. Although there were questions to guide the interviews, the semi-structured nature allowed me to keep the interviews "fluid" by adding or altering questions depending on the situation (Yin, 2014, p.110). I found that some of the questions needed rewording, reordering, or explaining during the interview to maintain a more natural flow. As the researcher I tried to "ask good questions, be a good listener, stay adaptive, and avoid bias" (Yin, 2014, p. 73). I kept notes, tracking my thoughts and observations while I listened to the participants. During the interview I took personal notes, but mainly tried to focus my full attention on the participants. Personally transcribing the interviews allowed me to continually review the information. As I went through the printed transcripts to code the data, I was able to thoroughly absorb the details with repeated readings (Creswell, 2013).

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little about yourself.

2. Describe your current role in the district.

3. Why did you decide to become an educator?

4. What do you believe makes the first few years of teaching difficult?

5. What are the requirements from the school, district, or state for beginning teachers?

6. How does the district help teachers during the first few years of teaching?

7. Describe a time in your career that caused you to feel like leaving the profession.

8. What are the reasons you believe many teachers leave the field of education?

9. Why have you chosen to remain in education?

10. What are your thoughts regarding the turnover rate of beginning teachers in Utah, which is more than double the national average of 7%?

11. Do you believe teacher retention is a problem in your school or district?

12. What approaches does your district use to prevent teachers from leaving?

13. What approach(es) do you believe would be most effective in preventing teachers from leaving?

14. What factors do you believe influence teacher retention?

15. How has your district addressed compensation, working conditions, and teacher characteristics in their teacher retention approaches?

The first three questions were intended to ease the participants into a conversation (Yin, 2014). Beginning with introductory questions helped create a comfortable environment to elicit dialogue (Moustakas, 1994). Question two was intended to identify the participant's position in the district and duties related to that specific role. Understanding the key positions and responsibilities of district workers helped answer the central question of this study which sought to discover how educators describe Utah school district approaches to retaining beginning teachers.

Questions four through six focused on the beginning teacher. Repeatedly established in the literature was the difficulty of the first few years of teaching (Bennett et al., 2013; Chong et al., 2014; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Kim & Cho, 2014). Question four sought to determine what these participants in the City and Rural school districts believe makes the first few years of teaching so difficult. Because the perspectives of the teachers can often be different than those of administrative leaders, identifying multiple perspectives is key to addressing retention and attrition issues (Hughes et al., 2015; Schaefer et al., 2012).

Question five related to the state and district policies for beginning teachers in Utah. In the state of Utah, beginning teachers are required to complete certain steps in the EYE program such as maintain a portfolio, take Praxis tests, and partner with a mentor (Utah Administrative Code, 2017). The EYE program is state-mandated, but districts are left to enforce it. Important insight was gained by hearing from educators about how the program is actually being implemented and other policies each district may have.

The purpose of question six was to ascertain the resources and support that are being offered to beginning teachers. Induction programs have been found to be helpful in assisting beginning teachers with the difficult first few years (Chou, 2010; Clark & Byrnes, 2012; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Huling et al., 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Polikoff et al., 2015; Sadiq et al., 2017; Sebald & Rude, 2015; Wasonga et al., 2015). Identifying the ways these districts are supporting beginning teachers helps determine the impact induction programs have on teachers' career decisions. Additionally, there was the possibility to discover areas of success or areas that need improvement in supporting beginning teachers.

Finally, questions seven through 15 refer to teacher attrition and retention. The purpose of questions seven, eight, and nine was to hear the perspective and personal story of the

participants. Qualitative research is founded on gathering rich information from individuals (Creswell, 2013). Asking personal questions helped maintain the flow of conversation and allowed for personal stories to emerge. Question seven prompted participants to provide a personal example that made them consider quitting.

Teacher attrition has been an issue in education for several decades (Boe & Gilford, 1992; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 1984; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2016). Therefore, question eight sought to gain the participants' opinion about teacher attrition.

Question nine asked the participants to explain why they have stayed in education. Several past studies have asked teachers why they have left or why they have stayed in education (Bennett et al., 2013; Curtis & Wise, 2012; Harfitt, 2015; Latifoglu, 2016). However, perspectives of Utah educators, regarding reasons for staying or leaving, have not been investigated (USBOE, 2017). Hearing reasons that are keeping individuals in education is equally important to the reasons they leave.

The purpose of the question 10 was to address the high attrition rate of teachers in Utah. Compared to the national average teacher attrition rate of 7%, Utah's teacher attrition rate is 12% (UEPC, 2017). Possible reasons for this attrition rate could be that compared to other states, Utah pays teachers less, has larger class sizes, and spends the least amount per pupil (UEPC, 2017; USOE, 2016b). Hearing the participants' perspectives on why the attrition rate is unusually high in Utah provided further insight to determine which factors impact attrition and identify possible approaches that could help improve retention.

Question 11 narrowed the focus on teacher retention from the state of Utah to the district level. Although teacher retention is a statewide issue, the participants may not feel it is an issue

at their school or in their district. It was interesting to hear how the participant responses differed according to the school district.

Question 12 was intended to determine specific approaches the districts are taking to retain teachers which ties directly to the central question of the study. Past studies have determined factors that influence teachers' decisions to stay or leave the profession (Bennett et al., 2013; Curtis & Wise, 2012; Harfitt, 2015; Latifoglu, 2016), yet no studies have investigated school district approaches toward teacher retention. Asking this question was key to determining how school districts are approaching teacher retention.

While question 12 focused on the general policies or approaches of the district, question 13 concentrated on participants' perspectives. Question 13 was intended to hear the participants' perspectives on what they believed would help teachers remain in the profession.

Question 14 asked about the factors that influence retention and are related to Sher's (1983) Three Cs. Question 14 is more general to see what factors the participants produce and determine if their answers relate to Sher's (1983) three categories.

The final individual interview question related directly to the research sub-questions in this study that asked what districts are doing related to Characteristics, Conditions, and Compensation (Sher, 1983). Determining what districts are doing to retain teachers is essential to understanding retention and attrition issues.

Because the interview questions were flexible, questions were reworded or added during the interview (Yin, 2014).

Focus Group Interview

Focus groups are considered another form of interviews (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). In this study, the same type of protocol used for the individual interviews was used for the focus

group interview (Yin, 2014). The participants were invited to participate in one focus group interview. Focus group participants were limited to principals, mentors, and beginning teachers only, because the presence of supervising district leaders, such as superintendents, could have impacted the comfort level of the other participants and thus impacting their responses to the focus group interview questions. The focus group included a total of seven participants: three from the Rural District and four from the City District. There were two beginning teachers, three mentor teachers, one district mentor, and one principal in attendance. Three participants were from the Rural District (Larry, Pam, & Quinn) and four were from the City District (Cathy, Deb, Ellen, & Gabby). The variety of positions and districts allowed for a rich discussion regarding teacher retention and difficulties.

The focus group interview was video recorded to distinguish who was speaking and was transcribed by me. The location of the focus group interview was public library that was central to the participants and lasted for about 80 minutes. Participants that attended were provided with dinner and a five-dollar gift-card as incentives. The questions were written in a way to elicit group discussion as well as clarification and validation of themes that emerged during the individual interviews (See Appendix G). Due to the fluidity of the conversation, the questions were used as a guide but not a rigid format.

Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Tell the group your name, school, how long you have been teaching, and what your current position is.

2. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the term teacher retention?

3. How significant do you believe the problem of teacher retention is in Utah?

4. What do you believe are the negative aspects of teacher turnover? What are the positives?

5. What do you believe is the solution to the teacher retention problem?

6. Which of the following do you believe matters the most in addressing teacher retention issues: teacher characteristics, teacher working conditions, teacher compensation, or something else?

7. How effective are districts at solving retention problems?

8. Do you have anything else you would like to add about teacher retention specifically, or this study in general?

The focus group interview questions were specifically designed to encourage discussion among members of the focus group (Yin, 2014). The first focus group interview question was intended to learn background information about the participants and to provide an introduction to the focus group interview. The purpose of question two was to establish a comfortable environment for discussion (Yin, 2014) and prompt group discussion about teacher retention.

The third question asked the participants about their perspectives on teacher retention in education and whether they believed it is a significant problem, while question four asked participants to consider the advantages and disadvantages of turnover. Researchers note that all occupations experience some level of turnover (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) and that some turnover can be positive (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

The purpose of the fifth question was to stimulate conversation among the participants regarding possible solutions to teacher retention. Educators are experts in the field; therefore, their ideas are valid (Snyder, 2012).

Question six related to Sher's (1983) Three Cs of retention and the sub-questions of this study. The question sought to determine if Sher's (1983) Three Cs covers the most important retention factors or if there is something novel that warrants consideration.

Because this study was focused on two districts, question seven concentrated on a possible solution for retention and whether it can be solved at a district level.

The final focus group interview question provided participants with an opportunity to share anything else pertaining to retention

Documents

Documents used in this study provided a more holistic case study picture, verified information received during the individual interviews and focus group interview, and triangulated the data (Yin, 2014). One source of documents was the Internet. Although not all online information can be trusted, the Internet provides a wealth of knowledge that is crucial in case study research (Yin, 2014). Utilizing the web to gather information from state and school district websites helped to provide context and clarity of policy. Determining how districts are implementing the state-mandated EYE program for beginning teachers and if they have any other retention-specific policies was an important part of this study. Other documents included district papers, pamphlets, books, or articles that were shown during interviews that pertain to teacher retention. As I examined these and related documents that surfaced, I searched for specific approaches that the districts are taking to retain teachers and information that corroborated the participants responses.

Documents collection occurred throughout the interview process. Prior to the interviews, each participant was asked to bring any documents they believed pertinent. The Human Resource Directors for each district, the Rural District Mentors, and one mentor teacher provided documents for this study. The documents included new teacher orientation and training schedules, mentoring program information, district brochures, and compensation packages. Documents verified information from the interviews and provided additional information

regarding retention (Yin, 2014).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a challenging component of any research design, including case study research. Yin (2014) stipulated that case studies are challenging because the analysis portion is unclear. There is no single method of analyzing case studies and therefore, "much depends on a researcher's own style of rigorous empirical thinking, along with the sufficient presentation of evidence, and careful consideration of alternative interpretations" (Yin, 2014, p. 133). Despite the lack of clarity in case study research analysis, it is important to have a clear analysis protocol determined before data collection begins (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) outlined a clear procedure for conducting multiple case studies that was used in this study. The steps include: selecting a theory or concept; choosing appropriate cases; investigating and analyzing each case separately; determining cross-case conclusions; checking those conclusions against the theory; and writing the final report.

The data analysis process for this multiple case study began during data collection as I took notes during the individual interviews, the focus group interview, and while collecting documents (Yin, 2014). Throughout the process I searched for common themes that emerged. My notes were kept separate from the raw data so that I could revisit the data over time and draw new conclusions. I maintained a "chain of evidence" to keep a clear record of the data and provide transparency (Yin, 2014, p.127). Following data collection, detailed descriptions of the cases and their settings were written (Creswell, 2013). Because this was a multiple case study, each case was initially described and analyzed individually before being compared across cases (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014).

After the individual interviews and the focus group interview were conducted, I listened to the recordings and read the transcriptions repeatedly to make notes and highlight copies of the data. These notes and highlights coded the participants' words for significant ideas (Yin, 2014). The data was reviewed repeatedly as I "play[ed] with [the] data" (Yin, 2014, p. 135) to discover common themes or categories. Since I transcribed the data, I was able to hear the interviews several times and truly immerse myself. Transcribing the data myself helped during the analysis phase because participant responses were ingrained in my mind. A "word table" of themes was created for each of the cases separately (Yin, 2014, p. 164). Then, for a cross-case synthesis the tables were compared to determine similarities and differences. The analysis revealed overall themes and developed an in-depth holistic narrative description of the phenomenon.

Additionally, a form of pattern matching determined if the data fit with the Three Cs categories of retention determined by Sher (1983). Yin (2014) explained that pattern matching occurs when the data observed in the field are compared to a theory. In this study, the data was analyzed to determine its fit with the retention categories of Characteristics, Conditions, and Compensation, or if new categories were discovered. Triangulation compared the data received from all three sources for consistency (Yin, 2014). In summary, the data gathered from each case created a detailed description of each case and generated overall themes. The information was organized into tables for easy comparison. A cross-case synthesis highlighted the similarities and differences in the perspectives of district retention approaches in the two districts. The results were tested against Sher's (1983) Three Cs to ascertain the accuracy of this concept. Ultimately, the goal was to achieve a "high-quality analysis" to ensure a high-quality study (Yin, 2014, p. 168).

Trustworthiness

The purpose of any research undertaking is to add to the body of literature in a meaningful way (O'Leary, 2017). It is essential then that certain steps be taken to confirm that the findings are trustworthy. Scholars note that a qualitative researcher must take purposeful steps, provide clear descriptions, and meticulously analyze the data (O'Leary, 2017). Trustworthiness includes findings that are credible, dependable, confirmable, and transferable. Addressing each of these components is essential to create "research that has been approached as disciplined rigorous inquiry and is therefore likely to be accepted as a valued contribution to knowledge" (O'Leary, 2017, p. 56). The following sections outline the steps that were taken in this study to establish the trustworthiness of the findings.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the accuracy of the information being presented. An important way to provide credibility to the study was the use of member checks. Member checks involve showing participants the findings to acknowledge the accuracy of the description (Creswell, 2013). The participants received a copy of the study report to verify the accuracy of their statements (Yin, 2014). Allowing participants to check the report added to the credibility and accuracy of the study.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability relate to the consistency of the findings in order to ensure that the findings are dependable; therefore, triangulation was used. Triangulation is the use of multiple data sources to "corroborate data obtained by one method by using other methods" (Gall et al., 2010, p. 14). The data sources for this study included individual interviews, a focus group interview, and documents. Using multiple sources made the findings

more dependable. A research professional reviewed the findings to ensure the findings are confirmable (Creswell, 2013). I maintained a memo log of personal notes throughout the entire process (Yin, 2014). The raw data was kept separate from my personal notes and analysis, so that outside readers can draw their own conclusions from the data, or at the very least, understand how conclusions were drawn (Yin, 2014).

Transferability

Transferability determines whether the findings and research strategies used can be applied to another setting. The best way to create transferable data is to provide rich, thick descriptions about the participants, the site, and their experiences. Then the readers can "determine whether the findings can be transferred" (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). A "chain of evidence" was kept so that the research procedures and data gathered are clear (Yin, 2014, p. 127). Maintaining a level of transparency and providing detailed descriptions helped establish a study that can be repeated in another setting.

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Ethical Considerations

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In every research study it is essential to consider and address ethical issues. The first step in the present study was to obtain approval from the IRB before any data was collected. The district superintendents and school boards provided site approval. In accordance with research ethics, the safety and well-being of the participants was of utmost concern. Participation in this study was completely voluntary, and the participants had the ability to withdraw at any time without penalty. The use of pseudonyms maintained assured confidentiality of the participants. The purpose of the study was told explicitly to the participants prior to their agreement to participate (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). The purpose was included in the initial email sent, as well as explained as part of the individual interview and focus group interview protocol. The

participants were assured of anonymity when signing the consent forms. To maintain privacy, data will be kept on a password locked computer and in a locked filing cabinet for seven years. Finally, the data was reported as it was revealed.

Summary

Creswell (2013) enumerated several key components of any "good qualitative study" (p. 53), including "detailed methods, a rigorous approach to data collection, data analysis, and report writing" (p. 54). Also important were ethical considerations and the presence of the researcher (Creswell, 2013). This chapter described a sound, qualitative research investigation by clearly depicting the design and procedures used in this study. A multiple case study design was most appropriate for this study because it allowed for an in-depth examination of two different school districts' retention approaches. The research questions clearly framed this study and connected it to a theoretical base (Sher, 1983). The setting of Utah was appropriate due to the major issues with teacher attrition the state is facing. While the attrition rates are clear, the approaches being taken by the districts to retain teachers are unclear (USOE, 2016b). Gathering the participants purposefully, based on criteria and variation, resulted in a detailed description of Utah school district approaches to addressing retention. In describing my role as the researcher, I acknowledged the bias that I brought into the study. Multiple data sources included interviews, a focus group interview, and documents. Data analysis followed the guidelines set forth by Yin (2014). Issues regarding trustworthiness and ethics were minimized to the extent possible. Overall, this chapter summarized the plan for this study followed that sought to discover Utah school district approaches to retaining beginning teachers.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this case study was to discover educator perceptions of Utah school district approaches to retaining beginning teachers. Two different school districts in Utah were selected as "theoretical replications" that assumed the results would vary (Yin, 2014, p. 57). One district was a small urban district, while the other was a large rural district. Each case was primarily analyzed and coded individually, then a cross-case analysis was conducted. This study utilized three different forms of data to generate overall themes and descriptions of the cases. Five overarching themes were discovered: teacher characteristics, working conditions, compensation, community, and difficult job. The main form of data came from individual interviews with 16 educators. The second form of data was a combined focus group of seven participants from both districts. Finally, documents were collected from participants and district websites to enhance triangulation. Provided in the following subsections are descriptions of the participants, then the cases, and finally the results.

Participants

The participants for this study included 16 educators from the City and Rural districts. The City District participants were seven educators from the district and school level and included the assistant superintendent, the director of human resources, one principal, two mentor teachers, and two beginning teachers. The first individual interview was with the assistant superintendent. Prior to his interview he emailed me a list of principals, mentor teachers, and beginning teachers, along with their contact information. The second individual interview was with the director of human resources, several hours later, on the same day as the individual interview with the assistant superintendent. After the first two individual interviews, I emailed

the other educators to arrange their individual interviews. Because school was out for the

summer, it was difficult to get responses initially. However, once I was able to secure a few

participants, I utilized snowball sampling to gather the remainder of the participants.

The participants from the Rural District were nine educators, including the

superintendent, human resources director, three district mentors, one principal, one mentor

teacher, and two beginning teachers. Although I planned to gather participants in with a similar

manner to the City District, the process went differently for the Rural District. After I contacted

the superintendent for district permission, he put me in contact with the Director of Assessment,

Accountability and Research for the district. She contacted the participants for me and sent me

the contact information of those that were willing to participate.

All the participants were very professional and took the interviews seriously. Even

though it was their summer break, they were willing to take the time to meet with me. All the

individual interviews were conducted at a time and location that was convenient for the

participants. Because most of the schools were still closed for the summer, the participants were

willing to meet with me at the district offices, and one participant even allowed me into her home

for the interview. Table 1 provides an overall depiction of the participant names (pseudonyms),

district, gender, years of experience, and their current position in the district; detailed

descriptions of each of the participants are also provided.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Name	Case	Gender	Years of Experience	Position
Allen	City District	Male	31	Assistant Superintendent
Brett	City District	Male	25	Human Resources Director
Cathy	City District	Female	24	Principal
Deb	City District	Female	20	Elementary Mentor Teacher
Ellen	City District	Female	17	Elementary Instructional Coach
Frank	City District	Male	2	Elementary Beginning Teacher
Gabby	City District	Female	4	Elementary Beginning Teacher
Hank	Rural District	Male	20	Superintendent
John	Rural District	Male	20	Human Resources
Karen	Rural District	Female	26	District Mentor
Larry	Rural District	Male	19	District Mentor
Marie	Rural District	Female	21	District Mentor
Ned	Rural District	Male	8	Elementary Principal
Pam	Rural District	Female	37	Junior High Mentor Teacher
Quinn	Rural District	Female	3	Elementary Beginning Teacher
Robert	Rural District	Male	2	Junior High Beginning Teacher

Allen

Allen is the assistant superintendent in the City District. He professed to love education and his position. He conveyed a clear passion for the job. During his individual interview, he was very articulate and able to convey his thoughts clearly. I observed his responses were thoughtful and diplomatic, perhaps due to his experience as an assistant superintendent and being a seasoned educator leader. For example, when I asked him if retention was a problem in his district, he reframed the response to explicate that every lost teacher was a problem, rather than simply saying yes or no. Allen noted that teachers are his priority, and indeed, he seems to care deeply about their well-being. Allen professed to strive to make the best decisions for teachers, even if they are not always received that way. He attempts to maintain a positive outlook, looking past the negatives of his job and to what he feels are the numerous positive aspects that go unnoticed. I observed that he is a caring person who knows how to connect to people. I also noticed his people-centered skill in his ease with me during his interview and confirmed it when another teacher said he likes to just stop by and hang out. He knows how to build relationships he believes are important for retention.

Brett

Brett is the human resources director for the City District. Initially, Brett went into education to make a difference. He was an idealist wanting to better the world in some way. He loved spending time with kids and enjoyed being a teacher. However, the realities of life and needing to provide for his family caused him to move into administration. He explained that is what has kept him in the profession—the ability to make more money and still be in education. Family appeared to be very important to him based on what he said and how his office looked. He had college memorabilia from his children's schools and not his own. He believes that

teachers deserve to earn a livable wage for the important job they do working with children. Once teachers are given a fair salary, he emphasized repeatedly the importance of the school climate and the people that work there. He also emphasized the importance of helping teachers feel supported and appreciated. As a principal he tried to make an effort to do just that. Now as a district leader he continues to look for ways to help recognize and support teachers.

Cathy

Cathy is an elementary school principal in the City District. It is clear to see how passionate Cathy is about education and her role as principal. Several times during the interview she got emotional talking about her reason for being in education and her hope that she truly is making a difference. She clearly loves what she is doing and puts both her heart and soul into it. She spoke of the teachers as her kids, and it is important to her to always have their back. Since she was a teacher first, her goal is to never forget what it was like as a teacher and tries to remember that as she has to be the bearer of bad news to her already stressed out teachers. She makes an effort to create a climate of open communication with her teachers and tries to listen to their opinions to help her make decisions for the school. She is the first to admit she does not have all the answers and values their input. The bottom line for her is the students. Her decisions are ultimately based on the students and how those decisions will benefit them.

Deb

Deb is a mentor teacher in the City District. Deb became a teacher and has stayed a teacher because she loves working with kids. In fact, she said that she hates just about everything else related to her job except for the students. If it were not for the students, she would not still be teaching. Although a seasoned veteran teacher now, Deb is the first to admit that her career started off rocky. Her first year of teaching she almost quit. On the first day of school she found

herself in the principal's office crying and asking for help. Her humility allowed her to get the help she needed and because of the support from her principal, vice principal, and counselor she was able to survive her first year and has continued to teach for 19 more. She attributes her success to her willingness to ask for help and for a supportive staff. She believes that many teacher are too afraid to ask for help and so they fail. She also believes that the school climate and people you work with are the most important factor in teacher retention, since it obviously retained her. She emphasized the importance of getting more teachers and support staff in schools. Along with better training at the college level, more people in the building will help keep teachers from leaving. According to Deb, the solution to retention however, will take a whole community involving the government, universities, districts, and schools. Although she apologized for focusing on the negative aspects of education she still believes in education and has hope that it will continue to improve.

Ellen

Ellen is an instructional coach in the City District. She has taught for 18 years, and this will be her first year moving out of the classroom and into a coaching role. Like many educators, Ellen went into the profession because of family. Both parents and several members of her extended family were educators. She spoke of her natural ability and love for teaching. Very eloquently, she was able to describe the difficulties that teachers face in this tough, yet important profession. She emphasized the number of expectations put on teacher both internally and externally. All of these expectations, along with the long hours and amount of work is overwhelming. Many teachers, including herself, do not feel like they are meeting all those expectations. Although pay is important and can be helpful, she explained that for herself and most teachers, money is not the biggest factor in retention. Ellen argued that money spent on

support staff, counselors, and other people would be more beneficial and more appreciated by teachers than simply raising salaries. Although this job is difficult, she loves what she does, and she loved it enough to come back after a nine-year hiatus. Interestingly enough, she says what keeps her in the job is the insurance for her family and being close to retirement. Ellen urged that the voices of teacher be listened to or the problems in education will continue to get worse, especially for the students.

Frank

Frank is a beginning teacher in the City District with two years of experience. Frank became a teacher almost accidentally. He originally planned to become a lawyer but decided he did not want to go into so much debt for a career he was unsure about. He was working as a para-educator at an elementary school and enjoyed the job and the people he worked with. The principal told him that he would make a great teacher. His mother, who worked at another district's office, also encouraged him to become a teacher, so he decided to go for it. He had the option to teach at a high school or at the elementary that he had been working. Since he liked his principal so much he decided to stay at the elementary—a decision that surprised even himself. Although the first year was really challenging, he enjoys what he does. He declared he enjoys interacting with the students and helping them to succeed. His favorite is to help those kids who are really struggling to improve, even if that's not reflected in test scores. Despite his love of teaching he already plans to become an administrator because teacher pay is so low. As a male he notices the lack of male teachers and attributes that to the low wages. He is excited to move to administration though because he has seen how important good principals can be for the whole climate of the school.

Gabby

Gabby is a beginning teacher in the City District and has taught for four years. Gabby described her role and her viewpoints in a very matter of fact way. A few times she even stated that her comments might come across as mean. Her mother was a teacher, and although she did not think teaching would be a good fit for her, she loves the job and feels she has found her natural fit. She expressed love of teaching and children. She wants other teachers to succeed. Even though she is a beginning teacher, her principal trusted her with two student teachers. As a mentor to those student teachers she really wanted to give them experiences to succeed and help them be prepared for teaching. She emphasized several times the importance of letting people know the reality of the job—both the good and bad—so they know going in what it is really like. She believes that teachers should not complain about pay or dealing with tough kids because that is the job. Repeatedly she emphasized the importance of the school environment and finding happiness in where you work and who you work with. Relationships and school environment are key to retention, in her opinion. She did not go into education to make millions and is content with the difficult career she has chosen.

Hank

Hank is the superintendent of the Rural District and was very personable and talkative. He immediately took control of the interview as a leader of school district is probably accustomed to. As he spoke, he quoted from a variety of sources of current literature in education. His journey to the superintendent position was not a typical one. He began as a clinical psychologist in the healthcare field. Dealing with the very tough situations was difficult for him and he admitted he felt burned out. A superintendent that he interacted with suggested that he go into education. So Hank went back to school and earned his Educational Specialist

degree in administration. He worked as a school psychologist for four years to fulfill his requirements in the school, then became a principal, and finally a superintendent. Since he did not start out as a teacher, he acknowledged he had to work hard to gain teachers support and trust. He made an effort, and still makes an effort, to build relationships and demonstrate that he is not disconnected from the teachers. As a principal he attended the same trainings as the teachers because he admits he does not know everything. As superintendent, he makes an effort to substitute teach and visit schools monthly. It is evident that building relationships, collaboration, and humility is important to Hank. With his psychology background, he recognizes the importance of social and emotional factors for teachers and students. The district was the first in the state to hire a counselor for every school and provides wellness activities for teachers. He emphasized the importance of self-care to avoid burnout and helping heal discouraged teacher hearts.

John

John is the human resources director for the Rural District. During the interview he articulated his passion for his job, education in general, and helping the teachers any way that he can. He went into education for children. He loves interacting with them and seeing them succeed. That love of children motivates him to still spend time in the schools as much as he can to stay connected to what is important. He understands the importance of his job to help teachers succeed in order to help students succeed. He tries to be an advocate for teachers with the state legislature, who he feels causes the biggest problems for the district. With so many new bills each year and not enough funding, the state makes it difficult for districts to solve retention issues. He emphasized repeatedly the challenges that come from the legislature and the lack of support teachers feel from them. When it comes to preparing teachers, John believes that more

student teaching would help prepare them for the realities of the classroom. That is why he believes mentoring is crucial for the success of new teachers. As the main recruiter for the district he attempts to sell the benefits of living in a more rural district and strives to change people's negative perceptions. He travels all over the country recruiting teachers that will fit best in their district.

Karen

Karen began her career as an elementary teacher but has served as a Rural District mentor for the last four years. She explained how she loved teaching and loved the interactions with the students. Now she claims that the teachers are like her students, but she still misses the daily interaction with children. She had always wanted to be a teacher and has never even thought of leaving the profession. To her, the most important factor in retention is relationships. Teaching is a tough job with lots of extras, but according to Karen, if positive relationships exist with the people at school it makes all the difference.

Larry

Larry is the newest district mentor in the Rural District. Before working as a district mentor he served as a middle school teacher, instructional coach, and principal. He wanted to be an educator to be able to work with children and make a difference in their lives. He believes that teachers struggle because of the amount of work that is involved in teaching. Being responsible for children's learning comes with a lot of pressure and not a lot of pay. The main reason he left the classroom was because he needed to make more money to support his family. Although he professed he enjoyed working with kids, he loves working with beginning teachers because of their fresh excitement for the profession and the ability to watch them develop quickly into great teachers.

Marie

Marie is a district mentor in the Rural District. She has spent 21 years in education. It took her a moment to calculate her experience in education and seemed surprised by the result. As the most experienced Rural District mentor, Marie provided the most detailed answers during her interview. She entered education because of a negative experience she had with a teacher growing up. She was determined to be the opposite of that teacher and make sure to provide students with a positive learning experience. Marie emphasized the importance of being a cheerleader for teachers and celebrating their successes. She also pointed out a lot of ways the district is working hard to provide more support and more compensation for teachers.

Ned

Ned is an elementary school principal. He was very personable and made me feel at ease instantly. Despite making a lot of money in the business sector, Ned claims to be happier working as a principal. The money was not worth hating his job, and now he loves what he does. He always wanted to be an educator but was not sure he could afford to do so. He feels lucky that he has been able to financially afford to remain in education. As a principal he explained his efforts to support his teachers and not expect perfection. He believes that many new teachers feel like they have to be perfect from the start and are afraid to ask for help in fear of appearing weak. He tries not to perpetuate that notion and believes that all teachers can improve their skills. Ned emphasized the importance of mentoring and fair compensation. He loves that beginning teachers come excited and ready to change the world. His goal as principal is to keep that excitement and help them succeed.

Pam

Pam is a junior high mentor teacher and was the most prepared for the interview of all the participants I spoke with. She had asked in her email what types of questions I would be asking and had a checklist of her own to go over with me when we met. Since she is a mentor teacher, the focus of the interview was the mentoring program and her responsibilities as a mentor. In her 37 years of experience as a teacher she has a plethora of knowledge and a comprehensive perspective of teaching. For her, the most important thing the district can do to help retain teachers is provide them a mentor. She has seen the mentoring program begin and blossom into a well-established program. She emphasized the importance of collaboration and offering support to the success of all teachers. In her experience she has seen most people leave to other higher-paying districts. Pam believes teachers that quit altogether do so because teaching was not the right fit for them. The hardest part of teaching according to Pam is all the expectations. The beginning teachers come with their own expectations and then have to determine the expectations of the other teachers, principals, district leaders, and state. Navigating these expectations can be overwhelming. That is why Pam believes it is important to offer support to teachers and reassure them that struggling is okay. She expressed love for her job and passion for mentoring.

Quinn

Quinn is a beginning elementary school teacher with three years of experience. Quinn entered the teaching profession through an alternative route. She earned her original degree in psychology but found limited job options. She began working as a para educator and loved it. She decided to apply for teaching jobs and took the Alternative Teacher Preparation (ATP) route. Being one of the first teachers in the Rural District to take the ATP route allowed her to utilize a

grant that paid for everything. Her first year of teaching she focused mainly on survival, but then the last two years she took the required classes to earn her teaching degree. Although she liked the alternative route, she would have preferred to get some student teaching experience under a certified teacher. During her interview her answers concentrated on the realities beginning teachers face since she has only completed three years of teaching. She emphasized the challenges of large class sizes, difficult students, difficult parents, long hours, and low pay. Repeatedly she mentioned how much money teachers have to pay out of pocket for supplies and how many extras are involved in the job. She expressed her struggle to balance family life with the long hours and extra time required outside of school by the district. Despite the challenging job, Quinn feels like it is getting easier and says she loves her job. Her favorite part is to see the lightbulb moments as children truly understand the concept. She just wishes that class sizes were smaller so she could truly feel like she was reaching every child.

Robert

Robert is a beginning junior high teacher in the Rural District, only having two years of experience. He began his career as an environmental planner, and after 20 years he was laid off. The majority of his family are educators and with Utah needing teachers, especially in the science field, he decided to become a teacher through the alternative route program. He professed to love his job and being the one to introduce science concepts to his students. He feels lucky that he gets to be the first person to ignite that spark of excitement when his students learn a new science concept. He admitted that going the alternative route was a little difficult because he had no classroom management training, but the support he received from other teachers and district mentors helped him succeed. He was worried he could not afford to be a teacher, and in order to make it work his wife is a substitute teacher in the district. Despite pay being an issue,

he does not plan to move up to administration like many men seem to do. He prefers to be in the classroom and working with the students. He has a unique perspective since he came from another career field. He recognizes the benefits in education are better than other career fields and enjoys being on the same schedule as his children. Robert believes that retention cannot be solved at the school, district, or even state level. He believes retention needs to become a public issue in order for real change to be made.

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Case Descriptions

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Case One: City District

The City District is a relatively small district compared to the larger surrounding districts. For example, the City District had a total student enrollment of 6,416 for the 2017 school year whereas the three bordering districts had 33,907; 53,519; and 66,024 (USOE, 2016b). In the City District there are 10 schools, including one high school, two junior high schools, and seven elementary schools. The district is small enough that one of the activities the district does with beginning teachers at the start of a new school year is a quick bus tour to each of the schools to "get a feel for the district" (Allen, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). The district office attempts to capitalize on their small size when developing a sense of community among current employees and recruiting new employees. For example, a brochure the City District distributes to prospective employees emphasizes the benefits of a small district where everyone knows each other within the tight-knit community. The City District assistant superintendent and human resources director both emphasized the benefits of a small district during their individual interviews. Assistant Superintendent Allen explained that the small size of the district facilitates support from the community because community members can easily identify with one high school and have a sense of pride in the entire district. Unlike many districts, the boundaries of

City District align with the boundaries of the city, which also helps cultivate a sense of community. Furthermore, Allen believes that the City District is just the "right size" that allows them to "have a sense of community and a sense of family" (Allen, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). The Human Resources Director, Brett, pointed out the big letters on the wall of the district office that articulate the theme of the district, "We Are City District." He said "we are a community that all works together" and he is hopeful that this sense of community will help to retain more teachers (Brett, Interview, 07/26/18, CD).

Because the City District is a small district, the district leaders can be in the classrooms frequently and accessible to the teachers (Allen, p.8). During the individual interviews, several teachers also mentioned the benefits of being in a small district. Such benefits include giving them more of a voice as well as more involvement, and interaction with district leaders. Gabby and Frank, beginning teachers in the district, spoke about how they knew the people at the district and felt comfortable reaching out to them if they needed to. Gabby even mentioned how the assistant superintendent had come to her classroom several times and felt like he had attempted to build a relationship with her and other teachers. Although Frank has never needed to, he knows he could email the superintendent and get a response. He stated being in a small district he has "more input and know more what's going on. I see the superintendent and I know more what's going on…I can email the superintendent. I've never done it but assume she would respond because it's more streamlined" (Frank, Interview, 07/27/18, CD). The smaller district gives teachers more interaction with the district leaders which allows them to feel more connected and involved to the district.

While the City District participants in the present study noted there are benefits to a small district, they also mentioned some negatives. For example, Frank observed that small districts

have a more difficult time providing the same resources that larger districts may have. Being in a

small district means they pay more for healthcare since the district does not have as much

bargaining power as larger districts. Additionally, the district lacks behavior units for difficult

students. Frank lamented that "other districts have a whole infrastructure" to handle disruptive

students but in the City District "you just have to deal with it" (Frank, Interview, 07/27/18, CD).

Brett further explained that professional development is a challenge because the City District

does not have an entire department focused specifically on training teachers. The City District

has only two people to coordinate professional development for the district, whereas a larger

district would have a whole department. Regardless of the negatives, City District uses its size to

build community among teachers, build relationships with the city, and recruit new teachers to

the district family.

Case Two: Rural District

The Rural District is much larger in size than the City District, both in student population

and geographical scope. The district covers 7,286 square miles and services over 16,000

students. The district consists of fifteen elementary schools, three junior high schools, four high

schools, one K-12 school, one special education preschool, one alternative school, and one

online K-12 school. While the City District interviews focused more on the size of the district,

the participants from the Rural District spoke more about location. Just as a small district has

positives and negatives, there are positives and negatives to being a more rural district. The

district leaders strive hard to sell a positive message about the location of their district in order to

attract employees. One of the elementary principals, Ned, stated that the district "is really selling

the community and the benefits of working our here…really sold what makes [Rural District] a

great place to live and be" (Ned, Interview, 07/31/18, RD).

One of the ways they attempt to sell the area is by focusing on what the more rural setting has to offer. In the brochure that human resources hands out to prospective teachers it includes a list of things to do in the area such and a link to a video of a teacher explaining why they want to teach in the district. The Human Resources Director, John, goes all over the country recruiting teachers. He searches for people who want to be in a more rural area because he wants to find the right fit for the district. John explained, "I'm not trying to get people to come out here because I need a teacher. I want you to come because you want to be here because you like being in the more rural community" (John, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). For many prospective teachers that are unsure about teaching in the district, a simple drive around the district with John changes their perspective on how close things really are. According to John, he has not had a difficult time, recruiting teachers based on the rural factor. "The air is a little bit cleaner, the pace is a lot slower, the home prices are less, you have open space…the quiet, more rural atmosphere kind of sells itself" (John, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Finding the right kind of teacher helps to lessen the difficulty of recruitment and retention.

Another benefit of the rural district that Principal Ned mentioned was that fewer problems exist in the Rural District than inner-city schools face. Inner-city schools often face challenges of poverty, behavioral problems, language barriers, and other stresses that are not as common in more rural areas. But the rural district is not without its own challenges. Many teachers that have left the Rural District have done so because they want to lessen their commute and live closer to home, not due to being disgruntled with the district. There are a lot of teachers leaving the district every year, but John says it is not clear why. Every year they have about 100 or more new hires. He stated that they will be creating exit surveys to figure out the reasons causing so many to leave each year. One mentor teacher said that retention is not a problem for

the teachers that live in the district, but they have a hard time keeping any teachers that are commuting.

The schools that have the hardest time keeping teachers are the more distant schools. All of the participants mentioned the two distant schools that face challenges of recruiting and retaining teachers. These NESS schools or Necessary Existing Small Schools, post challenges for the district. Teachers can easily cross the border to another state and make more money. Such a high turnover rate also creates inconsistency with the climate because they "get all the teachers trained and within a couple years [they] lose everything" (Larry, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). In an effort to combat the problem the district offers incentive pay and moving expenses for teachers that teach at NESS schools. The superintendent also shared their new plans for a four-day school week. Superintendent Hank explained that people that live in those distant locations have to come into town for appointments and other things, so by giving them Friday to accomplish those tasks the district is hoping it will decrease absences. This is one way the district is trying to be innovative and creative.

Location also plays a factor in the amount of money that the district can acquire. School districts get a majority of their funding from local taxes. Much of the land encompassed by the Rural District is federal land. This is a major disadvantage for the district because federal land cannot be taxed. HR Director John laments the district is "kind of stuck" because they "have all this land here that we can't build on or get any benefit from" (John, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Without a lot of taxable land, it makes it difficult to stay competitive with salaries and keep teachers from switching districts. The location of the Rural District seems to impact teacher retention.

Results

The following are the results of this qualitative multiple case study. Data collected from each case included individual interviews, a focus group interview, and documents. The results from the individual and focus group interviews are described in detail under each thematic heading. The documents were used in creating the case descriptions and answering the research questions. A systematic analysis technique analyzed the cases individually and then across cases. The following sections describe the themes developed during the cross-case analysis, the research question results, and the cross-case synthesis.

Cross-Case Analysis

The cross-case analysis compared two school districts' approaches to teacher retention in the state of Utah. Individual interviews provided the majority of information for this study. Interviews began with participants from the City District, followed by participants in the Rural District. Each individual interview was transcribed and coded for analysis. The codes, subthemes, and themes that emerged during analysis are presented in Table 2 below. Additionally, documents and a focus group interview added further details and insight. The documents included the school district websites for both cases, district brochures, salary schedules, benefits packages, mentoring packets, and beginning teacher training schedules. These documents assisted in creating case descriptions and determining the specific strategies each district implemented to address retention. Documents also confirmed participant statements during the individual interviews. The focus group interview corroborated participant statements during the individual interviews, allowed me to gain more details from the participants, and delve deeper into common themes that emerged during the individual interviews. The focus group interview provided a forum for the educators to voice their opinions and discuss teacher

retention issues further. The focus group interview confirmed the themes and codes derived from the individual interviews. As prescribed by Yin (2014), word tables created for each of the cases (school districts) organized the data into themes and subthemes.

The present study was theoretically grounded in the concept of Sher's (1983) Three Cs of Retention: teacher Characteristics, working Conditions, and Compensation. These three categories helped facilitate initial theme development. Yin (2014) explained that pattern matching data to already established theories or concepts is "one of the most desirable techniques" (p. 143). The data were matched, or compared, to Sher's (1983) Three Cs to create a clear organization and understanding. The establishment of the word tables began with Sher's (1983) Three Cs and then additional themes were added as the data was collected. Five major themes emerged from 20 subthemes, which in turn emerged from 87 codes. These themes, subthemes, and codes are listed in Table 2 below. An analysis of the word tables revealed similarities and differences in district approaches to teacher retention. A summary of responses from participants during the interviews in both districts is provided based on each of the five major themes. The similarities and differences of each district are highlighted under each section.

Table 2: *Themes*

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Teacher Characteristics		
	Training	Teacher Preparation, District Professional Development, Alternative Routes, ARL, ATP, Praxis, licensure
	Family	In education, Obligations, Same schedule, Kids, Staying at Home
	Personality	"It" factor, Love of Children, Personality Type, Natural Ability
	Expectations	Shock, Misconceptions, Different Sources of Expectations, Pressure, Reality, Demands
	Personal Feelings	Reasons to Stay or Leave, Feeling Valued, Love, Passion, Discouraged
Working Conditions		
	Culture or Climate	Relationships, Administration, Support, Mentoring
	District Relations	Communication, Access, Availability, Atmosphere, Relationships
	Geography	Utah, District Location
	Size	Small, Large, Population
Compensation		
	Salary	Money, Raises, Inflation, Living Wage
	Benefits	Packages, Healthcare, Retirement
	Incentives	Stipends, Bonuses, Extra Costs Covered
	Money for Resources	Supplies, Staff, Testing, Books, Furniture
	Job Advancement	Steps, Training, Titles, Moving out of the Classroom
Community		
	State Legislature	State, Legislators, Capitol Hill
	Board of Education	
	General Public	Taxpayers, Community, Parents
Difficult Job		
	Overwhelming	Workload, Difficult, Isolating, Long Hours, Effort, Burnout, Criticism, Too Much, Hard, Learning Curve, Challenging, Time
	Appearing Weak	Perfectionism, Asking for Help, Fear
	Extra Responsibilities	Meetings, Paperwork, Data, Parents

Theme One: Teacher Characteristics

The first three major themes that emerged from the study aligned with Robert Sher's (1983) Three Cs of Retention, a theoretical foundation for the present study, and included teacher Characteristics, working Conditions, and Compensation. The first major theme to emerge from the data, teacher Characteristics, explained the characteristics that teachers possess and bring with them daily into their jobs. These characteristics include knowledge and experience they may have gained through training, family influences, personality traits, expectations, and personal feelings. Within the first major theme of characteristics, were five subthemes, including training, family, personality, expectations, and personal feelings.

Training. The first subtheme revealed within the major theme of teacher characteristics was training. This training that teachers have can include how they were prepared to become teachers and professional development training they receive once they are teachers. A common complaint among the participants from both districts was that teachers are simply not prepared enough for the difficult job of teaching. Several participants expressed the schism between the theory taught in college classrooms and the reality of the student-filled classrooms. Superintendent Hank explained that "turning philosophy and theory into practice" always comes with a "learning curve" (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Similarly, a beginning teacher from the City District expressed how teacher preparation programs do not give you "enough actual application of what reality is going to be like" (Gabby, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). Gabby knew what to expect when entering the teaching profession because her mom is also a teacher. She felt grateful that she knew the realities of the job because many people do not know the amount of "emotional work and normal work you put into it. The lack of preparation on that aspect can be hard" (Gabby, Interview, 08/01/18, CD).

The lack of preparation that teachers received was emphasized more often with the City District participants than the Rural District ones. All seven of the City District participants mentioned the importance of teacher preparation and the difficulties faced by those unprepared. One key point that participants brought up was the fact that preservice teachers need more classroom experience prior to becoming a teacher. Ellen stated that although the preparation given in college is "adequate," it is "still not enough. You can't experience it until you are the one calling all the shots" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). While college classes can be useful, it was the opinion of many participants that hands-on experience in the classroom is what teachers need. According to Deb and Gabby, if teacher training was improved, retention problems would even be reduced. The more experience preservice teachers gain, the more prepared they will be for the realities of the classroom.

When looking for new teachers to hire, John seeks out individuals who have been in teacher preparation programs with year-long student teaching assignments. He says that "we appreciate those schools that do because they come out better prepared" (John, Interview, 08/09/18). Some programs only give preservice teachers a few weeks or a couple months to spend in an actual classroom. This does not give preservice teaches adequate time to see the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. Deb argued that preservice teachers should shadow a teacher for at least a whole year, more like the apprenticeship days of old. By seeing the start and finish of a whole year preservice teachers would be more prepared for all of the extras the job entails. Examples of extra duties involved in teaching that are usually not taught in college courses include dealing with parents, using a gradebook, applying the standards to create lessons, differentiating instruction, assessing data, attending Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

meetings, using a copy machine, and dealing with all of the paperwork. These are tasks that can only be learned through experience and time in the classroom.

As a principal Cathy believed that teachers need to be taught how to use the state standards to guide instruction. When she was in her teacher preparation courses, she cannot recall even looking at the state standards once. She admitted, "Honestly the last thing I remember thinking is, 'Well, how do I know what standards to teach?' I don't think we ever opened up a book or the internet to look at standards" (Cathy, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). Similarly, Deb remembered during her first year of teaching she simply followed the mathematics textbook in order it was printed. She explained:

> I had a mentor teacher and he was really good. I remember going over to him once saying 'The kids aren't getting this concept. I don't know what I'm doing.' And he looked at it and said, 'Why are you teaching this? It's not in our core. You don't need to teach it. Skip it!'" (Deb, Interview, 08/01/18, CD).

Deb learned that she should be following the state standards and not a general textbook. Both participants expressed how teachers need to be trained on how to follow the state standards and implement them correctly.

Additionally, participants expressed the concern that teachers are not being trained to handle all of the issues and needs that students are coming with. Cathy explained the difficulty in meeting the needs of all academic levels of students. She said:

> You have to know what do with kids that don't get it, what to do with kids who do—kind of, and what you do with those accelerated kids. I mean you have such a huge range and you're not trained in any of that" (Cathy, Interview, 08/01/18, CD).

Ellen focused on the increased emotional needs of students and difficulty in reaching all of their needs beyond academics. She argued, "There are a lot of expectations placed on a teacher that we are not prepared for…Some children behavior is more than we have been trained for" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). If teachers lack the skills necessary to meet the needs of their students it can cause frustration, burnout, and attrition. Quinn expressed frustration as a beginning teacher who was never trained how to deal with parents. She said that every time she has to speak with a parent it makes her nervous. "I was getting all tied up when I have to talk to a parent about things. I hate parent conferences!" (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Teacher preparation programs do not usually teach candidates how to speak with parents, run IEP meetings, or fill out gradebooks. Participants mentioned that lacking these skills as a beginning teacher adds to the stress and difficulty of the job. As Karen stated, "Nobody tells you what you're getting into…It's so real life when you get into [teaching] that your college classes maybe haven't prepared you for certain experiences you're going to be dealing with" (Karen, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). According to these participants the type of training and the amount of experience preservice teachers are given is critical for teachers to be successful.

Assistant Superintendent Allen brought up another point regarding teacher preparation. He explained that preservice teachers "really need to understand the workload and the expectations" of the job (Allen, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). During preparation programs and before candidates even become teachers, teacher educators need to "be real honest and if they're not cutting it, let them know. And if they are not, that may be one way to reduce the lack of retention" (Allen, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). Allen believed that having those "honest conversations" will help direct people into the right career (Allen, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). Teacher preparation programs that let anyone graduate are not really doing their job. However,

teacher preparation programs may be letting more people through because there is a lack of candidates entering the programs to begin with. Both the HR director from the City District and the superintendent from the Rural District mentioned that colleges are not graduating enough teachers. Hank explained, "There's not enough to fill our vacancies…Millennials aren't going into education. So supply and demand is really tough" (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). The lack of supply has caused the Rural District to go out of state for most of their recruiting. HR Director John said that he begins his recruiting trips in October to get an early start on filling vacancies for the next year.

In both districts the lack of supply of teachers has also led to the hiring of alternatively licensed teachers. Alternative Route to Licensure (ARL) or Alternative Teacher Preparation (ATP) teachers are people who do not have a degree in education but have a bachelor's degree in another field. Once hired, ARL or ATP teachers must take classes to earn their teaching license. The HR Director from the City District shared, "We have hired a lot of people at are ARL" (Brett, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). When I asked him his opinion on how well that has worked for the district he answered, "It's worked out okay. Some of the people are actually really good…Sometimes it doesn't work out but it's an option. Otherwise we wouldn't have teachers in the classroom" (Brett, Interview, 07/26/18, CD).

Both districts have had to utilize ARL to fill teacher vacancies. Three out of the four beginning teachers that were interviewed from both districts were ARL teachers. Robert (RD), Quinn (RD), and Frank (CD) all entered the profession through the ARL or ATP programs. Each one of them spoke about their lack of training as an additional struggle as a beginning teacher. Part of the struggle was due to the fact that in addition to learning the job and teaching all day, they also had to take the college classes to earn their degree. Quinn described it as a "whirlwind

of classes and stuff. Doing the classes and teaching was crazy!" (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). She also added that it would have been helpful to have student teaching experience under a skilled teacher to receive help and instruction while she learned. For Robert, the most difficult area has been classroom management and differentiation to meet all of the students' needs. He felt that if he had received the pedagogy classes, they would have helped him be more successful managing his classroom. In describing his challenging first year Frank expressed, "I'm sure [teaching is] difficult for everyone but I don't know if it's more difficult because I didn't go to school for it specifically. It's definitely more work than I anticipated" (Frank, Interview, 07/27/18). Like Robert, Frank also expressed that individualizing the learning for students was the most challenging component for him. While ARL is a way to get teachers into empty classrooms, according to the participants, it does add a layer of difficulty to an already difficult job. Overall the consensus of the participants was that better and more training for teachers needs to take place. The best way participants felt to train teachers is not in a college classroom, but in a real-life classroom setting where they can learn all aspects of the job under a qualified cooperating teacher. The more time spent in the classroom the better.

After teachers receive their initial training, professional development provided by the local school districts continues teachers' education throughout their careers. Professional development encompasses the training that schools, districts, states, and private companies give to certified teachers to increase their knowledge or skill in specific areas. Teachers must take a certain number of credit hours to keep their licenses current. Both districts offer trainings to their teachers before the school year begins and provide other opportunities throughout the year. The Rural District seemed to focus more on professional development than the City District, or at least the Rural District participants spoke more about it than the City District participants. This

could be due to the sizes of the district as mentioned previously by HR Director Brett (CD). The City District only has two people working on professional development, whereas the Rural District has a whole department. Despite the City District's small size, Brett believed that professional development (PD) is "another thing teachers want," so the City District is making an effort to make trainings "more convenient and accessible" by putting them online (Brett, Interview, 07/26/18). The focus for the City District has been on technology since this year they will have a one-to-one ratio with devices.

The Rural District also focuses a lot of professional development on technology. Every October they have a training called "Tech-tober Fest" where they offer workshops and classes on integrating technology (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Several Rural District participants said the district offers a lot of PD. Pam stated, "There's always professional development programs and things. There's a lot of programs" (Pam, Interview, 07/31/18). Correspondingly, Ned said, "They do a lot of professional development" (Ned, Interview, 07/31/18, RD). One way the Rural District attains money for PD is through grants. Robert explained that the district uses grants to provide many training opportunities, and he believes that more district staff should be focused on bringing money into the district to keep teachers well-trained.

One interesting point that Gabby suggested was that Utah offers better professional development opportunities than other states. Her mother is a teacher from another state, and so they are able to compare the differences. Gabby said that in Oklahoma "they really have to search for" training opportunities whereas Utah has a lot to offer. In fact, "other states use Utah's resources" when they lack their own (Gabby, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). Being able to have that perspective has kept Gabby grateful for the opportunities and resources that Utah provides.

The professional development efforts of the district are not always positive, however. Quinn explained that the technology workshops the district provided were not always helpful. The technology presented required purchasing software or tools that Quinn's school did not have. She said, "So they offer these things that would be really cool, but a lot of times we don't have the technology in our rooms to do it" (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Although some trainings are helpful, the lack of applicability makes some teachers feel like the trainings are a "waste of a day" (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Pam also mentioned that sometimes the district efforts are less than helpful. The Rural District introduced a new way for teachers to earn PD credits on their own, but Pam found it "kind of confusing" and did not try it (Pam, Interview, 07/31/18, RD). In the City District Frank also conveyed disappointment with the trainings the district provided. He preferred advice from his colleagues rather than attending district meetings where it was hard to "pay full attention" because you "just want to go home after a long day" (Frank, Interview, 07/27/18, CD). Although both districts offer professional development, none of the participants felt that it was a big factor in retention and emphasized the importance of initial teacher preparation over PD. The training that teachers receive is one characteristic that they bring with them into the profession and impacts their experience as a beginning teacher.

Family. The second subtheme discovered within the major theme of teacher characteristics was family. Two different types of family topics were brought up during the interviews: familial obligations and family in education. The first refers to the influence family had on retention. One of the reasons that many teachers enter or leave the profession seems to be based on their family situation. Several participants expressed a major benefit of teaching is that they are on the same schedule as their own children. Quinn, Robert, and Brett enjoy the fact that

they have the same holidays off and a similar daily schedule as their children. This allows them to spend more time with their children and is a clear perk of the job.

The attrition aspect of family is that many teachers leave the profession to stay home and raise their children. All of the participants mentioned staying home with children as a reason that teachers leave the profession, especially in the state of Utah. Participants explained that Utah has a unique culture that values family, possibly due to the large population of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints—a church focused on family. Marie said, "It happens more in Utah that they leave the classroom to start families" (Marie, Interview, 08/13/18). Pam further articulated that, "In Utah, families come first. So if you're raising a family you're going to stay home whereas in other places you're going to teach" (Pam, Interview, 07/31/18). Although participants were not sure of the statistics, they speculated that more teachers leave the profession to stay at home in Utah than in the rest of the country due to this unique culture.

The teaching career also attracts those who are looking for something temporary until they start a family. According to Ellen, "a high percentage of women start in the profession leave to have a family, probably more so than outside of the state...They go into it short-term, thinking this would be a really good degree if I'm a mom" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18). Even though Deb never had any children of her own she admits that she initially earned a degree in teaching because she felt it was a good profession to have a family with.

Familial obligations were also voiced as issues impacting teaching and retention. A few participants suggested that teachers leave because of their spouse getting transferred or because of moves. Allen also stated that teachers may be working to put their spouse through college and then quit once they have accomplished that goal. The insurance and benefits that the job provides

for families also keeps teachers in. Ellen was a teacher who left the profession and returned. One of the main reasons that she stays in education now is that she is the sole provider of insurance for her family. She has a sense of obligation to continue to provide insurance for her family and so she remains in the profession.

There were also many participants who described family members who were in education and that inspired them to enter the teaching career. Five City District participants and four Rural District participants stated they had family members in education. Those that spoke of family members spoke of how teaching was a family business. Cathy pointed out that "most educators have educators in the family" (Cathy, Interview, 08/01/18). A few participants expressed that they went into teaching almost reluctantly because they wanted to do something different than their family. Gabby did not think that teaching would be the right career for her like it was for her mother, but once she started taking college classes, she realized her natural ability for it. In Ellen's family she has educators on both sides of the family. She confessed, "I was hoping to do something else. You know, you always dream big to do something different, but the more classes I took the more it felt right" (Ellen, Interview 07/31/18). Robert also did not think he would end up an educator like his parents and siblings. He began as an engineer, but when he lost his job decided to give teaching a try. Despite his misgivings he found that "after years of working in a cubicle this is a really good fit for me…I look forward to going to work in the morning" (Robert, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). Participants described spending time in parents' classrooms and how teaching was a natural fit. Teachers with educators in the family was a common theme in the majority of participants. Having family members in the profession seemed to influence many of the participants to enter the field of education.

Personality. The third subtheme within the major theme of teacher characteristics was personality. The disposition and beliefs that teachers have prior to becoming a teacher influence their decisions as a teacher. Certain personalities are attracted to the teaching profession. One common trait among teachers is a love for children. All of the participants spoke about children during the interviews. Ned thinks that "most teachers get into [teaching] because they want to make a difference for kids. They want to help kids" (Ned, Interview, 07/31/18, RD). That is the very reason that Brett said he entered the profession. As an HR Director, he asks prospective teachers why they want to be a teacher, and the majority mention wanting to make a difference with children. He considers teachers to be "idealistic in a large sense" because they "want to better the world in some way" (Brett, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). Hank, Ned, John, Larry, Karen, Quinn, Allen, Deb, Frank, Brett, and Gabby all conveyed that the reason they went into teaching was to work with or make a difference with children. Gabby stated, "Kids are cute. Who doesn't want to be around kids?" (Gabby, Interview, 08/01/18, CD).

Enjoying children is a common and necessary trait among educators. If people do not enjoy working with children, then the teaching profession may not be the right fit. Allen explained that some teachers leave because they do not connect with children like they thought they would. He said, "It takes a unique individual to be able to make the personal connection with students and to enjoy the demands of the job on a daily basis" (Allen, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). Certain personalities are able to connect with students and are able to enjoy the job. Quinn and Robert both mentioned how they love seeing students grasp a new concept. Frank loves interacting with students and helping them succeed. For Cathy, everything she does as a principal comes down to the children. Working with children is what keeps Ned, Allen, Deb, and Gabby from leaving the profession. Deb went as far to say that the students are literally the only reason

she is still teaching because, "Pretty much everything else about my job I hate" (Deb, Interview, 08/01/18, CD).

For those participants that have moved outside of the classroom, they all expressed feelings of missing daily interaction with the children. Superintendent Hank makes an effort to substitute teach once a month just "get his kid fix" (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). The hardest part of working at the district office for Karen is missing out on that student interaction. She said the beginning teachers she mentors have become her children, but it still does not replace the joy of working with children. Marie added that she considers every year moving back to the classroom because she misses the relationships with students. A love for working with children brings joy to the participants and motivation to continue working in a difficult field.

Another point regarding teacher personality traits brought up by participants was that of natural ability. Several participants contended that the best teachers have a quality that cannot be achieved through training or experience. Allen called this trait the "it factor" that some teachers come with. He explained teacher characteristics on a spectrum of those that have "it" and those that do not. Teachers that have the "it factor" are "Lighthouse teachers" that have "the passion, the love, the energy, the understanding of the job, being able to build relationships—those kinds of things" (Allen, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). He believed that teachers that fall close to being great teachers on the spectrum can be worked with through professional development types of situations. But those teachers that fall on the end of the spectrum without the special teaching characteristics are unable to become successful teachers.

In addition to Allen's response, Ned and Cathy, who are both principals, also mentioned great teachers having specific character traits, especially in managing a classroom. Cathy described a "certain personality" that has talent with classroom management. "Most often it can't

be taught. It's inbred. They have an instinctual way of working with kids" that allows them to be successful (Cathy, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). In Ned's words, "Some people have a natural knack for [classroom management]. Others don't, but those who don't can still be taught some skills to help them with it" (Ned, Interview, 07/31/18, RD). As principals, Cathy and Ned have seen beginning teachers succeed and fail depending on their natural ability to manage a classroom.

The way that teachers see the profession also stems from their personality. Interestingly two participants from each district expressed the same idea of two different types of teachers or approaches to education. According to Ellen, an instructional coach, there are two distinct types of teacher: scientists and artists. Teachers who are scientists are data-driven whereas artists are more instinctually or creatively driven. While there are "phenomenal" teachers of both types, Ellen believes that it is the artists who are leaving the profession because it is "stifling. Just killing [their] soul. There are many who are round pegs being forced in a square hole and it's very uncomfortable. Especially when it was so comfortable not so long ago" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). Similarly, Marie mentioned the "fight over is teaching an art or a science" (Marie, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). Mutually Marie and Ellen believed that a combination of both perspectives are important. Ultimately though, Marie says that teachers must have "that willingness factor to make it the long haul. You can't teach that" (Marie, Interview, 08/13/18, RD).

Expectations. The fourth subtheme found within the major theme of teacher characteristics was expectations. One of the difficulties of teaching is the misconception beginning teachers have upon entering the profession. Pam argued that the toughest part for beginning teachers is learning how to deal with all of the expectations. "What expectations? My expectations? Yours? District administrators? Whose expectations am I trying to live up to?

Because that is hard" (Pam, Interview, 07/31/18). The expectations that teachers have internally

or have placed upon them externally is difficult to handle. Many of the participants discussed the

shock that beginning teachers experience from their own unrealistic expectations. Allen

explained that many beginning teachers "do not realize how demanding teaching in education is"

(Allen, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). The perception of what the job is and the reality of the job do

not always match up. In John's opinion, teachers leave college thinking they are prepared to

handle the job only to find that it is "so much bigger and broader" than expected. (John,

Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Correspondingly, Deb expressed how beginning teachers are in a

"naïve realm" where they think they "know what good teaching is" but find out the reality is

"completely different" (Deb, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). Some of that misperception comes from

lack of preparation or lack of job understanding. "Nobody tells you what you're getting

into…[Teachers] don't realize all the paperwork, all the extra time, the extra duties, all the extra

things that are expected of them" (Karen, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). All of the "unknowns" add

layers of difficulty (Cathy, Interview, 08/01/18, CD).

One way that Marie tries to help beginning teachers is to tell them "they don't know what

they don't know." She has found that beginning teachers are "really ignorant of what to expect.

They could be drowning, and they just don't know, or they could be doing amazing and they

don't even know. They just don't have that knowledge base yet" (Marie, Interview, 08/13/18,

RD). Several other participants also emphasized the lack of knowledge that beginning teachers

have. Larry explained it as an unknown "mark" that teachers are "aiming for—a moving target"

(Larry, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). According to Gabby "it's hard because people don't

understand the full depth of what they're getting into" (Gabby, Interview, 08/01/18, CD).

Without understanding the job completely, beginning teachers struggle to cope with the demands of the job.

The problem that many teachers face is a gap between the preparation received and the realities of the classroom: "It doesn't matter how many classes on classroom management you've taken, you've got to experience through it and do it. Reality is different" (Ned, Interview, 07/31/18, RD). The reality that beginning teachers face is a career full of challenges perhaps different than expected. The career of teaching has evolved over time, and so the ideal of teaching from the past may lead some teachers to imagine the job differently. Brett explained that the job is not what it used to be. Teaching is data driven and inundated with testing. Teachers may feel a "lack of empowerment" because many decisions are made for them and teachers are "accountable for a lot with limited resources" (Brett, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). All of this can be "discouraging" to teachers (Brett, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). As a beginning teacher himself, Frank admitted that teaching was "more work than I anticipated" (Frank, Interview, 07/27/18, CD). It seems that teachers cannot fully understand the difficulties of the job until they enter the profession. Some teachers realize they do not want to or are not able to handle the realities of the job and leave.

Theme Two: Working Conditions

The second C of Sher's (1983) Three Cs of Retention focuses on the conditions associated with teaching. These conditions can include the people, the location, and culture of the school. Based on the participants' responses during the interviews, the following categories were specified that fell within the conditions theme: school culture, relationships, support, classroom environment, district relations, geography, and size. The following section discusses these categories and their subcategories in further detail.

School culture. The first subtheme within the major theme of working conditions was school culture. The culture of the school encompasses many aspects. Culture includes the people of the school, the physical environment, the guiding principles, and the overall climate. Superintendent Hank related the school climate to Disneyland. He explained that people like to go to Disneyland because they "feel better when [they] enter their park" (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Schools should likewise have an overall positive feeling for those who enter. One of the district mentors, Marie, told how they as mentors can tell a difference between the schools that they visit. She said, "You can go to a school and you can feel when the culture is set up in a way where those teachers feel safe. The students feel safe. The teachers feel valued" (Marie, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). Marie added that "those schools have way lower turnover. So, culture's a big reason that people stay and go to work" (Marie, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). The school culture creates the overall environment where teachers, administration, students, and parents interact. The atmosphere is created by how those interactions occur. Larry also stipulated that the physical condition of the building can influence that atmosphere. Improving the condition of the building such as new paint can improve the climate by creating a place where people like to be.

Many of the participants stated that the school culture plays a large role in teacher retention. Phrases some participants said included: "climate's huge" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD); "big reason people stay" (Marie, Interview, 08/13/18, RD); "makes all the difference if you're going to stay" (Brett, Interview, 07/26/18, CD); "most important factor in retention" (Deb, Interview, 08/01/18, CD); and "foundation of every school" (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). The majority of participants agreed that the climate of the school plays a major role in

teachers' decisions to remain in the profession. Areas that influence the culture include relationships, support, and classroom environment.

A key component influencing the school culture is the people. Teachers work with a variety of people: students, fellow teachers, administration at the local and district level, parents, and even community members. Although teachers spend most of their time with students, their interactions with other adults are also an important part of the job. Teachers must learn to develop relationships with all the types of people they interact with. Karen believes that relationships are the number one factor in teacher retention because building relationships helps teachers to feel appreciated and connected. She said, "We want people to care about us, and we want to care about other people" (Karen, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). Caring can be as simple as asking about another teacher's family while seeing them in the hallway. Building personal connections helps teachers remain in the profession.

The Rural District superintendent emphasized the importance of building relationships and social-emotional learning in teacher retention. When teachers feel "a little isolationism and a lack of feeling like you're part of an exciting collaborative team" then they struggle (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). The assistant superintendent in the City District agreed. Allen stated that for him, "It makes a huge difference if I enjoy the people around me when I go to work each day," referring both to colleagues and students (Allen, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). The people that teachers are surrounded by have the potential to impact job satisfaction. Larry also explained how important it is for teachers to truly feel connected with the people they work with. If teachers do not feel connected to their students, colleagues, or administration, Larry wonders why they would stay.

One of the benefits of building relationships with colleagues is it helps ease the burden when teaching becomes difficult. Several participants mentioned the importance of collaboration and supportive team members. Gabby expressed how having a "strong environment of people you can trust and rely on" is helpful when dealing with all of the extra responsibilities and challenges that are part of teaching (Gabby, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). She also added that building those relationships creates an environment of trust and honesty where teachers feel comfortable asking for help. In her case, she began teaching in a lower grade level that was not the right fit. Due to the relationship she had built with her vice principal she felt comfortable being honest about her struggles and was able to receive the help she needed.

According to several participants, asking for help is a difficult thing for teachers. By asking for help, teachers worry they appear weak or imperfect. As a principal, Ned recognizes perfectionism in many beginning teachers as they expect to be "the perfect teacher right from the first year" (Ned, Interview, 07/31/18, RD). He tries to reassure them that asking for help is something all teachers need to do and encourages beginning teachers to not expect so much out of themselves. Pam, Deb, and Ellen also spoke about how teachers struggle to ask for help. As a mentor, Pam lets her mentees know that she still struggles with aspects of the job so that they know it is okay to struggle. Luckily for Deb she was a beginning teacher that was willing to ask for help when she needed it. During her first year of teaching she ended up in tears in the principal's office the very first day. She admitted, "I probably wouldn't still be teaching if it wasn't for that support" (Deb, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). By acknowledging that she needed help, Deb was able to get the support she needed to be successful and has remained in the profession for 20 years.

The collaboration that teachers have can make their teaching experience more enjoyable. Ellen said that "When you have a collaborative team there is nothing better…You feel like you are in this together and things are really clicking" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). As a beginning teacher Quinn agreed that "collaboration goes a long way and helps a lot" (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). During her first year Quinn worked at a small school where there was one teacher in each grade level. She was struggling but felt like there was no one she could ask for help. Once she moved to a new school and had "more people to collaborate with" she found it very helpful (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Likewise, Frank, a beginning teacher, also struggled his first year. He did not received a mentor like he was supposed to, but because of the relationships he had built with colleagues he felt supported and like he had plenty of places to turn for help.

Pam explained the importance that grade-level teams can have. She said, "You plan together, work together, assess together. You stick it out together" (Pam, Interview, 07/21/18, RD). Participants emphasized the importance of feeling like a team in surviving the difficulties of the job. Teachers who are unable to connect with their team will struggle or be more dissatisfied with job and potentially leave. The people teachers are surrounded by matter. Deb only worked at the junior high level for two years because the "faculty weren't supportive of each other" and were "just so torn, it was hard" (Deb, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). Conversely, Robert loves the people he works with in his junior high position and cannot imagine moving to another school. He mentioned that he has heard about when people do not get along with other teachers it can be difficult but feels lucky he has not experienced that himself. Additionally, Frank is happy with his decision to choose an elementary position rather than a high school one like he thought he would because of the people he works with. The relationships that teachers

build with other teachers can make the difference between a difficult working condition and a successful one.

One of the most important relationships a teacher can have is with the administration. Repeatedly participants emphasized the importance of administration in setting the climate for the school and creating a positive work environment for teachers, students, and parents. Brett believes that, "Administration setting the climate is the most important factor for people staying in the job" (Brett, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). Similarly, Ellen said "Administrators make a huge impact on teachers. If you do not connect with your administrator it makes a very difficult work environment" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). The administration plays a big role in creating a feeling of support for their teachers. Pam stated if the administration is not a "positive situation" then teachers "will look for other schools" or "dread going back" (Pam, Interview, 07/31/18, RD). In the City District several participants mentioned one elementary school with the most retention issues. Although they were not certain what was causing so many teachers to leave that school, a few of the participants hinted that it was a conflict between teachers and administration. If there is friction or a difference in vision between teachers and administrators it can be a challenge. Cathy expressed the importance of this relationship when she stated that without support from administration "[teachers] are going to go" (Cathy, Interview, 08/01/18, CD).

For teachers to feel supported by principals they need to believe that they are present and will support them when they struggle. Both Quinn, Cathy, and John used the phrase that principals should "have your back" as a teacher. As a teacher Quinn has found that "having a supportive principal really helps," especially when dealing with parents (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). As a principal, Cathy tries to never forget what it was like as a teacher so that she can support her teachers in the best way possible. She says she always stands up for them in front

of parents, even if later she has to go back and reprimand the teacher. Demonstrating a united front helps teachers feel supported from their administration. Deb also mentioned principal support when parents come in. She said that some are helpful and others are not. Feeling like principals have the teachers' back is an important part of the teacher-administration relationship.

An important characteristic of principals is one that understands the difficulty of the job and does not expect perfection from teachers. Ned described how many beginning teachers feel the need to be perfect and sometimes principals perpetuate that idea further by the climate they set. Some teachers are scared to speak to their principals because they might appear weak, so Ned believed that an "understanding principal…is huge" (Ned, Interview, 07/31/18, RD). But in order for teachers to feel supported or have a principal to ask for help, the principal needs to be present. Both Cathy and Ellen spoke about how teachers often feel like principals are not around when they need them. Cathy explained that many teachers do not fully understand the job principals have and that they have to be in district meetings, trainings, or observations that pull them away frequently. In Ellen's case as a teacher, she knows that many teachers feel there is no one there to help when issues arise with student behavior. Teachers feel frustrated when they feel like "there wasn't anyone around" to call for help (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). Principals must find a way to be supportive even when they are not present so that teachers do not feel abandoned.

A big part of relationships is the need for teachers to feel supported. HR Director John has found that beginning teachers "are interested in knowing they're supported. They want to know that people are going to have their backs…That's why collaboration is key" (John, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). The more support for teachers helps keep teachers from leaving. Assistant Superintendent Allen stipulated that teachers needs support in all areas: curriculum,

behavior issues, time to prepare, and plan. Teachers want to feel that they are supported in all aspects of the job. Ultimately teachers just "don't want to feel alone" (Cathy, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). The biggest way that both districts provide support for their teachers is through mentoring. The following section describes the participants' thoughts about mentoring in their district. Specific attributes of each district's mentoring program is discussed in the section where the research questions are answered.

Although it can take varying forms, generally mentoring is when beginning teachers are assigned a veteran teacher to provide them support, advice, and assistance as needed. Several of the participants stated that mentoring is the most important factor in retaining beginning teachers. Assistant Superintendent Allen stated that, "One of the biggest things for teacher retention is a good, quality mentoring program" (Allen, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). As a principal, Ned has seen the difference mentoring has made with his beginning teachers. The past school year he had a beginning teacher who was really struggling due to some difficult behaviors in her class. The district mentors came in frequently and helped her through the year. Ned said now she is a successful teacher and he knows it was due to the support of the mentors. Quinn also expressed the importance of support she received from the district mentors. She said, "They give you hints of things to do and help you get logged on. They also come to visit your classroom and tell you what you're doing good and things you can improve on. That really helped" (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). One of the Rural District's mentors, Marie, explained that the purpose of their job is to help teachers succeed. The help they give teachers is "not something you can necessarily quantify, but it's just the cheerleader, the support, the listening ear…Things like that you can't put into a program. But the support. They know we are here for them" (Marie,

Interview, 08/13/18). The assistance that mentors provide beginning teachers helps them to feel supported and capable of success.

The type of and quality of the mentor makes a difference. Deb explained that not just any teacher makes a good mentor. Often teachers are just assigned the person in their grade level to be their mentor, but Deb argued that this is not necessarily the best practice. Mentors should be "the best leaders in the school that are willing to talk and share and won't judge" (Deb, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). On the other hand, beginning teachers need to be willing to receive help in order for the mentor/mentee relationship to work. As a mentor, Deb has seen beginning teachers willing to take advice and those that are not. The success of the mentor/mentee relationship depends on the skills of the mentor and the willingness of the beginning teacher to be mentored.

The classroom environment where teachers spend the majority of their time also influences retention. The common issues discussed by the participants included student behavior, class sizes, and the resources available. Since the comments surrounding the issues of resources focused mainly on money, that topic will be discussed in the Compensation section. The other two issues of student behavior and class sizes and how they impact the classroom environment will be detailed here.

The number of students and how they act in the classroom greatly impacts the classroom environment. One of the difficulties of teaching several participants mentioned is reaching all of the students' different needs and learning levels. Beginning teachers Frank and Robert admitted that differentiating instruction to meet varying learning styles and levels was the most difficult challenge for them as beginning teachers. Frank said that teachers can "definitely get away with doing less work, but once you start getting invested in specific kids and how much work you

have to do to individualize the learning" makes teaching difficult (Frank, Interview, 07/27/18, CD). As a junior high science teacher, Robert finds that many students come lacking basic skills which makes it difficult for him to teach science concepts. "I'm still trying to find ways to teach that group of students without reducing anything…but it's a real challenge to meet the needs of all of them" (Robert, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). Teachers are unable to control what students they get or what skills those students bring with them. Meeting all of their learning levels is challenging, especially for beginning teachers.

One thing that makes reaching all of the students more difficult is large class sizes. The number of students impacts the amount of work required by teachers. During Quinn's first year of teaching she was in a NESS school, and so she had a really small class. When she moved to her new school she was overwhelmed by 33 students. She confessed that some days she is not sure she "even asked [all of her students] how they were doing today because with so many kids you can't…My most challenging thing is probably the amount of students in my class…With 33 kids you can't teach to their individual levels. You've got too many" (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Quinn also pointed out that teachers get paid the same amount regardless of how many students are in their classroom. Each student comes at a different level, and it can be difficult to meet all their needs. Brett explained that reaching all students takes a lot of effort and resources to help them. In Robert's opinion, the reason so many teachers leave is due to "huge classes" and not enough resources to meet their needs (Robert, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). The number of students impacts the workload of teachers and makes it difficult to reach all of their students.

While many participants pointed to the size of class sizes as a major factor in retention, during the focus group interview Cathy brought up a counterpoint. She stated how the class sizes

in Utah have always been large and have not recently increased in size, yet teacher attrition has increased. She posed the question of why this is and then provided her own answer. According to Cathy:

> Class sizes haven't changed in City District. So why the difference [in teacher retention]? Pressure. Stress. The way the kids are harder they're coming in. We're in a school that has probably the highest socio-economic status in City District and we've also been a Title I school. So we've got this huge span and they're coming in more difficult. I think there's a lot more mental challenges, not just academically, but the real emotional challenges. They're just tougher. (Cathy, Focus Group Interview, 09/06/18, CD)

The amount of pressure and stress that teachers face has increased. The expectations from the state, districts, and public are overwhelming for teachers. The students are also coming with more challenges and emotional baggage than ever before. All of the participants chimed in with their own examples of challenges that the students bring to class with them and how teachers are now expected to deal with and solve these issues. Pam mentioned that family structures are less stable than in the past. "There's more that the child themselves have. More stress and emotional and baggage that I've ever seen over the years" (Pam, Focus Group Interview, 09/06/18, RD). She explained that she discontinued having her students do Show and Tell when "a kid said for Show and Tell 'My dad's in jail right now. My mom is living with her boyfriend'" (Pam, Focus Group Interview, 09/06/18, RD). Deb shared that teachers have to worry about children's allergies, mental health issues, and whether they have eaten that day. On top of all of that teachers are still expected to teach and get test scores higher. The stress of reaching the whole child is difficult for teachers and the participants explained how emotionally taxing it is for them on a daily basis. Deb articulated the difficulties by sharing:

I'm so worried about this little boy that has diabetes and this little boy with his peanut allergy, that girl in the wheelchair and the girl that has lost her Epi pen and, and those kinds of things. And kids who haven't had anything to eat for breakfast. Kids who you know are living in a car. And so you're thinking, what can I bring for lunch today? I think I have an apple and look in the fridge and making sure they have what they need. You don't want a student to come to school and not have a mechanical pencil. If your clientele has this big chasm in the middle, you don't want all of the rich kids to have everything and these kids don't even have a pencil and so do we have to do that? No, but is it in the best interest of our children to do that? Yes. So people would say, well, you're putting on yourself. No, compassion is part of being an educator. I just want to do my job, just help me do my job and it's not about the money. Doing my job is giving me a group of kids at a number that I can handle and manage and truly know what they need, what level they're reading at, how they are at spelling, how they feel about writing. I need to know that whole child. Where in public education did we lose about the whole child? Because we're doing a disservice and if the parents knew what a disservice it was. If I knew, I would be at that school saying my kid is not going to have 34 kids in their class. They would strike. If education is important to them, they would strike, but we don't talk about that. You don't hear teachers complain they're too tired at the end of the day. They're soaking their feet and grading papers. (Deb, Focus Group Interview, 09/06/18, CD)

Another issue regarding classroom environment is student behavior. Many participants spoke about how the students of today are coming with more challenges than those of the past. Superintendent Hank explained, "I think there's a little disappointment that happens in the first few years [of teaching]…realizing that kids are not the same, a little bit more disrespect, a little

bit more poverty impact in classrooms, and a little bit more mental health" (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Teachers become disheartened when they realize that students have more challenges than they expected. Dealing with the baggage students bring makes it difficult for teachers to do all of the teaching that is expected of them. According to Ellen, students are coming with more anxiety, depression, anger and other issues more than before. Teachers are expected to be counselors, nurses, dietitians, and other roles to deal with student issues. Ellen lamented, "Depending on where you are teaching, it can feel like you in a war zone. Then on top of all that they want to know how well they students are performing on tests" (Ellen, Interview, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). She added that "the kids are coming with greater needs but yet the expectations [for teachers] are greater" (Ellen, Interview, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). The needs of students impacts the classroom environment.

Certain areas of teaching are harder in regards to student behavior than others. In the area of Special Education, teachers are dealing with especially challenging behaviors. John spoke about how many SPED teachers burn-out and leave because they are dealing with tough student behaviors: "It's so intensive with some of the behaviors they're having to face. We have teachers getting spat upon or bit by their students. And they keep going back to work every day, working with those kids, giving it all they got" (John, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). As a classroom teacher, Deb has seen student behaviors getting more challenging. Students that are in SPED, but remain in the regular classroom, are especially challenging. The current attitude and laws state that inclusion of SPED students in a regular setting is the best option. But Deb does not necessarily agree. She has found that they place these students in classrooms without the proper resources or assistance to help them be successful and sometimes to the detriment of other students. She said, "Students are getting really hard…We have some really hard kids that take up all the resources in

our building. So then other kids are losing out that we could make a difference with" (Deb, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). Students with special needs require extra effort and attention from teachers, which increases the difficulty of the job.

Frank also mentioned Title I schools as being another area that is extra challenging for teachers. Title I schools are those that get federal funding because the student demographic are coming from low-income families. In Frank's opinion, Title I schools have more turnover because teachers are still getting paid the same salary, despite having more challenges than other schools in their district. Students' background, home life, emotional issues, and behavior challenges all impact the classroom environment. Participants voiced their concern for the impact classroom environment has on teacher retention.

Geography and size. Two more subthemes within the major theme of working conditions were geography and size. Part of the working conditions included by Sher (1983) was the location of the school. Where the school resides can impact the amount of teachers that come and go. During the interviews the participants spoke about two different areas of geography that influenced retention: the state of Utah and the district location. When speaking about Utah, participants described challenges or characteristics that were unique to the state culture. The location of the district typically referred the differences between being a rural district or a city one. The participants of the Rural District mentioned the unique challenges that rural districts face and the impact their location has had on retention. The City District focused more on the size of their district. Being a small district, they have unique challenges as well. The comments participants shared on either location or size are included in the previous case description sections.

Participants described the culture of Utah as being unique to the rest of the country. Many touched on the fact that this could be due to the large presence of a singular religion: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS). Superintendent Hank described Utah as having "an interesting demographic" because on one side there are "some poverty and some real challenging in minority groups in language issues. But then we have white LDS, a Caucasian kind of large population of people that value education" (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). In Robert's opinion "The reason people stay in Utah is they like to live in Utah. There's a culture here especially if you are LDS that people want to be a part of. It's a safe place. There is not as much crime as California or other places" (Robert, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). The culture of the state of Utah can influence teachers' decisions to come to the state and whether to remain.

The other aspect of Utah that participants brought up was the differences in education between Utah and other states. Several participants pointed out that Utah has one of the lowest pay in the nation for teachers and the least per-pupil spending. This could be why the state does not have enough supply of teachers. Hank and Brett mentioned the difficulties of finding qualified teachers for their districts and the increase in ARL teachers to fill teacher vacancies. Quinn, Ellen, Cathy, and Deb spoke about teachers that have moved to other states that pay more money. Despite the fact that Utah pays the least amount per-pupil, several participants highlighted proudly that Utah is able to do more with less. Ned articulated, "Utah is so low on how much they pay per student but when you look at our scores and what we're doing with that, we're actually doing pretty well compared to the rest of the country" (Ned, Interview, 07/31/18, RD). Robert also said, "We have been doing more with less for a long time in Utah" (Robert, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). He argued that if teachers in Utah were given more money they "wouldn't do less, it would just increase the ability to teach" (Robert, Interview, 08/13/18, RD).

The Rural District superintendent shared something very similar that an educator from the governor's office said. People say that throwing money at education does not work, but in Utah they have never tried it. He suggested they try it and see what happens. Hank added that perhaps if Utah invested more money in schools, they would not need to invest so much in a new prison. In the opinion of the participants Utah does not provide enough financial support for education.

Theme Three: Compensation

Sher's (1983) third C of Retention is Compensation. This includes salary, benefits, incentives, resources, and job advancement opportunities. Participants spoke a great deal about compensation and its influence on retention. The majority of the conversation centered on the salary that teachers receive in general. The overall consensus was that teachers need more money.

Salary. The first subtheme discovered within the major theme of compensation was salary. Participants explained the motivating factor for teachers entering the education profession is not compensation. Ellen pointed out, "Educators didn't go into education for money and when you talk to the majority of people that's not their drive because they wouldn't have chosen that field if it were. Many of us came into this profession knowing we weren't going to come out millionaires" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). Despite the fact that money is not their number one motivating factor in becoming an educator, they still believe that money is important. However, as the participants spoke about money, they did so almost apologetically. Many of them said they hated to bring up money so much, but they had to admit its importance in retention. Marie also said that teachers who leave might not admit that it was due to money on an exit interview because they want to leave on good terms. Whether they are honest or not, the

number of times the participants spoke about money clearly indicates they believe it is a factor in retention.

One common idea that participants brought up was the fact that teachers are not paid enough for the amount of work they do. In response to an interview question asked, and unprompted throughout the interviews, the participants described the difficulties of teaching. The amount of work that teachers put in does not match the compensation received. Larry explained that teaching is not a regular 40-hour a week job like people may think. Teachers are continually working as they take papers home to grade, lessons to plan, and students to worry about. The participants stressed that the level of work that teachers do goes well beyond their contract hours. Ned stated, "I think it's just they feel like there's too much on their plate and for not enough compensation" (Ned, Interview, 07/31/18, RD). When asked what causes teachers to leave, Quinn simply said, "Long hours and low pay" (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Helping students to be successful requires extra time and effort by teachers. Frank admitted that teachers can choose to do less work and stick to their contract hours, but if they actually care about the students then they need to, and will, put in more time.

The participants acknowledged that although they knew the pay would be low and the career challenging, they would appreciate if the salary matched their level of efforts and demonstrated that what teachers are doing is valued. Teachers do not expect to make millions, but they would like to be "fairly compensated" and earn a livable wage (John, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). John has seen many teachers leave because they are unable to survive on the low income. He pointed out that many educators have to work several jobs in order to afford life expenses. The worry for teachers and prospective teachers is not being able to afford to be a teacher. In Ellen's words, "If I'm going to put that many hours into it, if I'm going to take this

home, there needs to be some compensation to where I can afford to live on this income" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD).

Several of the participants mentioned how they struggled to afford being a teacher. Robert divulged that the only way his family could afford for him to teach was with his wife substitute teaching as well. Even though he is only two years into his teaching career Frank knows that he will have to move into administration to make a decent living. Larry admitted that more money was the main motivator for moving into an administrative position. Of the male participants interviewed only one said that he had no desire to move into administration or was not in an administrative position already. A few participants brought up the fact that since males are usually the main source of income for their families, they have more pressure to earn enough money to support a family. Frank explained that is why there are "like no male teachers" (Frank, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). They have to seek other employment or move out of the classroom to make more money to support their family. Unsurprisingly, the male participants focused more on money as a factor than the women participants did. Marie observed that as females, they never had to consider quitting due to money because they were not the sole source of income for their families. While this stereotype is less true than in the past, it is still true for many families that the male is the sole provider. Marie and Karen were both grateful that they did not have that extra burden to shoulder and could choose their career based on enjoyment rather than salary.

Contrary to the majority opinion of participants, Gabby thinks teachers should not be frustrated with the salary because they all knew going in what the salary would be. She asserted that "if you are constantly frustrated with money then that was ignorance on your part" (Gabby, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). Although she did state that one of the main reasons that people leave is because of frustration with pay. But in her opinion, "You can't do this job for the money. You

won't find success in it. If you come into for money then I don't know where your head has been" (Gabby, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). All of the participants agreed that teachers do not go into the career for the money, and none of them listed money as a reason they became an educator. But most participants are frustrated with the amount teachers are paid because they feel teachers deserve more.

Teachers feel they should earn more money because they are not getting the "respect they deserve by being the ones that are molding our kids" (John, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). The responsibility of helping children learn and succeed weighs heavily on the participants. Quinn cautioned, "As teachers we hold these kids' futures in our hands. So [we need] better pay for one. We don't put much money into education and without kids getting their education their future's pretty much gone" (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Ultimately teachers just want to feel respected by the amount of salary received. The Rural District superintendent explained how the districts must show their respect for teachers financially. Until they do that, teachers are not going to believe that the district, or anyone else, really cares.

The lack of funding that teachers receive was also a frustration participants brought up during the focus group interview. The participants argued that they should be treated as professionals with the amount of salary given and that it should at least be a living wage. Larry said that initially teachers can accept the low salaries, but over time that can be difficult to deal with as inflation increases and job freezes occur. The salaries need to keep up with the cost of living so that teachers can survive. More important than higher salaries to the participants, was more money for supplies and for staff. Deb explained, "I just want to teach…And so it's not about the money and so when the public starts going in and criticizing us and saying it's all about the money. No, the truth is we want to make a difference" (Deb, Focus Group Interview,

09/06/18, CD). Deb added that teachers are unable to make that difference when the classrooms are packed full with so many students.

Unfortunately, the reason that many teachers leave is to seek more money in other jobs, other districts, or other states. Several participants mentioned how they have seen great educators leave their school for more pay elsewhere. Pam expressed remorse over losing a great math teacher to another higher paying district in the city. She explained that it was hard to get junior high teachers, and so losing one that was exceptional was extra difficult. Both districts have had to make an effort to stay competitive with salaries to draw teachers to their districts. Within the last few years, participants explained there have been salary wars among the districts to fight for the limited supply of teachers. One school district raised their salaries significantly, and so all other districts had to raise theirs too in order to compete. The district leaders explained they had to be creative to find more money for the teachers in order stay competitive. They did not have a choice. They had to raise salaries to get teachers to come or stay in the district. Superintendent Hank also lamented that after he insisted the district hire counselors for every school to help with the mental health issues, another city district swooped in and stole three of their counselors by offering more money. The competition is fierce among school districts. Hank said, "It's a dog eat dog world out there now for teachers" (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD).

While the district leaders spoke a little begrudgingly about it, Robert was happy that he entered the profession when these salary wars between districts were going on. He believes the battle between districts has been "good for salaries overall" but knows that his district still pays teachers less than most of the city districts and so pay is still a "huge" problem (Robert, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). The Rural District loses a lot of teachers because they can commute a little further and make more money in other districts. In the last few years the Rural District has

been able to raise salaries to match those in other nearby districts and so they are already seeing fewer teachers leave. The district leaders are hopeful the trend of retention will increase and continue. The City District also mentioned difficulties of staying competitive with salary. Their issues stem from being such a small district and not having access to lots of taxpayer funds. However, the participants from the City District did not speak about teachers leaving for other districts as much as they did about teachers leaving the profession in general for higher paying careers or teachers leaving the state. Unlike the Rural District, the City District did not mention many teachers leaving for other higher paying districts.

The consensus of the participants was that money is an important factor in teachers leaving the profession. When asked the most important retention factors, participants listed money as either the first or second most important reason teachers leave. The best way to keep teachers in "revolves around money" (Frank, Interview, 07/27/18, CD). More money is needed to attract and keep teachers in the field. If teachers cannot make an affordable living then they will leave to find work where they can. Teachers want to feel financially respected. If they are doing such an important and difficult job, then they want to receive fair compensation for it. More compensation helps teachers "feel more appreciated" and like they are being "treated like a professional. It's hard to truly feel the appreciation the way it is set up without showing it through money" (Frank, Interview, 07/27/18, CD). Superintendent Hank agreed. He said that simply voicing appreciation is not enough. "We kept telling them how much we cared and wanting to support them, but until we were willing to pay a competitive wage it felt shallow" (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). In a job that is often considered lacking appreciation, teachers need to feel appreciated through salary.

Benefits. The second subtheme found within the major theme of compensation was insurance and healthcare benefits. The area of benefits is one that the participants felt has gotten worse over time. Larry explained that in the past education was a career that you could plan on getting "really inexpensive, very good benefits" (Larry, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). Unfortunately, with increasing costs, that is no longer the case. HR Director John lamented that benefits is an area he has had to decrease over time due to lack of funding. He explained, "I have to whittle away at the benefits. We used to have 100% paid plan, but I've had to take it down to 90% and now 80%" (John, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). He hates that he has to decrease the benefits, but some years that is the only option he has with the funds that the district is given. In Frank's opinion, one of the downsides of working in a small district like the City District is that healthcare costs more. Robert has a different perspective since he moved from an industry job. He knows that teacher benefits are not the best, but they are better than what he experienced in a different career and considers teachers "pretty fortunate" (Robert, Interview 08/13/18, RD). Just like with salary both districts try to offer competitive benefits packages. Interestingly only male participants spoke about benefits whereas none of the females did.

Incentives. The third subtheme included within the major theme of compensation was incentives. Incentives for teachers include things like stipends or bonuses for extra trainings or additional duties. Most participants did not mention incentives unprompted and incentives did not seem like a big deal in either district. Those that did speak of incentives spoke of how small and unnoticeable the amounts were. Ellen said the City District was "really big on stipends, though the stipends are not really big" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). Both Frank and Robert mentioned how they were given stipends for extra nights at the school. Robert was asked to manage an after-school science club and he is not even sure he got paid extra for it. He wished

that they would give more compensation or more resources for things like that. Frank said that due to the small size of the stipends that after taxes are taken out, the extra money is "so small you don't even notice it" (Frank, Interview, 07/27/18, CD). He also said that the money does not incentivize him to do those extra nights or PD, rather it is more like getting a little extra money for something you were already planning to do.

In the Rural District the district mentors did mention a few additional incentives that their district offers. As mentioned previously, the district received a grant that allows them to pay teachers for earning micro-credentials and provides study materials for the Praxis tests. The district will also pay for those going through alternative pathways to licensure. For those NESS schools, the district provides incentive pay and moving expenses to entice teachers to teach out there. HR Director John said that when he cannot increase all of the teachers' salaries he can offer a $500 bonus. He said that some teachers appreciate that, but others are still disappointed with stagnant salaries. While the incentives might not be large or appreciated, these little things do help to lessen the financial burden on teachers in a small way. The participants would just prefer a larger sum.

Money for resources. Another subtheme discovered within the major theme of compensation was money provided for resources. One complaint that participants shared was the fact that teachers have to spend a large amount of their own money on resources and supplies for their classrooms. This can be extremely difficult for beginning teachers who are starting with nothing. At Pam's school, new teachers often show up to empty rooms without even a marker for the whiteboard. Usually Pam and the other mentor teachers help to find extra supplies around the school to help the new teachers out. This year Pam is using her own money to make gift baskets of supplies for the beginning teachers so they have something to start with. As a beginning

teacher, Quinn mentioned several times throughout her interview how "more money for supplies is a big thing" (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). She also pointed out that they still get the same amount of money regardless of the number of students in their classroom. So the larger the class sizes, the more expensive it is for teachers. Even a veteran teacher, Deb stated that she spends most of her money on supplies for the classroom. Gabby felt that one of the best approaches to keeping teachers in the profession is to "continuing to give resources" so they have enough materials and supplies (Gabby, Interview, 08/01/18).

During the focus group interview the participants discussed the importance of additional support in the classroom. According to the focus group participants if teachers had more help inside the classroom, it would make a big difference. Pam explained the importance of mentoring and a supportive principal, but Larry countered that those supports are outside of the classroom. Teachers need support within the classroom. In Larry's opinion, retention comes down to "money and resources because if you have those, then people will come to it just like any other job." (Larry, Focus Group Interview, 09/06/18, RD). The resources can include having enough supplies for the large class sizes or providing aides to assist the teachers. He concluded, "If we're willing to put the resources into our children and the future. You have to put it to the teachers and if you don't, we'll keep having the problems that we're having" (Larry, Focus Group Interview, 09/06/18, RD). All of the participants agreed that if teachers were provided more financial support, no matter what form it took, it would help them to feel more valued as professionals.

Career advancement. The final subtheme within the major theme of compensation was career advancement. The options teachers have for career advancement opportunities are limited. Teachers can stay in the classroom, move laterally into supplemental positions, or move out of

the classroom into administrative positions. Both the superintendent and HR director from the City District stated that teachers leave the profession due to lack of opportunity for growth. Brett said that new hires ask him about "growth paths" and he tries to find ways to "give people these different opportunities to grow and learn" (Brett, Interview, 07/26/18, CD).

One opportunity that the state legislature has created is an advanced title or responsibility that teachers can earn. The Rural District mentors and Ellen from the City District spoke about this new opportunity, though they all seemed a little confused by it. Ellen said "they are offering titles this year. We don't know what they are but they are called fellows" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). She does not think they get paid more, but just get the benefit of a new title. Marie explained that since so "many teachers feel like they're stuck" the state created a "teacher leader" position that has "more responsibility, more pay" and can "still be in the classroom" (Marie, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). However, Marie said that the Rural District has not fully implemented this opportunity yet but she thinks it will be beneficial when they do to help give teachers a way to progress without going into administration.

Not all of the participants care to advance in their career and are content to stay in the classroom. Robert said he does not want to move into administration because he prefers to "be on the front lines" with the students (Robert, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). Frank also said he would prefer to just stay in the classroom, though he does plan to move into administration for the pay increase. Quinn explained how she does not want to earn a master's degree or move into administration because it costs more money to get more education and she does not feel that it would be worth it. Frank did mention that it would be beneficial for retention if teachers were offered bigger changes in their salary ladders to incentivize them to stay. Ultimately teachers do

not have a lot of options for job advancement, but it looks like the state and district are trying things to improve that.

Another point that participants made in regards to money, is the need for more staff. Increased salaries are welcomed, but the participants felt that hiring more teachers and support staff would greatly improve job satisfaction for teachers. Hiring more teachers would reduce the class sizes, thereby lightening the load of teachers. Ellen explained that increased salaries help, but "many people would be satisfied and happy if some of that burden was shared" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). Deb agreed that hiring more support staff would help keep teachers from leaving. She said, "We don't need more training! We need more people!" (Deb, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). Adding more support staff would help teachers meet the needs of all students. According to Frank, teachers would be able to accomplish so much more if class sizes were reduced. If districts cannot afford to increase salaries across the board, one way to help make the job of teachers easier would be to hire more staff.

Theme Four: Community

While Sher (1983) only categorized retention issues into three categories, the participants brought up a fourth C: Community. The community category included discussion about the state legislature, school board, and general public. Many of the participants felt that the influence of the legislature and the support of the public were crucial factors in solving the retention issue. The overall sentiment was that the Utah State Legislature does not support teachers. Without feeling supported by the state, many teachers feel "discouraged" (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD) or "beaten up" (John, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). The rhetoric is negative, and teachers repeatedly hear they are not doing a good job and there is not enough money.

While both districts had participants that spoke about the legislature, Superintendent Hank and HR Director John from the Rural District focused on difficulties with the state frequently during their interviews. Their roles obviously deal more directly with the state, and so it made sense they had more to say on the matter. One of the main issues they had with the state was that every year so many new bills regarding education are created, and it is difficult for them to keep up. John said he feels like they are always "chasing a new bill" (John, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). These new bills are difficult for the teachers as well. John lamented teachers "see that there's constantly things being demanded of them. Every year is something new. You used to be able to do it this way. Now you have to do it this way just because somebody at the state tells you" (John, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). This can cause teachers to want to leave the state and find somewhere else where they feel more support.

Superintendent Hank spends a lot of time at the capital meeting with legislators and trying to advocate for teachers. Both Hank and John said that there are 150 new pieces of legislation every year. Hank said this "shotgun approach" is "willy nilly." He argued, "Who does that year after year unless you're trying to overwhelm a system. Sink the boat. So I can't control that, but I can have a bailing thing and let some water out" (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). The districts try to ease the burden for teachers the best they can, but it is difficult. Hank also said that the approach the state takes is negative because it focuses on enforcement which causes resentment among teachers. According to participants, without a supportive state legislator then the teacher retention issue will only continue to worsen.

The support of the general public is also key in teacher retention, especially taxpayer support. Robert proposed that Utah taxpayers say "that they value education but when it comes to hitting their wallet…are very much penny pinchers" (Robert, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). Until

the taxpayers are willing to support education financially, nothing will be able to improve. Robert believes it will take many discussions and even some "public education" to get the full community on board (Robert, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). Correspondingly, Deb said that it will take the whole community to solve the retention issue as it "trickles down" from the government, to the universities, to the districts, and then the schools (Deb, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). All members of the community must work together to solve the teacher retention issue.

Both districts did mention some ways that the community has helped education. In the Rural District, the taxpayers passed a levy that allowed the district to increase the salaries and stay competitive with the other districts. The Rural District also has an education foundation that works to find donations to bring money into the district. From the City District Brett discussed a cohort of business leaders called Our Schools Now Initiative where business leaders put pressure on the state legislature to give more money to the schools. Also mentioned by both districts is a bill that will be voted on this election to increase gas prices to help fund schools. Having a community that supports teachers and provides a "total funding commitment" is critical for schools to be successful with students and in keeping teachers (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD).

Theme Five: Difficult Job

Repeatedly throughout the interviews the participants emphasized the challenges that beginning teachers and all teachers face in a difficult job. Some of the biggest issues discussed were burnout, isolation, feeling disrespected, and an overwhelming workload. Beginning teachers especially face an onslaught of extra responsibilities and work they were not expecting. All of these factors make it difficult for beginning teachers to fully handle the job and cause many of them to leave.

As a beginning teacher, there is a lot of new information that needs to be learned and mastered to be successful. Frank admitted that all that new information is what made it difficult for him as a beginning teacher. Karen explained that many teachers are shocked by "all the paperwork, all the extra time, the extra duties, all the extra things that are expected of them" (Karen, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Teachers enter the profession expecting to just teach, but there are actually a lot of additional responsibilities required of them. Ellen feels that teaching is "becoming more and more a paper chase. I am documenting everything. I'm assessing students and there isn't much time for teaching" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). As a beginning teacher Quinn mentioned several times how all of the extra duties and paperwork was difficult to manage.

Dealing with all components of the job can easily cause teachers to burn out. Ned explained how he sees teachers "put too much on themselves" as they try to be the perfect teacher from the beginning. He continued, "It's more stressful than people realize, and it has an effect" (Ned, Interview, 07/31/18, RD). Quinn confessed that she could barely "keep her head above water" the first year of teaching (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Frank also admitted that his first year of teaching he felt his "hair was like on fire!" (Frank, Interview, 07/27/18, CD). The amount of time required and the amount of paperwork involved to be a successful teacher, is overwhelming.

All of the participants spoke about how overwhelming the job can be. There is a big responsibility that comes with working with children. Larry explained that it adds a "ton of pressure" on teachers to have children's education in their hands (Larry, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). Even as a veteran teacher Pam admitted that she still feels overwhelmed at times. Superintendent Hank said as a district they need to work hard to provide support for

overwhelmed teachers. Part of that is explaining the reason behind many of the things teachers are required to do. He added, "Do we fire them for being overwhelmed and snowball effect our teacher shortage? Or do we provide more supports?" (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Both districts are trying to help teachers feel less overwhelmed and deal with all of the parts of teaching so that both teachers and students will be successful.

While the individual interviews touched on a variety of topics, the focus group centered more on the realities of the classroom and the weight of a difficult job. The participants were discouraged at the current state of education in Utah. When asked what came to mind when they heard the word retention, most of the responses were negative in nature. Ellen shared that the first word that came to her mind, in regards to teacher retention, was worry: "What is [the future] going to look like? How's it going to affect the children and those who are in the profession? I'm worried about the kids and then I'm worried about those of us who are staying" (Ellen, Focus Group Interview, 09/06/18, CD). Deb expressed concern for the number of teachers entering the profession compared to when she began teaching. When she wanted to become a teacher there was a surplus of teachers, and it was difficult to find a job. Now the opposite is true—it is difficult to find enough teachers to fill the positions. Filling classrooms with qualified educators was a concern for participants and the outlook was bleak.

A particular area of difficulty that participants mentioned during the focus group was dual-language classes and special education. With many schools now doing dual-language immersion (DLI), districts are having a difficult time finding teachers that speak the specific language the school decides to teach. According to Cathy, many of the dual-language teachers are recruited from overseas, and there is a high turnover rate. She explained the foreign language teachers she had worked with returned quickly to their home country because the schools, level

of respect from students, and workload was not what they expected. Larry explained how the Rural District struggles finding certified special education teachers. With the lack of supply, the district is forced to hire teachers as long-term substitutes while they work on their certifications. This means that these beginning teachers must learn the job while also working towards their degrees. The difficulty of this, according to Larry, is one of the reasons there is such a high turnover rate with special education in their district.

While all of the participants expressed love and passion for the job, a theme that kept surfacing during the focus group interview was that teaching is a battlefield. Participants referred to teachers as being soldiers in the trenches. Metaphorical grenades are thrown at them by the legislature, district, administration, parents, students, and community. Since they do not feel valued as educators, it makes the battles even more difficult to bear. The most challenging factors the participants focused on for teachers was large class sizes, lack of funding, lack of respect, and increased student challenges. Utah is known for large class sizes, and the participants all spoke about how the number of students impacts the workload and stress level of teachers. Quinn, a beginning teacher, shared how that she just had two more students added to her class the very day of the focus group interview, bringing her total to 35. She had reached her breaking point and felt like quitting. The only thing that kept her from leaving was the students. She said, "If I didn't love my kids so much and didn't think it would leave them in a lurch, I would walk out. I would be done" (Quinn, Focus Group 09/06/18, RD). The others of the focus group were quick to rally around her and join in on her frustration that 35 students in a classroom is even an option in education. Several pointed out that this was the perfect example of the retention issue that teachers face as this beginning teacher was ready to leave.

At the close of the focus group the attention was on Quinn and how she was ready to quit teaching. The participants tried to offer suggestions and support to help keep a fellow soldier in the trenches a little bit longer. Ultimately the participants expressed discouragement and worry for the future. Several of the participants explained how they advised people not to go into teaching, even their own children, because they knew what a challenging and thankless job teaching is. All of the participants shared their love and passion for teaching, but they agreed that something needs to change in order for teaching to become valued again. Otherwise, teacher retention will continue to be a problem.

Research Questions

The research questions for the present study were grounded in the gap that existed in teacher retention literature. The central research question focused on how educators view district approaches to retention in a general sense and was answered more specifically by the sub-questions. The sub-questions stemmed from Sher's (1983) Three Cs of Retention: Characteristics, Conditions, and Compensation and how these factors were being addressed by the school districts. In Figure 1 below, the total frequency of participant responses regarding the Three Cs was tabulated. The second C of Working Conditions was spoken about the most frequently, closely followed by Teacher Characteristics. Although Compensation was described by participants the main thing districts were doing to retain teachers, they spoke about it the least. The following section describes participant responses that answered the central and sub-questions of this study that were based on the Three Cs of Retention (Sher, 1983).
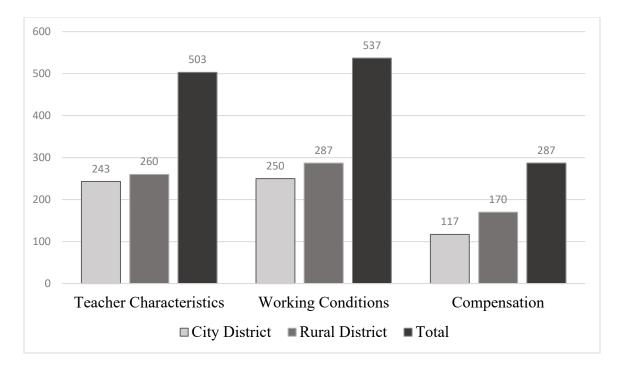
Figure 1. Frequency of Participant Responses. The figure shows how many times each of the

Three Cs of Retention were mentioned by participants during the individual interview.

Central Research Question

The central research question of the study was: How do educators describe Utah school

district approaches to retaining beginning teachers? The central question sought to determine the

participants' viewpoints on what school districts were doing to retain teachers, if anything.

Interestingly, the participants had different opinions on the efforts the districts were taking to

retain teachers. Several participants in the Rural District felt that the district has made positive

efforts to retain teachers. Marie believes the Rural District "is making very strong efforts to

change" the problem of retention in their district (Marie, Interview, 08/13/18, RD).

Correspondingly, Pam expressed how the Rural District "come through the last 15 years or so

that they are more and more supportive" (Pam, Interview, 07/31/18, RD). Quinn also felt that the

Rural District has made strides in teacher retention over the last few years. She explained that "in

just the short three years I've been teaching I've seen them moving towards more things to help

teachers, more interventions…They're trying really hard to retain teachers" (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD).

For other participants, it was not really clear specific approaches districts were taking. Robert said that besides raising salaries, "I don't know what other approaches they've done" (Robert, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). He then went on to describe approaches he wished the district was taking including more resources and more technology to compete with charter schools. In the City District, Frank was also uncertain if the district was actively approaching teacher retention. He explained how the City District gave a raise "but it was just survival because every other district was doing it. Other than that I don't really think they're doing anything" (Frank, Interview, 07/27/18, CD). When asked what approaches the City District was taking to retain teachers, Gabby said, "I think they are figuring it out…They're trying to find that balance. Trying different things to see, 'Does it work? Does it not?'" (Gabby, Interview, 08/01/18). Other City District participants listed specific approaches that tied in with the sub-questions below, but unlike the Rural District participants did not state their opinion regarding district approaches except for Cathy. When asked if the district was doing anything to keep teachers, Cathy replied, "Yeah, they really are. That's what I saw last year because they would meet with us [principals] and we would brainstorm what it is we need to be doing to hang on to these teachers" (Cathy, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). More detailed responses are provided below that describe specific district retention approaches as they related to each sub-question and corresponding Sher's (1983) Three C's.

Sub-question One

The first sub-question of the study was: What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address teacher characteristics as an approach to retaining beginning teachers?

When participants spoke about teacher characteristics, they spoke mainly about teacher personality and training. During the focus group interview Pam explained how teacher characteristics are what bring teachers into the profession initially. She said, "With characteristics, that's why you want to become a teacher" (Pam, Interview, Focus Group 09/06/18, RD). Their personality and passion for teaching influence their decision to become teachers. Other participants during the individual interviews mentioned how certain teachers come with innate gifts for teaching. Allen professed that it takes a "unique individual" to be a successful teacher (Allen, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). Cathy also stated how good teachers have a "natural way" of working with students that "can't be taught" (Cathy, Interview, 08/01/18, CD). These kinds of personality traits and talents cannot really be altered or addressed by school districts directly. But there are things the districts are trying to do to address the teachers as human beings as a whole.

A common concept used in education currently is the idea of the whole child. This concept centers on the fact that all aspects of students need to be addressed, not just the academic. Students have emotional, physical, physiological, and other needs that they bring with them. During the interviews the idea of the whole teacher was brought up. Teachers have needs that factor into their ability to cope with the challenges of the profession. Before he became a superintendent, Hank was a psychologist. So in the Rural District he has made an effort to provide resources and "wellness stuff" to help teachers deal with stress and avoid burnout (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). He believes that teachers need to be taught how to take care of themselves and deal with the stresses of the job. Another way that the Rural District is addressing the social-emotional needs of teachers is by providing access to counseling. Ned spoke about how the district just recently added to the teacher's benefit packages an option to

receive counseling. If teachers feel they need help then there is a number they can call to meet with a counselor. Although this option is available to all teachers, Ned believes it is especially helpful for beginning teachers who may not want to turn to any of their coworkers or supervisors for help.

The City District participants did not mention any specific ways the district was addressing mental health of the teachers directly, but the district leaders did express their concern for making teachers feel appreciated and supported. Human Resource Director, Brett said, "I don't know if we've got any cohesive plan to address those things other than just working on our ability to have better relationships with everyone and to get the message out that they are appreciated" (Brett, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). Some of the ways that both districts try to show appreciation is through teacher recognition. This is done by giving teachers gift cards or awards throughout the year. Both districts also mentioned how the district made an effort to have open communication and be available to teachers. Participants from both districts mentioned how they felt they could contact district leaders and felt they truly cared about them. However, Quinn did confess that some people in the Rural District office are difficult to get responses from. She complained, "There are some who just, no matter what you do, you can't get them to answer you back" (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). She felt frustrated that when she needed help some people were unavailable.

The other aspect of teacher characteristics that districts try to address is training. While most of the training comes before teachers enter the profession, ongoing professional development is a way that districts can continue to support teachers throughout their career. Participants in both districts were satisfied with the amount of professional development offered by their districts. For beginning teachers there are additional training requirements that are

mandated by the state and implemented by the districts. Both districts seemed to implement the beginning teacher trainings in a similar fashion. Before the start of the school year there is a new teacher orientation that lasts a couple days. Then, during the school year beginning teachers attend district trainings to help provide further assistance. Brett explained that the City District has "new teacher orientation" and then "three days of new teacher trainings throughout the course of the year" (Brett, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). Similarly, the Rural District provides "a two-day induction or orientation and then first year teachers attend four trainings throughout the year and meet with [a district mentor]" (Karen, Interview, 08/13/18, RD).

While these trainings are meant to be helpful and well-intended by the districts, most beginning teachers interviewed did not find them helpful and simply added more work to an already stressful first year. Frank admitted that he "didn't really find [beginning teacher trainings] helpful" (Frank, Interview, 07/28/18, CD). Quinn explained that the Rural District "requires us to do a certain amount of hours outside of class, extra like workshops and stuff." Rather than finding it helpful she expressed attending classes after a long workday is "hard because a lot of us do have our own kids and families. I go to work and then I need to be able to have some home time" (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD).

Each district provided me with a copy of their new teacher orientation and training schedule. The City District new teacher training lasted two days and covered topics such as: leave, substitutes, policies, EYE information, SafeSchools training, insurance, district education association, login information to the district system, meetings with their principals, and a bus tour of the district. The schedule also included dates and topics for future meetings in October and November. The training schedule included four, full days of new teacher training with a substitute teacher provided. The handout included detailed information about the fourth meeting

which included school observations and instruction on classroom management. The handout did not include the topics covered in the other three trainings.

The Rural District new teacher training also lasted two days before school began. Similar topics to the City District were covered including: substitute procedures, education foundation, new teacher requirements, and policies. The district mentors were in charge of the meeting. During their interview they mentioned how they were not allowed to go over human resource type of information such as benefits and insurance during the training because the training days were funded as professional development. Marie explained, "Because they're being paid with PD money, we've been told we cannot use that time to go over insurance and retirement and that kind of stuff because it doesn't apply to professional development" (Marie, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). However, the mentors believed that information was something beginning teachers want and need to know, so they had HR set up tables during the lunch break for teachers to visit voluntarily. They hoped that the majority of beginning teachers would take advantage of that to show HR that it was important.

Also outlined on the Rural District's agenda was lesson planning, time to meet with mentors, and a new teacher panel. The district mentors explained that they have the beginning teachers write questions on pieces of paper at the end of the first day and then they spend time answering every question on the second day during the panel. They work hard to tailor the trainings to meet the needs of the teachers and listen to the feedback each year to improve. The district mentors also provided a copy of the training dates for beginning teachers for the rest of the school year. First year teachers met five times while second and third year teachers met four times. The building mentors also met three times for mentor training throughout the year.

A recent grant earned by the Rural District provides online training where teachers can earn micro-credentials and receive a stipend for doing them. The district mentors spoke about how they use them for beginning teacher trainings and helping them through their EYE requirements. The classes are also offered to veteran teachers. According to the district mentors the response has been really positive from teachers in the district. The district mentors and school-level mentor Pam also pointed out that the Rural District offers study materials and preparation classes for the Praxis exams that teachers must take for their licensure. By providing these materials it saves teachers from paying for it themselves.

Another requirement for beginning teachers has been to create a portfolio, though some participants said that is no longer required by the state. The Rural District mentors have created a way to help beginning teachers accomplish the goal of a portfolio without making it too overwhelming. They shared the forms they use with beginning teachers to break down each of the ten state standards for teachers. By breaking it down into a couple of standards each of the three years, they have found it is less overwhelming to the beginning teachers. Marie explained, "They're overwhelmed no matter what. So I feel like that's a big part of our job is to help them take that elephant and start biting it one small pieces at a time" (Marie, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). The "elephant" in this case was the Entry Years Enhancement Program (EYE) that is required for beginning teachers in Utah. Both districts provided me with information regarding the EYE program that they had printed from the Utah State Office of Education. This is the program that the state of Utah requires for beginning teachers during their first three years and upon completion allows them to move from a Level 1 license to a Level 2 license. Another form the Rural District mentors provided me with was a simplified outline of the EYE requirements they give to their beginning teachers. The requirements include three years of training and mentoring,

passing several Praxis tests, completing a portfolio, writing end of year reflections and philosophy, receiving at least an Emerging Effective rating on evaluations, and holding a Level 1 teaching license with the state of Utah. Additionally, they shared a document that had all of the requirements for the state and district in a checklist format. The way that the Rural District broke down the requirements into simple steps seems like it would make things easier for beginning teachers, overwhelmed at all that is required of them. The Rural District mentors said they have received positive feedback from the teachers in the way they help and support them through the EYE process.

While the area of teacher characteristics may be the most difficult one to address, both school districts have made efforts to provide training and support for beginning teachers. Districts cannot change personality or innate talent, but they both have strived to provide teachers with support from mentors or coaches and offer trainings that would be most useful during their beginning years of teaching. Additionally, the Rural District has sought to educate teachers on their social-emotional health and provide them with options to meet with counselors. Trying to reach the whole teacher is a way that the Rural and City district are approaching retention by addressing teacher characteristics.

Sub-question Two

The second sub-question of the study asked: What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address working conditions as an approach to retaining beginning teachers? The most obvious way that the school districts were approaching the working conditions was through their mentoring programs. When asked what the district was doing to approach retention, the two most common answers were mentoring and salary raises. Mentoring is a requirement from the state of Utah as part of the Entry Years Enhancement (EYE) program for

beginning teachers. Each beginning teacher is required to have a mentor for the first three years of teaching. Both districts HR directors gave me a copy of the Utah State Office of Education's "Competencies of a Quality EYE Mentor," which lists the characteristics of a mentor in five areas: pedagogy and content knowledge, relationships, communication, adult learning, and mentor growth and learning. While providing a mentor is the state standard, districts are responsible for implementing it and therefore can take different forms. The two districts in this study provide mentoring in very different ways.

The City District HR Director shared the packet he gives to mentors and beginning teachers. The district mentoring policy was outlined for both the school and district level. Each principal assigns a veteran teacher to the beginning teacher to work with for the following three years. For their time as a mentor, they get a $100 stipend. It did not specify if the stipend was annually or a singular payment. The beginning teachers were allowed two days to observe teachers, work on lesson plans, or meet with instructional coaches. The mentor teachers are also allowed one day of provisional leave. Mentors are required to check in weekly and complete an observation of their mentees. The packet included a checklist of information for mentors to cover with their mentees throughout the year.

Additional to the mentors, each school has a literacy coach. This coach is considered the instructional mentor for all beginning teachers. While mentors are classroom teachers, coaches are outside of the classroom which allows them the ability to meet with, observe, and instruct beginning teachers easier. Coaches are required to meet with the beginning teachers at least three times. Their role is to help model, observe, and instruct the beginning teachers. Ellen explained that in the City District "the instructional coaches' focus is on coaching teachers and getting

great instruction out of them. Helping them manage classrooms. Just teaching alongside them and helping them try and figure out what's most important" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD).

From the comments the participants made in the City District, it seemed that the coaches were more formally helpful than the mentors. Gabby explained that her mentor was someone in her grade level and just checked in on her informally as they met together for their planning meetings. There was no mention of observations or specific mentor meetings. Frank admitted that he was never assigned a mentor. When asked what the district does to help beginning teachers he mentioned that each school had two coaches and they were very helpful. I followed-up that question to ask if he was assigned a mentor and he said, "No. I was kind of anticipating that because I thought I would but I didn't have a specific other than the instructional coaches. I didn't have like one specific teacher assigned to me" (Frank, Interview, 07/27/18, CD). Despite not being assigned a mentor, Frank found help from other teachers and the coaches so that he felt like he was supported his first couple years of teaching.

In the Rural District there was more of a comprehensive mentoring program established, perhaps because of the larger size. The information and documentation I received about the mentoring program came mainly from Pam, a junior high mentor and the district mentors. The Rural District has district mentors, coaches, and grade-level mentors. According to Pam the mentoring program is "now very well established in our district" (Pam, Interview, 07/31/18, RD). She has seen it grow over the years into the program it is now. Initially she said they just assigned anyone to mentor and did not provide training. But now they train the mentors and have a more defined program. The mentors first meet with their mentees at the new teacher training provided before the school year starts. Just like the City District, the principal typically assigns the mentor. There is a checklist the district gives the mentors to go over with their assigned

beginning teacher. Then each month mentors meet with their mentees. After the meeting the mentors complete a log that is sent to the district mentors to keep them informed and alert them to any beginning teachers who need help. Pam also mentioned that they do weekly check-ins, assist with lesson planning, and can do observations. Now that she is in the junior high she has a prep time that allows her more flexibility to check in on her mentees. When she was in the elementary school she had a harder time finding time to meet with her mentee. At the junior high level there are two or three mentors that provide support for about 20 different beginning teachers. Pam explained they divide up the beginning teachers to assist and they divide up the mentor money equally. In the Rural District the mentors are paid different amounts for the number of mentees they help and the year of teaching they are in. For example, first year teacher mentors get paid the most since they typically need more support than a third year teacher.

The Rural District mentors provide the trainings for beginning teachers throughout the year. Since there are three district mentors, they divided up the schools by area and each manage one. For the NESS schools they all go together since the schools are far away. In addition to the trainings the district mentors provide they are also out in the schools frequently. Marie explained, "We're in their classrooms at least two or three times a month just for support, for observation. We're not evaluative at all, but we will give feedback and any support—a listening ear. Just someone to be their cheerleader" (Marie, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). During his interview, Principal Ned said he was surprised how often he saw the district mentors in his school and the amount of help they gave beginning teachers. He felt like they were doing a great job to help beginning teacher succeed.

When speaking to the beginning teachers from the district, however, there were mixed reviews about the mentoring helped they actually received. Robert did not receive any help from

the district mentors and wished he would have had more assistance. He said he had "plenty of support at the school level" so he did not feel the need to "reach out to the district for help" (Robert, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). During his second year he did get help from one of the district mentors and mentioned how helpful it was. Robert explained that the mentor "made classroom visits, talked to me a lot, and helped me with my goals" which he found "super helpful" (Robert, Interview, 08/13/18, RD).

Quinn had the opposite experience with mentoring than Robert. She received help from the district mentors, but not a school-level mentor. Her first year of teaching, Quinn was at one of the NESS schools where there was one teacher per grade level. The assigned school mentor was a high school teacher who was unable to really help her at an elementary level. Her second year of teaching she moved to a different school and was assigned a very helpful mentor teacher. She also found the district mentors very helpful because they provided assistance with the EYE program and "try not to overwhelm you with it" (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). They also visited her classroom, offered suggestions for improvement, and shared tips to make the year easier. None of the other participants mentioned the instructional coaches, but Quinn explained that the district recently added them to each school a few years ago. She said that "they're really good too and come in and help with stuff" (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). In her opinion, the Rural District is "moving towards more things to help teachers…they're trying really hard to do more things to retain teachers" by offering more supports such as mentors and coaches (Quinn, Interview, 08/09/18, RD).

While both districts approach the mentoring and support programs a little differently, both are using them as ways to improve the working conditions for teachers. Participants from both districts agreed that the mentoring and supports offered were major factors in retaining

teachers. Some of the benefits of these programs included helping teachers not feel alone and providing them with the tools for success. Providing beginning teachers the opportunity to work with and learn from veteran teachers also helped them to build relationships in the school which the participants believed is critical for retention.

Sub-question Three

The final sub-question for this study asked: What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address teacher compensation as an approach to retaining beginning teachers? The most obvious way that districts strive to retain teachers is through compensation. All of the participants mentioned the importance of salary and how the districts have raised salaries to keep teachers. With the "salary wars" that Robert mentioned occurring throughout the state of Utah, both districts have raised their salaries to stay competitive with other districts (Robert, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). Ned also stated that one district in the state raised their starting salary to $40,000 so "all the districts had to scramble to follow" (Ned, Interview, 07/31/18, RD). Both districts think that by raising salaries it will retain more teachers for their districts and stop them from moving to other districts that pay more.

School districts only get a certain amount of funding from the state and so to provide competitive wages they had to look for different ways to find the money. HR Director John explained that, "Districts on their own had to be creative about fundraising so they could pay their teachers higher" (John, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). The way the Rural District was able to afford the raises was by going to the taxpayers and asking them to pass a levy. The superintendent recalled that the two years ago the starting salary for the Rural District was $33,000 and now it is currently $42,000. According to John that was the "highest increase in any district in the state…so now we're in the top of the pack" (John, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). The

Rural District was one of the lowest paying salaries in the state but now they are near the highest. By increasing salaries the Rural District has already "seen less teachers leave" in the last couple years (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). A trend they hope will continue. The other Rural District participants mentioned how the increased salaries would help keep teachers from leaving.

The City District also had to seek more funds to increase teacher salaries. HR Director Brett explained that the "School Board has been very supportive of increases for teachers. Even changes in our contract to make personal leave better or things like that" (Brett, Interview, 07/26/18, CD). According to the salary schedule that Brett provided me with the City District also has a starting salary of $42,000. The superintendent and HR director both spoke about the importance of having a competitive salary and benefits package. Both districts do not want money to be the reason that teachers choose to go elsewhere. Ellen felt that the pay increase as well as more technology in the classroom has been effective in "drawing more people" to the City District (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). She explained how her district used to be "the district everyone wanted to go to" but due to lack of pay increases and lack of technology people began to consider the district "archaic" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). Now with the "aggressive raise," the district is seeing higher quality teachers apply to the district and remain (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). While the pay increase was seen as a positive by most, Frank felt that the district only raised salaries out of necessity since all the other districts did. He did not feel it was an active approach on the district to retain teachers. Regardless of the motivations, both the City and Rural district are hopeful that increased salaries will help retain teachers.

Cross-Case Synthesis

Overall, the purpose of this study was to look at multiple school districts to understand the approaches districts are taking to improve teacher retention according to the educators

working in the districts. The two districts were chosen for their differences in location and size, supposing that their results would differ (Yin, 2011). However, upon speaking with the participants, the issues that both districts face and the approaches to retention were more similar than different. Both districts indicated issues with teacher retention. Both districts have seen teachers leave the district for other higher paying districts or industry jobs. Participants in both districts described the negative climate of teaching in Utah and the lack of support felt from the state legislator. Additionally, participants described the difficulties of teaching in similar ways. Participants in both districts felt that teaching is an extremely difficult career that lacks respect and proper funding.

The approaches the districts are taking towards teacher retention were also similar. The main way the districts are trying to improve teacher retention is through increasing salaries. Both districts had recently raised teacher salaries in order to stay competitive amongst other districts in Utah. District leaders from both districts expressed how they had seen less attrition and hoped for continued improvement with retention. The second way that both the Rural and City Districts were approaching retention was through the use of induction programs. Both districts felt that providing beginning teachers with initial and continued support throughout their careers is essential for teacher retention. The approaches varied slightly among the districts in implementation. The Rural District had a more established program with a clear structure of district and local mentors. The City District utilized instructional coaches more to provide support. Participants from both districts expressed how these induction programs were helpful and successful in retaining teachers.

Summary

Chapter Four of the present study included detailed descriptions of the 16 participants and two cases of the study. The participants included educators from two school districts in the state of Utah: one rural district and one urban district. The focus of this study was to gather participant perceptions of beginning teacher retention in Utah and the approaches that these two school districts have taken to retain teachers. The process for theme development and cross-case analysis began with pattern matching the data to Sher's (1983) Three Cs. Then, further analysis of the transcriptions from the interviews revealed five overarching themes: teacher characteristic, working conditions, compensation, community, and difficult job. Summarized comments and direct quotes from the participants illustrated the themes discovered during the study. The documents provided rich descriptions of the cases and supporting evidence for statements participants made. Information found in the three data sources answered the research questions regarding school district approaches based on Sher's (1983) Three Cs. The chapter concluded with a cross-case synthesis highlighting the overall similarities and differences among the districts in their approaches to teacher retention.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this multiple case study was to discover educator perceptions of Utah school district approaches to retaining beginning teachers. The following section provides a summary of this study's findings. A review of how the central and sub-questions were answered is presented. Then, the theoretical and empirical foundations from the literature are discussed. There are several implications from this study including theoretical, empirical, and practical implications. Each one is explained in detail. All studies include delimitations bounding the study and limitations that influence the results. The delimitations and limitations are discussed, followed by recommendations for future research. Finally, this chapter concludes with a summary that reviews the important conclusions drawn from this study.

Summary of Findings

This study included three different forms of data: individual interviews, focus group interview, and documents. Each piece of data created an overall description of the cases and a thematic understanding of teacher retention perceptions in Utah. The main source of data came from individual interviews. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed. The City District was completed first, followed by the Rural District. A word table was made for each district with important words and phrases from the participants categorized into themes. Once complete, those word tables were compared for a cross-case analysis. A combined focus group added additional insight and clarification. The documents collected throughout the process from the participants and district websites added further insight. The five overarching themes discovered included the Three Cs of Retention (Characteristics, Conditions, and Compensation) and two additional themes that emerged (Community and Difficulty of the Job). The research

questions guided the study to determine how school districts were approaching retention and the perspectives of the educators working in each district.

The central question guiding this study asked: How do educators describe Utah school district approaches to retaining beginning teachers? The purpose of this question was to speak directly with educators at varying levels in two different school districts to determine if districts are doing anything to retain teachers and give voice to those educators regarding retention issues. The participants' answers centered on their concerns for the teaching profession and the lack of value they felt as educators. The specifics of district approaches fit under the categories of the Three Cs, answering the three sub-questions.

The first sub-question asked: What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address teacher characteristics as an approach to retaining beginning teachers? The participants described areas in which the district helped support teachers emotionally and provided ongoing professional development to meet their overall needs. The Rural District had counseling options available to teachers as part of their benefits package. As a district, they also strive to educate teachers on burnout and wellness strategies. Both districts offered multiple professional development opportunities and targeted beginning teacher trainings to continually improve teachers' skills.

The second sub-question asked: What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address working conditions as an approach to retaining beginning teachers? The working conditions encompass a myriad of factors including the culture, relationships, support, location, and size. The majority of responses from participants focused on the mentoring programs that districts had established to provide support for beginning teachers. The participants agreed that mentoring programs are essential for the success of beginning teachers.

Another major factor that participants believed influenced working conditions was the overall culture and climate of the school as influenced by the administration. The districts provided some principal meetings and trainings, but for the most part the culture of the school was approached at the local level only. The location and size of the district were not controllable by the districts. However, both districts tried to capitalize on their unique characteristics to attract and retain teachers. The City District emphasized their small size as a positive to build community within the district and create a familial feeling. The Rural District highlighted the benefits of their location. Being more rural, they sought teachers who liked the open spaces and the small-town feel.

The final sub-question asked: What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address teacher compensation as an approach to retaining beginning teachers? Compensation was the most obvious and frequent category that participants gave for how districts were retaining teachers. Both districts had recently given salary raises to their teachers and were hopeful that would help lessen the attrition. The Rural District specifically had already noticed a large decrease in the number of teachers leaving in the last two years. The City District noticed higher quality candidates applying for positions and fewer leaving to other nearby districts. All of the participants agreed that more money would be beneficial for retention. Participants suggested that besides raising salaries, more money is needed for more teachers, support staff, and resources. The districts both seemed to be trying to give as much money and resources as possible to their teachers but could only do so much with the funds they had. More money is needed from the state and taxpayers for districts to be able to address compensation areas further.

Discussion

The findings of this study closely relate to the theoretical and empirical retention literature that was presented in Chapter Two. Past empirical research included in the literature review explained other areas surrounding teacher retention and attrition. The theoretical foundation for this study was based on Sher's (1983) Three Cs of Retention. The data was pattern-matched to these three categories to validate their appropriateness and completeness for describing retention issues. The following sections explain how this study relates to the empirical and theoretical foundation of literature and presents additional information regarding teacher retention in Utah.

Empirical Literature

The literature presented in Chapter Two was corroborated repeatedly by the participants of this present study. The issues participants had with teacher preparation, the difficulty expressed of the teaching profession, and the importance of mentoring programs coincides with the literature. The lack that existed in the literature was two-fold. There were limited studies from the state of Utah—an area that has experienced high numbers of teacher attrition. Additionally, there were no studies that examined the approaches that school districts have taken to alleviate teacher attrition problems. The following section explains how this current study relates to past research and how it fills the gap of literature for Utah and for district retention approaches.

The first section in Chapter Two focused on teacher preparation programs and the importance of teacher training, which was consistent with the findings of this study in Theme One. During the interviews the participants argued that teachers are not leaving programs prepared enough to meet the realities of a demanding job. The lack of preparation was consistent

with what past literature indicated. Previous studies established the importance of experiential learning for preservice teachers and the need for extended fieldwork opportunities (Chandler et al., 2013; Conderman et al., 2012; Hamman et al., 2013; O'Neill & Stephenson, 2013; Petersen, 2017; Snyder, 2012). Similarly, several participants spoke about the missing link between theory and practice that many preparation programs offer. Hank, Gabby, and Cathy spoke about how the experiences in college do not fully prepare teachers for the realities of the classroom. Both Deb and John argued that student teaching experiences should last at least a full school year to better prepare candidates. Those participants that earned their degree through alternative routes had wished they had experienced student teaching under a qualified teacher. Gabby believed that if "we just prepare our student teachers better, then retention would last longer" (Gabby, Interview, 08/01/18, CD).

Another aspect of training that was conveyed in both the literature and this present study was the need for more practical skills. Bledsoe et al. (2016) and Conderman et al (2012) suggested that teacher preparation should include skills that teachers would need on a daily basis such as how to use the gradebook, hold meetings with parents, and complete paperwork. In this study Quinn expressed how she wished that someone had taught her how to speak to parents because they were one of the most difficult parts of her job. Cathy and Deb admitted that they lacked the skills to plan lessons based on the state standards they were supposed to teach from. Additionally, participants and past literature indicated the difficulty of classroom management for beginning teachers. Dias-Lacy & Guirguis (2017) explained, "Classroom management has appeared to be a common issue for first year educators" (p. 269). This was found to be true in this study as well. Frank and Robert, both beginning teachers, expressed that classroom

management was their biggest challenge. Principals Ned and Cathy also articulated that many beginning teachers struggle with classroom management.

In past research, opinions on licensure route varied. Some studies indicated that how teachers are trained matters for teacher retention (Shepherd & Alpert, 2012; Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Conversely, Guili & Zeller (2016) conducted a longitudinal study that looked at the differences between alternative and traditional routes in teacher retention. The results indicated that the route did not relate to retention. Gorard (2017) surveyed 7,700 beginning teachers and found that regardless of the route, overall teachers were satisfied with their level of preparedness. This does not relate to what the participants in this study felt about ARL routes. Three out of the four beginning teachers interviewed were alternatively licensed teachers. All three expressed their lack of preparedness entering the profession and their desire for better instruction. Other participants that spoke of ARL candidates explained how they do not come well prepared, and more support and resources are required in order for them to succeed. The educators in this study also shared how the allowance of anyone in the teaching profession was offensive and hurtful to them as professionals. Past literature regarding the weaknesses of teacher preparation programs were articulated by the participants in this study. Both past research and this current study agreed that better and more preparation is needed for teachers.

The second section presented in Chapter Two focused on beginning teacher experiences. The findings of past research were similar to the results of this study. The consensus is that teaching is a difficult job. Just as the NTCQ stated that teaching has become even more difficult, the participants argued the same thing. The participants explained that students are now coming with more emotional and academic challenges than in the past. Their home lives are more stressful, and that stress seeps into the classroom. Despite increased student challenges, teachers

are expected to do more and more. Teachers cannot simply teach content. They must be data analysts, test administrators, technology gurus, and emotional counselors. Past research confirmed that teaching, especially during the beginning years, is challenging (Bennett et al., 2013; Chong et al., 2014; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Kim & Cho, 2014). The beginning teachers in this study said similar things presented in the literature. Frank described his first year as his hair being on fire, and Quinn admitted she could barely keep her head above water. Although the participants said that teaching gets easier to handle over time, the difficult first few years can determine if a teacher remains in the profession.

One of things that causes such difficulty at the beginning for teachers is the "reality shock" they face upon entering the classroom (Kim & Cho, 2014, p 76). The participants agreed that beginning teachers enter the profession with an idealistic view of teaching that lacks the realities of the job. Allen suggested that teachers need to be trained better and exposed to the realities of the classroom before they begin teaching so that they are less shocked when they begin. Gabby also emphasized how important exposing teacher candidates to the realities of the classroom is in order to increase retention. If teachers lack a realistic understanding of the teaching profession, they are more likely to be unsatisfied and leave.

Although much of the past literature emphasized the difficulty for beginning teachers, the participants expressed how difficult teaching is regardless of the years of experience a teacher had. Most of the participants interviewed were veteran educators, yet they still got emotional as they shared personal struggles and feelings of discouragement. Even with 37 years of experience, Pam said she still had rough days and felt overwhelmed. Teachers feel the stress of their students, requirements from the state, pressure from the district, expectations from administration, and demands of parents. All of this added to a complex workload and lack of

respect causes teachers to be left with "discouraged hearts" (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD).

Perhaps that is why the majority of participants I interviewed were still involved in education but

were not still in the classroom. Ellen explained to the focus group that although she loved

teaching and considered herself a good teacher, she just could not remain in the classroom. The

stress and anxiety never fully left her while teaching and so she had to find an alternative. She

ended her personal interview with this statement regarding the state of education: "It's high-

stakes for everyone. Even the very small are feeling it" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). With

the responsibility and pressure placed onto teachers it is no wonder that teacher retention is a

nationwide epidemic.

One of the best approaches that the literature and districts of this study have implemented

for teacher retention is mentoring programs. Researchers have found that mentoring programs

are successful in retaining teachers (Clark & Byrnes, 2012; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017;

Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The participants of this study emphasized the importance of

mentoring and shared personal examples where the mentoring program specifically retained

teachers. Dias-Lacy and Guirguis (2017) explained that assigning the right mentor is essential for

a positive and successful mentoring experience. Consideration should be taken when assigning

mentors, and simply using a teacher in the same grade-level is not always the best option. This

same fact was reiterated by Deb during her interview. She complained that often mentors are

chosen simply out of convenience rather than by ability. Mentors need to have certain skills and

abilities to create successful partnerships. According to researchers, mentors need to be trained

(Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; NTC, 2016). Both districts in this study provided some form of

training for mentors, although the participants did not speak in-depth about what kind of training

was provided. The documents shared from both districts included checklists and packets they

gave mentors to assist them in their role. The Rural District spoke about mentor meetings with the district mentors, and the City District HR director meets with mentors before they begin. Whether these meetings constitute actual training was unclear.

All participants found mentoring helpful, when it was implemented appropriately. Polikoff et al. (2015) explained how there are a variety of mentoring structures, and implementation varies among states and districts. In this study the two districts implemented mentoring very differently. The Rural District had a more formal, established mentoring program, whereas the City District utilized instructional coaches more with informal help from grade-level teams. Interestingly three out of the four beginning teachers explained how they did not receive a mentor their first year as they were supposed to. Quinn was assigned a mentor, but he was at the high school level and unhelpful with elementary issues. Robert and Frank both said they were not even assigned a mentor during their first year of teaching. Quinn explained that no one supervised the mentors closely to see if they were actually doing their mentoring job.

Mentors are primarily classroom teachers, and mentoring is an additional duty on top of their regular role. Knowing how difficult teaching is, even for veteran teachers, it is not surprising that mentors are not always able to meet the needs of their mentees (Latifoglu, 2016). Despite the failures of implementation, all three participants expressed how when they did receive support from mentors or coaches, it was very helpful and improved them as educators. Mentoring provides teachers with necessary support in an isolating and difficult profession. Both past research and the participants in this study agree that mentoring is an essential component to improve teacher retention (Chou, 2010; Clark & Byrnes, 2012; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Huling et al., 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Polikoff et al., 2015; Sadiq et al., 2017; Sebald & Rude, 2015; Wasonga et al., 2015).

The final section in Chapter Two focused on attrition and retention literature, organized by Sher's (1983) Three Cs of Retention. Researchers noted that teacher retention is not caused by one factor. Rather a combination of factors influences teachers' decisions to remain in the classroom (Clandinin et al., 2015; Mason & Matas, 2015; Schaefer et al., 2012; Swai, 2013). Past research and the majority of comments from participants focused on teacher characteristics, working conditions, and compensation as major issues of retention. But participants in this study emphasized the more personal side of the factors surrounding retention. The idea of valuing the whole teacher was a common theme throughout the interviews. Teachers need to feel valued in all areas to remain in the profession. Value comes in many different forms. Teachers need to feel valued as professionals by the training they receive. Teachers need to feel valued by the support, respect, and attention given to personal details of their lives. Teachers need to feel valued by the administration, colleagues, parents, and students they work with on a daily basis. Teachers need to feel valued by the state legislator and local community. Teachers need to feel valued financially for the amount of effort and time they put in. As Marie simply stated, "Why would you stay if you didn't feel valued?" (Marie, Interview, 08/13/18, RD). For participants who are still in the trenches, retention is all about value. As Ellen put it, "If we don't wake up and listen to the voices in the trenches we are going to be in a very difficult situation. Bottom line our kids are going to suffer" (Ellen, Interview, 07/31/18, CD). Valuing teachers is essential if there is hope of solving the retention problem.

Theoretical Literature

The grounding theoretical concept of this study was drawn from three categories presented by Sher (1983) regarding retention issues. Sher (1983) surmised that all retention issues could fit into three distinct categories of Characteristics, Conditions, and Compensation.

The majority of responses from participants confirmed that these three categories encompass most of the retention issues. However, an additional C was discovered during the data collection process: Community. The other theme that emerged from this study was the difficulty of the job. This theme can fall under the theme of teacher characteristics since personality and disposition determines opinions and ability to cope. It was discussed separately in the theme section for clarity, but it is considered a subset of teacher characteristics. The theme of community, however, is its own unique category that Sher (1983) did not include in his categories of retention, but one that participants of this study felt was an important component of teacher retention.

The theme of Community emerged from participants speaking about those outside of education that have a huge impact on education. These members include the state legislature, state board of education, school board members, and general public. Many of the decisions made by these groups of people impact education immensely and therefore impact teacher retention. Several participants mentioned how the state legislature in Utah does not support education. In fact, teachers feel berated, abandoned, and belittled by the state. The legislature is the one that is making decisions every year regarding education. They set the tone for the entire state and unfortunately, the participants felt that the overall tone for education in Utah is negative. The district educators spoke about how they deal with the state legislature on a continual basis. Every year the legislature passes multiple bills impacting education and requiring school districts, and therefore teachers, to make changes in the classroom. Districts scramble and teachers grumble to keep up with the changes. Participants felt like decisions being made for education, not by educators, is demeaning. The Rural District superintendent explained how the state is "all about compliance. And if you don't get it, they're going to hammer you with the stick and take your

money. Use that philosophy with your own children and your children are going to resent you" (Hank, Interview, 08/09/18, RD). Unfortunately, it seems that philosophy has caused teachers to feel bitterness and resentment toward the state. Changes need to be made at the state level to improve the overall climate of education in Utah or teachers are going to continue to leave.

The community members of school boards and general public also impact teacher retention. Only one participant mentioned the school board during the interviews. Brett explained that the school board of the City District had been supportive of approving raises for teachers. School boards are usually made up of community members that make decisions that immediately impact school districts. Their opinions and decisions need to be considered for retention issues since they wield a lot of power in school districts.

The members of the general public also play a role in teacher retention. Most of the community members are taxpayers and directly fund the school districts. Many of them are stakeholders since their children attend the schools. Their opinions both socially and financially directly impact the schools. Participants in this study explained the importance of the general public and student parents. Many felt that parents' opinions mattered more than their own as educators. Other participants felt that the public supports education in theory, but not realistically with their wallets. One participant suggested that the public needed to be educated on the how schools are funded and why more money is needed. Robert felt that the public does not fully understand the importance and benefit that more money, more resources, and smaller class sizes can have for students. He believed that a public ad campaign or some form of public education is necessary to foster public support of education. During the focus group interview participants also argued that parents needed to be better informed about the negatives impact large classes can have on teachers and students. The participants' view was that if parents understood how

these problems are impacting their children's education they would be at the district and state fighting for better conditions. The support of the community at all levels is essential for real changes to be made in education and thereby teacher retention.

Implications

Teacher retention has become an increasing problem throughout the country and especially in the state of Utah. Previous research regarding teacher retention has been insufficient in determining the best practices for retaining teachers and giving voice to educators in solving the problem. This qualitative study attempts to fill that gap by adding to retention literature and adding qualitative richness to Utah research. There are theoretical, empirical, and practical implications for this study that sought to discover school district approaches to teacher retention.

Theoretical Implications

Teacher retention is an area that encompasses the reasons that teachers stay or leave the education profession. In an attempt to describe the many different factors that influence teacher retention, Sher (1983) created three overarching categories of retention. Sher's (1983) Three Cs included teacher characteristics, working conditions, and compensation. Speaking with educators from the district and school level, I discovered that most of the retention issues do in fact fit nicely within the Three Cs. The participants' responses centered on the training and personality of teachers, the overall work climate, and the amount of money provided. The Three Cs were confirmed as appropriate categories for describing retention in both urban and rural settings. However, as previously mentioned, participants did speak of another C—Community which participants believed was an essential factor in teacher retention.

The Community factor includes the state legislature, the local school board, and the general public. These community entities are responsible for the majority of funding and

decision-making that impacts education. Without support from the community, changes in education are not possible. Participants spoke about how they did not feel supported by the state. The district leaders in both districts mentioned how there are so many new education bills each year that they can barely keep up with the changes. Additionally, participants spoke about how important the support of the general public was for retention. Unfortunately, the public lacks knowledge about the importance of education and the need for more funding. Robert and Deb suggested that the public needs to be better informed to acquire their support. The support teachers receive both financially and socially from these community entities influences the overall climate of education, and consequently influences retention. Therefore, to more fully encapsulate all of the issues surrounding retention, this fourth C of Community needs to be added to Sher's categories. Recognizing the influence the community has on teacher retention is critical in solving retention problems.

Empirical Implications

The majority of retention literature that existed focused on the reasons teachers stay or leave the profession. Additionally, most of the research, specifically in the state of Utah, was quantitative in nature and simply surveyed current or former teachers. Lacking from the literature was a current, qualitative glimpse into the perspectives of Utah educators. Also missing from the literature was any study that looked at the approaches that districts are taking to attempt to retain teachers. This study fills both of those gaps.

Interviewing participants from two districts in Utah gave a perspective from both an urban and rural setting. Interestingly, the responses from both groups were mostly the same, in regards to the challenges of teaching and the negative feelings surrounding the profession. There were a few differences in how the districts were approaching retention and a few differences in

issues they faced based on size or location. The Rural District had a more difficult time keeping teachers from leaving to better paying districts in the city. The City District struggled more as a small district, lacking the resources to establish formal programs. Both districts struggled to get the funding they needed to raise salaries, but for different reasons. The Rural District lacked taxable land, while the City District lacked a large number of taxpayers. Both districts also approached teacher retention in a similar fashion: mentoring and raises. This study filled the gaps in literature by illustrating how districts are approaching retention and giving voice to educators in Utah. However, one study is not enough. More research needs to be done to include more districts in Utah and gain further insight into beginning teacher retention issues. Utah education would also benefit from more qualitative studies to give voice to educators and provide more in-depth answers to the unique educational problems Utah faces.

Practical Implications

Finally, this study provided practical implications for the stakeholders involved in education. The participants spoke about the importance of teachers feeling valued by the state, the district, local administration, parents, and community. Teachers need to feel valued financially, emotionally, socially, and professionally. Teachers need to feel supported both outside and inside the classroom. Outside support includes a livable wage, realistic expectations, respect as professionals, and an overall positive attitude toward education. Many participants expressed that the overall feeling of education in Utah is negative. The state requires too many new things each year, parents blame teachers for everything, and the teaching profession is looked down upon. Somehow, this negative atmosphere surrounding education needs to change. Participants in this study suggested that educating the community and garnering their support is

the only way solve the retention problem. Teachers need to feel support outside the classroom in order to remain inside.

Also important is the support that teachers receive inside the classroom. The participants pointed out that many of the supports that teachers receive such as mentoring or salaries are outside of the classroom. What teachers really need is support within the walls of their classroom. Support within the classroom includes more money for supplies, support staff, and more teachers. Teachers spend a lot of their own money to supply their classrooms. Large class sizes make it difficult to afford and to reach all of the students. Support staff such as classroom aides can help to meet the individual needs of students. Additional teachers also help to reduce the class sizes in the first place. Rather than simply raising salaries to retain teachers, hiring more staff to lighten the burden of a difficult job would be more beneficial. By making teachers' jobs more manageable and valuing their efforts, more teachers would remain in the profession. Based on this recommendation from participants, states and districts should reevaluate where they allocate their funds and be more strategic in how best to help teachers.

Another area that needs to be reevaluated are the supports that beginning teachers are given. It is clear based on past research and confirmed in this present study that mentoring programs are critical in teacher retention. States and school districts need to be aware of how their mentoring programs are actually being implemented to ensure that the mentoring is successful. Mentors need to be trained, assigned carefully, and managed appropriately. Both school districts in this study also had training for beginning teachers that they felt was helpful for new teachers. However, speaking with teachers in this study, those trainings were actually unhelpful and added to an already stressful workload. Districts should consider better ways to

provide supports for beginning teachers throughout their first few years without increasing requirements and therefore stress.

One of the common complaints among the participants of this study and in previous research was the lack of appropriate training for teachers. Participants and researchers argued that teachers need more practical classroom experience. A separate area of complaint has been the lack of support and assistance in the classroom. As previously mentioned, participants asked for more people to help with all that is required of teachers. An obvious solution to both problems would be for school districts to partner with universities. If universities utilized the schools for more experiential learning opportunities for their candidates, then classroom teachers would be supplied with a free labor source to provide assistance in the classroom. Thus, teachers could graduate better prepared after spending several years of their coursework in actual classrooms, and teachers could receive the support they need at no additional cost to the districts. This solution seems to be perfect for two different problems in education.

A final practical implication of this study is the power that comes from bringing educators together to speak about education issues. Oftentimes the perspectives of educators at the school level are left out of the education discussion. The focus group of this study brought educators together to speak about teacher retention. The discussion was powerful, passionate, and productive. If states and school districts brought educators, along with community members together to discuss issues in education, then perhaps problems could be solved in meaningful and lasting ways.

In summary, there are several practical recommendations for those involved in education. First, the state legislature needs to stop introducing and implementing so many changes to education every year. Second, the state legislature needs to show teachers support both

with less teacher turnover and can build a positive learning culture. Students are benefited academically from qualified, satisfied teachers. Parents and community members benefit from educated students. All will benefit from teachers remaining in the classroom.

Delimitations and Limitations

Specific decisions made provided parameters and delimitations for this study. The design chosen for this study was a multiple case study. This design was most fitting since it allowed me to investigate two different school districts in Utah and compare the findings. Yin (2014) explained that multiple case studies are beneficial because they provide more information on the topic in a similar way that repeated studies would. By using a multiple case study design, I was able to get multiple perspectives in one study. Two cases provided varied perceptions without sacrificing the depth required for case study design (O'Leary, 2017; Yin, 2014). One of the cases was a small, urban school district while the other was a large, rural one. Each case provided unique viewpoints on district approaches to teacher retention.

Another delimiting parameter that was set for this study was participant selection. Participants included employed educators within the two school districts. Participants from varying positions and gender established maximum variation (Creswell, 2013). The study included seven teachers. Two were from a secondary level while the other five were elementary. Multiple secondary educators were contacted, however only two educators were able to participate in the study. The other participants included two principals, three district mentors, two human resource directors, one assistant superintendent, and one superintendent. The varying levels of position within the districts and years of experience provided multiple perspectives on the same issue. An effort was also made to gather both male and female participants. Teaching is a profession typically dominated by women and so initially I was worried about finding male

participants. Luckily, however, there ended up being an equal number of male and females in the study. There were eight male participants and eight female participants. The different perspectives that males and females brought to teacher retention proved to be valuable as each group focused on different areas of concern.

In every study there are limitations, and this study was not exempt. While the selection of two cases made the research more feasible, the selection of more cases would have provided more information for school district approaches in Utah. Both of these districts were from the northern half of the state. While this made it convenient for me as the researcher, it would have been interesting to gather perspectives from other areas in Utah. Another limitation was participant selection. Both school districts had a couple schools with the highest teacher retention problems. Unfortunately, none of the participants interviewed for this study were from those schools. I made an attempt to gain participants from these schools but was unable to get anyone to agree to an interview within the timeframe of this study. In the City District I was unable to get a second principal or any educators from the high school level to respond to my requests for an interview. In the Rural District, the participants were selected for me by a district employee. Although this was very helpful for gathering participants during the summer, it meant that the district was aware of everyone that I spoke to. I was concerned that participants might not feel as comfortable being honest if their identities were known to the district. During the interviews however, the participants seemed comfortable sharing their opinions honestly and thoughtfully.

Recommendations for Future Research

Teacher retention is a continuing problem in education and warrants further study. Utah is a specific area with teacher retention issues and unique educational characteristics. More studies specific to the state of Utah would shed light on the reasons many teachers leave the

profession early. In the UEPC study that was conducted, the researchers suggested that studies were needed to determine the motivations of teachers leaving and staying. Correspondingly, participants in this study suggested that exit interviews need to be performed to determine the causes for teacher departures. Understanding why teachers are leaving and why others are staying is an important component to solving the teacher retention problem in Utah.

This study only included two school districts in the state of Utah. Additional case studies should be employed to investigate the perspectives of all Utah school districts. Examining the different school districts in Utah could highlight strategies that are successful in retaining teachers and determine areas for improvement. Speaking with more educators would also provide more insight to the retention issue. During the focus group interview for this study there was a powerful feeling in the room as educators came together to discuss issues in education. Many times teachers' voices are left out of the conversation regarding change in education. There need to be more educators involved in the decisions that affect education and great benefit could come from studies that focus on educators' opinions about education.

One theme that was discovered during this study was the importance of the community involvement in education. Since this is a new addition to Sher's (1983) Three Cs of Retention, more research needs to be done to explore the importance of community in regards to teacher retention. An interesting research study would be to investigate the relationship between community and teacher retention. One participant in this study felt that there needs to be more public education on the importance of funding schools. Understanding how the community opinion and support impacts teacher retention would be an important piece of information for the retention issue. Additionally, as suggested in the implication section, partnerships between universities and school districts could be beneficial to teacher retention. Further study

investigating the existence or introduction of these partnerships would be beneficial to universities and school districts alike.

Summary

In order for students to be successful, they must have the presence of a qualified instructor. Teacher attrition leaves classrooms with inexperienced educators and creates unstable learning environments. This is a problem for students, teachers, schools, districts, states, and communities. All are impacted by the quality of education students receive. The purpose of this study was to discover the approaches school districts in Utah are taking to retain beginning teachers. Participants from two different school districts in Utah were interviewed for their perspective on district approaches and the issues surrounding retention. The findings from this study aligns with past retention research and adds to the missing pieces. Previous research and this study confirm that teacher retention involves a myriad of factors. Retention cannot be solved from one angle. Just as teachers need to focus on the whole child when teaching, districts need to focus on the whole teacher to improve teacher retention.

Teachers have characteristics that influence their decision to remain in the classroom. Their ability to cope and the training they receive can determine their longevity in the field of teaching. The working conditions and climate of support greatly impacts teachers' satisfaction and capability of dealing with the challenges they face. The amount of compensation teachers earn for salary and are provided for supplies, matters for both their daily living and the respect they feel as professionals. Furthermore, the support they receive from the community at the state and local level impacts teachers' feelings toward the profession upon entering, remaining, or exiting.

The implications of this study are clear. Teacher retention needs to be addressed before it continues to worsen. Teachers need to feel valued personally, socially, and financially. Mentoring programs need to be utilized and then implemented correctly. Universities need to partner with school districts to improve teacher training and provide additional, free support to classrooms. School districts need to be more strategic in the help they give beginning teachers to ensure it is actually helpful. State legislatures and community members need to support teachers both vocally and financially. More support needs to be given within the walls of classrooms in order to keep teachers in those classrooms. Teacher retention is an issue that needs to be addressed and can be addressed in simple ways, but it will require states, districts, communities, and teachers to work together for lasting solutions to be found.

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APPENDIX A

Procedures

- Secured IRB approval
- Contacted school district superintendents for approval and to schedule interviews
- Conducted individual interviews and document collection
    - o Interviews were audiotaped for transcription
    - o During the individual interviews participants were asked to share any relevant documents such as portfolios, training records, compensation incentives, or district data
    - o During the interviews I took notes to record thoughts and observations
    - o Interviewed the first superintendent and asked for other relevant district employees to interview
    - o Contacted the district employees, principals, mentors, and beginning teachers to schedule interviews
    - o Conducted interviews
    - o During interviews asked principals, mentors, or teachers to participate in a focus group interview
- Analyzed the data from the first district
- Repeated the steps for the second district
- Held focus groups and videotape for transcription
- Analyzed the complete data and wrote the final report

APPENDIX B

Invitation to Participate

June 1, 2018

Dear Potential Participant:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to discover Utah school district approaches to beginning teacher retention, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are a beginning teacher, mentor, principal, superintendent, or district educator, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview, possibly a focus group interview, and to share any relevant documents you may have. It should take approximately one hour for you to complete the interview. Your name and position will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, contact me to schedule an interview at: ██████████████ or by calling me at ████████

A consent document will be given to you at the time of the interview. I also attached a copy of the consent form to this email for you information. The consent document contains additional information about my research, but you do not need to sign and return it at this time. I will have a copy of the consent document to sign before we begin your interview.

If you choose to participate, you will receive a five dollar gift card. Focus group participants will also receive an additional five dollar gift card and dinner.

I appreciate your consideration and possible willingness to participate. Please email or call me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Katie Kimber
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX C

Consent Form
How Utah School Districts Retain Beginning Teachers: A Multiple Case Study
Katie Kimber
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study on how school districts in Utah retain beginning teachers. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a district employee that holds a position with influence on teacher retention (superintendent, principal, district employee, mentor, or teacher). Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Katie Kimber, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to discover how school districts in Utah retain beginning teachers. The attrition rate of teachers in Utah is more than double the rate of the national average. More research is needed to determine the reasons teachers leave and possible solutions for keeping them in the classroom. The questions guiding this study are:
1. How do educators describe Utah school district approaches to retaining beginning teachers?
2. What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address teacher characteristics as an approach to retaining beginning teachers?
3. What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address working conditions as an approach to retaining beginning teachers?
4. What are educator perceptions of the ways Utah school districts address teacher

   compensation as an approach to retaining beginning teachers

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. Meet with me for an interview to discuss your views on the school district's teacher retention efforts. The interviews would be about 30-60 minutes long and audio recorded for transcription.
2. Provide any documents that relate to retention or beginning teacher induction programs such as:
   a. Portfolios
   b. Information regarding the EYE program
   c. Information or training given to mentors and beginning teachers
   d. District policy for beginning teachers
   e. Retention and attrition data
   f. Compensation or incentives packages
   g. Career advancement timelines
   h. Cost or budget for hiring and training new teachers
   i. Professional development tracking and opportunities

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include increased understanding of the factors influencing teacher retention and finding possible solutions to keep teachers in the classroom. Understanding and improving retention will benefit districts, teachers, parents, and students.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with person outside of the group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or your school district. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:
 If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Katie Kimber. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Signature of Investigator   Date

APPENDIX D

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

July 13, 2018

Katie Melinda Kimber

IRB Approval 3342.071318: A Multiple Case Study Investigating Utah School District Approaches to Beginning Teacher Retention

Dear Katie Melinda Kimber,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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APPENDIX E

Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little about yourself.

2. Describe your current role in the district.

3. Why did you decide to become an educator?

4. What do you believe makes the first few years of teaching difficult?

5. What are the requirements from the school, district, or state for beginning teachers?

6. How does the district help teachers during the first few years of teaching?

7. Describe a time in your career that caused you to feel like leaving the profession.

8. What are the reasons you believe many teachers leave the field of education?

9. Why have you chosen to remain in education?

10. What are your thoughts regarding the turnover rate of beginning teachers in Utah, which is more than double the national average of 7%?

11. Do you believe teacher retention is a problem in your school or district?

12. What approaches does your district use to prevent teachers from leaving?

13. What approach(es) do you believe would be most effective in preventing teachers from leaving?

14. What factors do you believe influence teacher retention?

15. How has your district addressed compensation, working conditions, and teacher characteristics in their teacher retention approaches?

APPENDIX F
Interview/Focus Group Script

Introduction:

"Good afternoon and welcome to our interview/focus group session. I appreciate your willingness to meet with me to discuss teacher retention efforts. Last year, the University of Utah released the results of an eight-year-long study that indicated over 50% of beginning teachers left the profession. Reasons why teachers left and why other teachers stayed were unclear. The purpose of this study is to figure out what school districts are doing, if anything, to keep teachers from leaving. The questions of the interview/focus group will focus on your perspective of the approaches your district has taken to retain beginning teachers. If you have any documents that pertain to retention you can share those during the interview if applicable or after we are finished.

I will be audio taping/videotaping this session today so that I can focus on what you are saying and take notes during our discussion. I will transcribe your comments at a later date to ensure accuracy when I write the report. In the report pseudonyms will be used to assure anonymity".

Questions: Following the introduction the interview/focus group questions will be asked. The questions are included in Appendices E and F. Any additional questions that arise will be noted.

Conclusion:

"Thank you so much for speaking with me today. I appreciate you taking the time out of your busy schedule. I will share the report with you upon the completion of this study. If you have any other information you would like to share or have any further questions for me, please do not hesitate to contact me".

APPENDIX G

Focus Group Questions

1. Tell the group your name, school, how long you have been teaching, and what your current position is?

2. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the term teacher retention?

3. How significant do you believe the problem of teacher retention is in Utah?

4. What do you believe are the negative aspects of teacher turnover? What are the positives?

5. What do you believe is the solution to the teacher retention problem?

6. Which of the following do you believe matters the most in addressing teacher retention issues: teacher characteristics, teacher working conditions, teacher compensation, or something else?

7. How effective are districts at solving retention problems?

8. Do you have anything else you would like to add about teacher retention specifically, or this study in general?