A Study to Determine How the Application of Georgia's Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) has Influenced Teacher Retention Rates as Perceived by Currentand Former Public School Teachers

A Dissertation submitted
to the Graduate School
Valdosta State University

in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in Leadership

in the Department of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology
of the Dewar College of Education and Human Services

December 2019

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ABSTRACT

The stakes are continually getting higher for teachers, as more states adopt policies and procedures based on teacher evaluations. Educational accountability practices reflect an ever-growing system where schools and teachers are being held more responsible for student achievement and learning (Lavigne, 2014). According to the Georgia Department of Education (2016), two-thirds of teachers within the State of Georgia would not recommend teaching as a viable profession. Additionally, as of 2015, 44% of teachers were leaving the profession within the first 5 years at great personal expense to themselves and the state in terms of time, effort, loss of productivity, and financial costs (GaDOE, 2016). This study examined current and former teachers' experiences to determine if the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) has influenced teacher retention rates within the State of Georgia. A basic interpretive qualitative research approach was applied to examine six participants' experiences. Participants were selected via purposeful and snowball sampling. Data for this study were analyzed via face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate that inconsistent and biased observations were negatively impacting teachers' performance ratings, lack of quality feedback was hindering teacher's abilities to improve their teaching, and the bureaucratic nature of the TKES and teaching, in general, are contributing factors forwhy teachers leave the profession. The findings from this study indicate that if school leaders and policymakers begin to address the subjective and bureaucratic nature of the TKES, teacher retention rates may begin to shift in the right direction.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to start off by saying that this journey has been a long and challenging chapter in my life. During this process, I have gotten married, built a house, maintained a full-time job, and brought two lovely children into this world. All of this would not have been possible without the help of my committee, my wife, and my family along the way.

I would first like to thank Dr. Rudo Tsemunhu, who never gave up on me and challenged me to keep pressing on over the years. I appreciate the phone calls, emails, and words of encouragement you gave me along the way. I would also like to thank Dr. Green and Dr. Truby for the time you spent helping me cross the finish line.

Additionally, I would like to thank my friends and colleagues who constantly supported me along the way. Your words of encouragement, advice, and willingness to just listen when I needed it was truly amazing.

Lastly and most importantly, I want to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to my wife for always being there for me when I needed you most during this process. Your willingness to help me succeed is one of the main factors for me finishing. I am also so very thankful for my mother. She was another significant factor in me finishing this dissertation. The countless hours you spent chatting with me and helping me think through my writer's block was extremely helpful.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Over the last 30 years, there has been an increased effort to improve teacher quality in public schools. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002 was the first major piece of legislation that began paving a path to better teacher quality (Sartain & Steinberg, 2016). This initiative put in motion the requirement for states to ensure all teachers within the schools were considered highly qualified (Sartain & Steinberg, 2016). In 2015, following the NCLB Act, President Barack Obama reauthorized the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). One of the major changes noted in the ESSA from NCLB was the removal of NCLB's Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and greater responsibility for states to design and build state accountability systems for determining supports and interventions for schools and districts. The ESSA demonstrates a shift in prior legislation from reliance on test scores as a measuring stick for assessing school effectiveness, to a more holistic approach by encouraging multiple measures of student and school success (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016).

Race to the Top (RTTT) was a competitive grant program designed to provide incentives for states to begin reforming K–12 education in the areas of student performance and teacher/principal effectiveness (Ballou & Springer, 2015). As a result of this grant program, the U.S. Department of Education began calling for states to examine and develop a comprehensive educator evaluation system (Ballou & Springer, 2015). In 2013, Georgia passed House Bill 244 in response to the state's Race to the Top initiative, and, in July 2014, HB 244 became law

(Georgia General Assembly, 2015). The resulting evaluating instrument for teachers within the state of Georgia is called the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). Twenty-six districts in Georgia were originally part of the RTTT application and represented educating about 40% of public school students. In 2012, in preparation for the passage of HB 244, each of those 26 districts implemented the TKES and Leader Keys Evaluation System (LKES) (Grigbsy, Helfrich, & Deissler, 2015).

Teacher Attrition

In 2015, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) reported that 44% of Georgia's public school teachers were leaving the profession within the first 5 years of employment. The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) concurrently stated that the number-one reason teachers were leaving the profession was a result of the increase and emphasis on mandated tests, while the number-two reason for teachers exiting the professionwas the teacher evaluation method (GaDOE, 2016).

According to Ingersoll (2005), "few educational issues have received more attention in recent times than the problem of ensuring that our nation's elementary and secondary classrooms are all staffed with quality teachers" (p. 1). The quality of teachers and instruction in the classroom has been undoubtedly among the most important factors shaping the overall success and growth of students (Ingersoll, 2005; Koedel, Li, Springer, & Tan, 2017). Principals have been evaluating teachers for decades, and a good deal of data has accumulated in this domain (Murphy, Hallinger, & Heck, 2013). However, teacher evaluation during the last century shows little influence on anything of substance related to student achievement, school improvement, and teacher effectiveness (Murphy et al., 2013; Sartain & Steinberg, 2016). Even the newer, more substantive evaluation systems implemented over the last 15 years have not been shown to drive

school improvement regarding student learning. Murphy et al. (2013) point out that given the limited number of studies, the topic remains a critical area of concern.

Problem Statement

According to the Georgia Department of Education (2016), two-thirds of teachers within the state of Georgia would not recommend teaching as a viable profession; as of 2015, 44% of teachers were leaving the profession. Georgia teachers are abandoning their careers at increasing rates after only 5 years of service at great personal expense to themselves and the state of Georgia regarding time, effort, loss of productivity, and financial costs. Due to low teacher retention rates, the state is facing a potential teacher shortage. Georgia teachers have identified the way they are evaluated as the number-two key reason for leaving the profession (GaDOE, 2016).

Purpose Statement

The stakes are continually getting higher for teachers, as more states adopt policies and procedures based on teacher evaluations. These current educational accountability practices reflect an ever-growing system where schools and teachers are being held more responsible for student achievement and learning (Lavigne, 2014). Within the state of Georgia, theTeacher Keys Effectiveness System has been implemented to objectively hold teachers accountable for their classroom practices, professional growth, and overall student achievement. The purpose of this study was to determine how the implementation of Georgia's common teacher evaluation system (TKES)—designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state—is impacting teacher retention rates as perceived by current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ 1. What are the career experiences of current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system identified as Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state?

RQ 2. How have teacher retention rates been impacted as perceived by current and former teachers in an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system identified as Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state?

RQ 3. Do current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system—Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state—perceive that TKES enables teachers to be more effective?

Significance of the Study

The Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) is used by the state of Georgia as the primary tool to evaluate teachers. Teachers within the state have indicated that this tool is a key reason for high employment dissatisfaction and attrition. By examining the perceptions of current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district, this studyinvestigated what components of the TKES are negatively impacting teacher retention rates through the career experiences of identified participants. Further examination of this potential crisis may lead to key stakeholders—the Professional Standards Commission (PSC), Georgia Department

of Education (GaDOE), and Regional Educational Service Agency's (RESAs)—implementing critical changes to the evaluation system.

The PSC and GaDOE play a strategic role in the implementation of the standards, policies, and procedures that schools and districts abide by while local RESAs help support school districts by focusing on and facilitating school improvement. Other stakeholders may include future teachers, principals, and superintendents within the educational system, where TKES has a direct impact on their schools and job performance. These stakeholders may use the results of this study to provide critical feedback for future evaluation improvements and assessment tools within the state.

Conceptual Framework

A Framework for Teaching, created by Charlotte Danielson (2007), focuses on the complex activity of teaching that is divided into twenty-two components combined across four domains. Figure 1 below is a representation of the four domains.

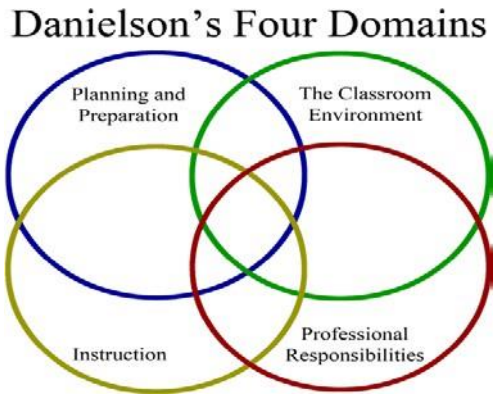

Figure 1. Danielson's Domains of Teaching (Danielson, 2011).

The components of this framework are related to the key components of the Teacher Keys Evaluation System, making it a good model to guide this study. According to Danielson (2007),

"a teacher's planning and preparation affect instruction, and all of these are affected by reflection on practice that accompanies a unit or lesson" (p. 2). A framework for professional practice such as this model can be used for a multitude of purposes ranging from supporting the needs of novice teachers in enhancing veteran teachers' skills. Due to the complex nature of teaching, following a professional framework can be helpful with the day-to-day challenge of teaching students and managing the many aspects of a teacher's duties (Danielson, 2007).

Danielson (2013) developed the Framework for Teaching evaluation instrument to identify the teacher's responsibilities that have been documented through empirical studies and theoretical research for promoting and improving student learning. The Framework for Teaching is one of the most widely used instruments employed to define quality teaching (Danielson, 2011). Danielson (2013) organized the Framework for Teaching into four distinct domains—planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. While the framework itself is not the only possible description of practice, it helps define what teachers should know and be able to do in the performance of their job duties (Danielson, 2013).

The Framework for Teaching outlines instruction that occurs in the classroom and the planning and preparation needed to be an effective teacher. Within each component of good teaching, the framework includes four levels of performance—unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished (Danielson, 2011). Danielson (2011) indicated that everyone, from the teachers to the administration, must possess a shared understanding of this common language to increase the value of classroom observations. Additionally, administrators/supervisors must become skilled evaluators and be able to recognize the different components of practice, interpret evidence of performance, and engage teachers in meaningful and productive conversations about their methods (Danielson, 2011). The framework can be used for various reasons, but its main

focus is grounded in developing the foundation for professional conversations among educators as they seek to enhance their skills within the complex act of teaching (Danielson Group, 2017).

Teacher Retention Theory

Over the last few decades, educational researchers have brought to light the challenges associated with newcomers to school teaching (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). According to Ingersoll (2001), contemporary educational theory suggested that one of the major causes of inadequate school performance lied in the inability of schools to properly staff classrooms with qualified teachers. Ingersoll (2002) points out that the prevailing policy response to the staffing problems had been to increase the supply of teachers. In the past, a wide range of initiatives had been put forth in order to recruit new teacher candidates into the teaching field. Among those initiatives were programs designed to entice professionals into a mid-career shift to teaching (i.e., Troops-to-Teachers, Peace Corps, and Teach for America) with the hopes of luring the best and the brightest to understaffed schools (Ingersoll, 2002). Additionally, states had implemented alternate routes to certification along with providing financial incentives such as signing bonuses and student loan forgiveness (Ingersoll, 2002).

The literature has documented what many teachers have long suspected—a significant link between high rates of beginning teacher attrition and the resulting teacher shortages that plague countless school systems (Burkhauser, 2017; Ford, Van Sickle, Clark, Fazio-Brunson, & Schween, 2017; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). Analysis of national research data indicates that school staffing problems are not solely due to teacher shortages but rather as a result of a "revolving door" (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). According to Smith and Ingersoll (2004), nearly three in ten teachers leave to go to a different school or leave the profession after their first year. National data collected in 2012 showed that

the national teacher attrition rate was 7.68%, which represented a loss of 238,000 teachers; virtually the entire teacher demand for the following school year (Sutcher et al., 2016). Ingersoll et al., (2014) reported that, from 1988–1989 to 2008–2009, annual attrition rose 41% from 6.4% to 9%.

In response to those statistics, induction programs have been implemented in growing numbers to help new teachers manage the day-to-day practicalities of teaching (Kearney, 2014; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Sutcher et al., 2016). Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that between 1990–1991 and 1999–2000, the number of new teachers participating in an induction program increased dramatically. Fewer than half of all new teachers reported participating in an induction/mentoring program during 1990–1991, while almost 80% reported participating by 1999–2000 (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). As the proportion of beginning teachers participating in school induction programs significantly increased, the kinds and number of supports provided by schools and districts to new teachers varied, as well as the potential effect on the retention of recipients (Kearney, 2014; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). These similar trends of teacher attrition and systematic induction programs are still a problem in the educational field today (Ford et al., 2017; Learning Policy Institute, 2017; Sutcher et al., 2016).

Research Methodology

A qualitative basic interpretive research design (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015 was used to understand better the life and career experiences of teachers being evaluated by the TKES. This design focused on taking the participants' experiences and generating themes based on their shared encounters. Purposive sampling was used to identify and select a Georgia public school district located in the northeastern portion of the state in order to develop a list of possible participants. Criterion sampling was used to select the participants within the chosen district.

Identified participants included current teachers with one to 5 years of teaching experience and former teachers with four to 15 years in the profession. Snowball sampling was used to identify participants who have left the teaching field within the last one to 5 years. Data collection methods included interviews and review of documents, while data analysis utilized a combination of memos, categorizing, and connecting strategies to identify emergent themesfrom the data (Maxwell, 2012).

Limitations

The study was limited to three current educators and three educators who left the teaching field. The findings, therefore, may not be transferable to all Georgia public school educators. Additional districts were not included in this study due to the qualitative inquiry of basic interpretive research, while ethical dilemmas were likely to emerge regarding data collection and analysis in qualitative studies (Merriam, 2015). Furthermore, personal perspectives of observations can limit data collection. Distorted responses, incomplete or inaccurate documents, and researcher bias are limitations that may occur in qualitative research (Patton, 2001).

Summary

This researcher addressed the impact of Georgia's teacher evaluation system on teacher retention by examining the perceptions and lived experiences of current and former public school teachers at an identified school district in Georgia. The purpose of this study was to investigate how Georgia's Teacher Keys Effectiveness System has impacted teacher retention rates through the career experiences of these teachers. Charlotte Danielson's (2013) Framework for Teaching was used to frame teachers' perceptions of the current evaluation system. Danielson's (2013) domains of teaching are used to understand and describe the complex act of teaching and identify what teachers should know and be able to do in the performance of their job. A qualitative basic

interpretive research design was used to guide the understanding of the selected site, and the findings in this study may inform key stakeholders with valuable feedback about the current evaluation system used within the state.

Definition of Terms

During the implementation of this study, there are numerous terms and concepts used that require further description and clarity.

Attrition Rate. The rate at which educators leave the teaching profession.

Employment Dissatisfaction. Some variables related to unhappiness in the workplace.

Feedback. Serves the purpose of the person who is seeking self-mastery or growth in their area of expertise, which serves an internal purpose (Green, 2001).

Professional Growth. The measure of progress toward or the attainment of a teacher's professional growth goals (GaDOE, 2016).

Student Growth Percentiles. Describes a student's growth in relation to a student with similar academic standing. The data are compared with similar prior achievements on state tests (GaDOE, 2016).

Student Growth. The calculation of Student Growth Percentiles, which are measured by the GaDOE based on state assessment data (GaDOE, 2016).

Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS). The expectations for teacher performance consisting of five domains and ten performance standards (see Figure 3 on pg. 56).

Teacher Effectiveness. Interpreted as the impact one has on student achievement. Teacher value-added is a measure of effectiveness (Harris, Ingle, & Rutledge, 2014).

Teacher Effectiveness Measure. An annual evaluation that consists of three components: (1) Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS), (2) Professional Growth, and (3)

Student Growth. These components combined contribute to the overall scores that teachers receive (GaDOE, 2016).

Teacher Evaluation. The formal evaluation process in which information is collected and used to judge performance through direct inspection of a teacher's work monitoring lesson plans, classroom performance, and performance results. (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Pease, 1983).

Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). The state of Georgia's current teacher evaluation system.

Teacher Performance. What a teacher does on the job rather than how competent he or she is (Darling-Hammond et al., 1983).

Teacher Retention. Teachers who are retained when they are in the Georgia public education system and are not retained when they are not employed within the system.

Value-added measure. A mathematical algorithm that measures teacher effectiveness via state testing.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature relevant to teacher evaluation across the nation and within the state of Georgia is presented in this chapter. According to the state of Georgia, teachers are abandoning their careers at an attrition rate of 44% after only 5 years of service; at great personal expense to themselves and the state of Georgia regarding time, effort, and financial costs (Georgia Department of Education [GaDOE], 2016). Due to the rate of teachers leaving the field, the state is facing a potential teacher shortage (GaDOE, 2016). Georgia teachers have identified the way they are evaluated as the number-two key reason for leaving the profession (GaDOE, 2016). Given the high attrition rates among Georgia teachers within the first 5 years, the potential teacher shortage, and the newly implemented Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, this study presents an in-depth review of the current evaluation system through the perceptions of current Georgia educators, which aims to provide valuable insights in an attempt to better fit the needs of all stakeholders involved. According to the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE, 2016), teachers in the state have identified high-stakes testing as the number-one reason for leaving the profession. Teachers cited teacher evaluation as the number-two reason for leaving the field (GaDOE, 2016). There is a plethora of literature on teacher evaluations across the nation; however, research conducted on Georgia's teacher evaluation system is almost non-existent due to its recent implementation in 2014. Thus, the purpose of this study is to determine how the application of Georgia's common teacher evaluation system—identified as the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state—is influencing teacher retention rates as

perceived by teachers at an identified school district in northeastern Georgia. Furthermore, the researcher examines whether or not the application of TKES is empowering teachers to do their jobs more effectively. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ 1. What are the career experiences of current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system identified as Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state?

RQ 2. How have teacher retention rates been impacted as perceived by current and former teachers in an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system identified as Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state?

RQ 3. Do current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state perceive TKES enables teachers to be more effective?

The Georgia Department of Education's (2016) report on teacher attrition rates is alarming. The GaDOE report stated teacher evaluation as the second reason behind high-stakes testing for teachers leaving the profession (GaDOE, 2016). Furthermore, two-thirds of the teachers from the GaDOE's (2016) report also stated they would not recommend teaching as a viable profession. In order to better understand this phenomenon, this study examines the perceptions of public school teachers to determine how the implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System may be influencing teacher retention rates. Through this study, the purpose

is to gain valuable feedback and insight from teachers in order to address the needs of all stakeholders within the state. The data collected may additionally help organizations like the Professional Standards Commission, Regional Educational Service Agencies, and the GaDOE to guide future revisions and policies regarding teacher evaluation.

Conceptual Framework

A Framework for Teaching, created by Charlotte Danielson (2013), serves as a valuable framework for this study. The model was developed to help identify certain aspects of a teacher's responsibilities that promote more effective teaching and improve student learning. The framework is a researched-based set of components that currently align with INTASC standards and are grounded in the constructivist view of teaching and learning (Danielson Group, 2017). The model consists of four domains (planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities), each of which is further broken down into levels of performance (unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished) (Danielson, 2013). The Danielson Group (2017) stated that the Framework for Teaching might be used as the foundation of a school or district's teacher evaluation process, making it a good fit for this study. Figure 2 below is a graphic representation of the conceptual framework for this study.

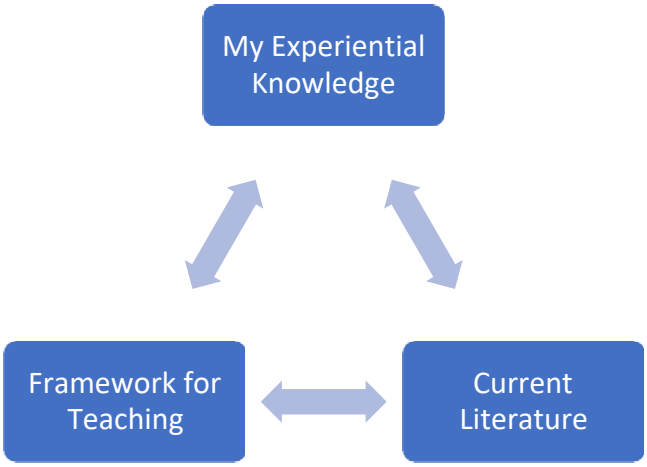

Figure 2. Conceptual framework.

A literature search of relevant topics was conducted via Google searches in Google Scholar. Additional searches were conducted using the UNG's library databases in order to search relevant peer-reviewed articles. Keywords such as teacher evaluation, teacher retention, teacher attrition, Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, teacher evaluation systems, and feedback were used to obtain and review suitable scholarly articles. The results of these searches helped identify the main topics for this literature review. The following foundational topics surrounding this study include Teacher Evaluation, Teacher Evaluation Models, Teacher Attrition and Retention, The Framework for Teaching, and The Teacher Keys Effectiveness System.

Teacher Evaluation

The history of measuring human behavior within the context of educational attainment to school students can be divided into four general periods. The assessment of student performance within schools has a very long history (Romberg, 1985). According to Romberg, these four periods relate to the beginning of historical records to around the 19th century, the 19th century, 1900 to roughly 1960, and the late 1960s until the present (p. 11). Romberg (1985) described the first period of evaluation as being "quite crude." He describes a period in which early examinations consisted of anything from tribal ceremonies and initiations to the use of oral tests and quizzing. These types of early examinations were viewed as the historical antecedents of more formal assessments we use today. During the second period, he describes an area when assessment began to assimilate from various scientific and statistical techniques, which later evolved into the psychometric testing movement. Romberg gave credit to three men during this time: Horace Mann, George Fisher, and J. M. Rice. According to Romberg, these three men were responsible for developing some of the very first school examinations, objective measures

of achievement for students, and spelling tests. In the third period, he labeled it as the psychometric period. During this era, mental testing and achievement testing began to become the focal point of evaluations and examinations. This era is also credited with creating the first individual intelligence scales. The fourth and final period was characterized as being the policy-program evaluation period. It is during this era that evaluation for policy and program purpose became popular by applying a "scientific" approach using data from student's test scores (p. 13). Romberg suggested that most models for gathering performance data have evolved during the past quarter-century (Romberg, 1985).

Conventionally, leaders within our typical governance systems use evaluations as an everyday tool to judge an employee's work and provide judgmental feedback to increase their performance (Green, 2001). This type of approach has produced positive results but only within an environment where workers are dependent and not competent; conversely, the same approach has poor results when applied to highly competent workers (Green, 2001).

The most commonly used approaches to educational evaluations are tied within the systematic approaches of training. These methods are characterized by earlier instructional systems that emerged in the U.S. in the 1950s and 1960s (Eseryel, 2002). Over the last 30 years, teacher evaluations have become a focal point for researchers. Since the early 1980s, the demand for accountability in education was transitioning from broad contextual issues into specific concerns over the quality of instruction that students are receiving in the classroom (Blazar, Litke, & Barmore, 2016; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Darling- Hammond, 2016; Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Pease, 1983; Steinberg & Kraft, 2017).

Teacher evaluation and its importance have long been recognized by the research community. According to Brown, Partelow, and Konoske-Graf (2016), "prior to 2012 teacher

evaluation in the U.S. was sporadic and uniformly viewed as unproductive" (p. 3). Improving our teacher evaluation systems is one of the most pressing and contested issues within educational reform (Ulmer, 2016). While researchers indicate that teachers are, in fact, the most significant school-based factor in student achievement, the most traditional means of evaluating teachers have not explained and clarified the differences between effective and ineffective teachers (Goe, Holdheide, & Miller, 2014). Traditionally, the development and implementation of teacher evaluation systems where one component consists of rating teachers based on student performance on standardized tests have proven to be unpopular and controversial among researchers (Ballou & Springer, 2015; Connally & Tooley, 2016; Shakman, et al., 2012).

Educational accountability surrounding teacher evaluations has been amplified given the push from federal programs to focus more on teacher-level accountability, and the value teacher adds to student achievement over some time. Teacher evaluation systems consist of multiple indicators to evaluate teacher effectiveness, one of which is teacher observations. Supervisor observations consist of evaluating a teacher's content, delivery of content, classroom management, and organization (Danielson, 2012; Steinberg & Garrett, 2016; Weisberg, et al., 2009). These observations are typically considered subjective (Weisberg et al., 2009). Thus, the growth and value-added models based on student achievement are typically viewed as being a more objective way of measuring teacher effectiveness. For example, some states use the value-added model for up to 50% of a teacher's total evaluation scores (Collins & Amrein-Beardsley, 2014). In the state of Tennessee, the value-added system implemented is considered one of the most prominent examples of how assessment in education is being used (Ballou, Sanders, & Wright, 2004).

Many experts and practitioners throughout the history of teacher evaluation agree that

most systems for teacher evaluations are doing little to help educators improve their effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012; Firestone, 2014; Ford et al., 2017; Ingersoll, 2002; Jiang, Sporte, & Luppescu, 2015; Kane & Staiger, 2012; Kraft & Gilmour, 2017; Lavigne, 2014; Murphy et al., 2013; Weisberg et al., 2009; Whitehurst, Chingos, & Linquist, 2015). Race to the Top (RTTP) essentially requires participating states and local school districts to measure and reward teachers based on student achievement (Harris et al., 2014). Additionally, these value-added models (VAMs) were designed to evaluate student test scores annually and are typically the main tool used to assess teachers' effectiveness. The VAMs allow researchers to quantify student data in the form of student test scores over time while also taking into consideration student characteristics and other variables related to student achievement. Implementation of VAMs for individual teacher evaluations is grounded in the belief that student gains in achievement reflect overall teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Darling-Hammond et al., 2012). However, many researchers point out that student achievement is influenced by more than just any individual teacher (Briggs & Domingue, 2011; Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; Newton, Darling-Hammond, Haertel, & Thomas, 2010; Rothstein, 2010).

The Widget Effect

When President Obama took office in 2009, he identified teacher evaluations as an important and significant public-policy problem (Aldeman, 2017). Even today, much of President Obama's legacy regarding K-12 education rests on his efforts to revamp teacher evaluations in the hopes of increasing teacher effectiveness across the country (Aldeman, 2017). Aldeman and Chuong (2014) reported that an increase of states requiring annual evaluations for all teachers increased from 15 to 28 between 2009 and 2013 (p. 7). In Aldeman's (2017) report,

he indicates that President Obama's administration's interest in teacher evaluation was prompted by two uncontroversial facts: (1) new data confirming teacher quality being the most important school factor affecting student growth, and (2) school districts ignoring important differences in performance by using a one-size-fits-all approach. Thus the term "widget effect" was coined (Aldeman, 2017; Aldeman & Chuong, 2014).

According to Weisberg et al. (2009), "The Widget Effect is characterized by institutional indifference to variations in teacher performance" (p. 6). Teacher evaluation systems reflect these characteristics in numerous ways such as all teachers are rated good or great; excellence goes unrecognized; inadequate professional development; no special attention to novices; and poor performance goes unaddressed (Weisberg et al., 2009). Weisberg et al. (2009) pointed out that while this effect pervades numerous areas of the educational system, the implementationand consequences of teacher evaluations are immediately apparent within schools. The researchers contend that the Widget Effect is grounded in the inability of teacher evaluation systems to produce quality information about teacher effectiveness. Teacher evaluation systems should measure both the strengths and weaknesses of a teacher accurately and consistently for feedback to be effective (Weisberg et al., 2009). Traditionally, these teacher evaluation systems tend to devalue instructional effectiveness by using performance-based data that does not appear to reflect any variation among teachers at all (Weisberg et al., 2009).

In Weisberg et al.'s (2009) report, some alarming statistics were raised regarding teacher evaluations. One statistic provided in the report indicated that of all the districts using binary rating systems of "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory," 99% of all tenured teachers received a satisfactory rating. The report further pointed out that teacher evaluation systems that employ a broader range of rating variables would more than likely reflect more accurate performance

results (Weisberg et al., 2009). Even those systems employing multiple rating options still seem to run into top-heavy ratings. According to the same report, districts that use multiple teacher evaluations ratings still show 70% of tenured teachers receiving the highest ratings, with 24% receiving the second-highest rating. The statistics indicated that in each case the results remained the same. More often than not, teachers receive a higher rating than a lower one (Weisberg et al., 2009).

Teacher evaluation systems are not perfect, and every evaluation system is an assembly of multiple variables that, in most cases, result in some imperfect measures (Ballou & Springer, 2015). There is certainly value in student test scores regarding a teacher's performance, but the challenge is to extract that information and combine it with information gained from other tools (Ballou & Springer, 2015). Ballou and Springer (2015) went on to report that educators need to draw attention to the under-appreciated problems with the design and implementation of evaluation systems that incorporate value-added measures. They focused on four main areas: (1) taking into account measurement error in teacher assessments, (2) revising teachers' scores as more information becomes available about their students, (3) minimizing opportunistic behavior by teachers during roster verification, and (4) the supervision of exams. Ballou and Springer (2015) stated the following about Georgia's teacher evaluation system ignoring estimationerrors:

> Student performance on standardized tests is compared to that of students who scored at the same percentile in the prior year. Where students fall in this year's distribution (of identically scoring students the previous year) is used to gauge teacher effectiveness. If the average percentile is across a teacher's student's falls below 30, the teacher is deemed ineffective with respect to this component of the evaluation system. (p. 78)

Based on the statement above, the likelihood of this happening is a function of the teacher's true effectiveness, the variability of student performance outside of teacher quality (including test error), and the number of students a teacher has (Ballou & Springer, 2015).

Another statistic raising attention regarding teacher evaluations is meaningful feedback on a teacher's performance through the formal evaluation systems being implemented across the nation (Weisberg et al., 2009). "Only 42 percent of teachers agree that evaluation allows for accurate assessment of performance, and only 43 percent of teachers agree that evaluation helps teachers improve" (Weisberg et al., 2009, p. 14). According to Weisberg et al.'s (2009) report, of the twelve districts studied, actual feedback for teacher development was only identified for 26% of teachers during their evaluations. This suggests that almost three out of four teachers who went through a formal evaluation process received little to no feedback about how to improve their effectiveness in the classroom. This is coupled with the fact that 47% of teachers reported not having had one informal conversation with their administration over the last year about improving teacher effectiveness (Weisberg et al., 2009).

In 2016, a follow-up study conducted by Kraft and Gilmour revisited the findings of Weisberg et al.'s (2009) Widget Effect. Kraft and Gilmour (2017) examined teacher performance ratings across 19 states that had adopted major reforms to their teacher evaluation systems. They found in most of these states, less than 3% of teachers were rated below proficient. Kraft and Gilmour (2017) compiled state distributions of teacher evaluation ratings, which included a target sample of 38 states. Out of the 38 states originally targeted for the study, data was collected on 19 of which 14 were Race to the Top winners. Thirteen of these states rated teachers across four performance categories, five states used a five-category system, and one state used a three-category system to evaluate teacher performance (Kraft & Gilmour,2017).

Each of these states had either piloted or fully implemented some form of a new teacher evaluation system by the 2014/2015 school year. Additionally, 24 principal interviews were conducted in order to understand better their experiences implementing the new teacher evaluation system (Kraft & Gilmour, 2017).

Kraft and Gilmour (2017) found that, among the 19 states examined, the median percentage of teachers rated below proficient was 2.7%. Further analysis of each state showed the median percentage of teachers being rated above proficient at 39% but varied considerably across certain states. States that used a four-category rating system primarily differentiated teachers between the two highest performance categories—Effective versus Highly Effective. States that used a five-category ranking system showed differentiation distributed across the top three performance categories (Kraft & Gilmour, 2017). The researchers identified one exception to this generalization in the state of Florida, where they found 97.6% of teachers were rated as either effective or highly effective. They noted the fact that Florida used a three-category system to rate teacher performance. Overall, the researchers found that while some new teacher evaluation systems differentiated teacher performance, most only did so at the top end of the spectrum (Kraft & Gilmour, 2017). They point out that having multiple rating categories is no guarantee of more differentiated rating distributions at the lower end of the spectrum.

The second part of Kraft and Gilmour's (2017) study examined the perceptions of principals regarding why teachers are rated more often at the higher end of the performance spectrum. The researchers found three main categories that may explain why teachers are typically rated higher on their evaluations. The first factor identified in the study was time constraints. Kraft and Gilmour reported a lack of time as the most frequent explanation for not giving a teacher a low rating. Rating teachers below proficient requires additional time to

document performance and provide support for the teacher's growth (Kraft & Gilmour, 2017). Additionally, principals questioned whether they could even collect sufficient evidence in just a few observations to justify scoring a teacher below proficient (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016).

The second major factor that Kraft and Gilmour (2017) found was that principals were more likely to score a teacher higher on the rating scale if they felt like the teacher had potential. Principals also believed that new teachers were still learning and it was unfair to rate thembelow proficient. Principals felt like they "needed to give time for development and become better" (Kraft & Gilmour, 2017, p. 13). Lastly, principals felt like giving low ratings to teachers they believed had potential might be counterproductive to the teachers' overall development (Kraft & Gilmour, 2017). Kraft and Gilmour also found that personal discomfort was a factor in rating teacher performance. During the study, they collected data from six principals who touched on how difficult it was to rate teachers low on the spectrum due to the emotional conversation that would follow. The principals made a note of how this personal discomfort might cause some evaluators to be reluctant to assign ratings below proficient (Kraft & Gilmour, 2017). Finally, the researchers found additional reasons for the discrepancy among teacher ratings such as dismissal processes, racial tensions, and exchanging higher ratings for voluntary departures as other potential explanations for high teacher ratings (Kraft & Gilmour, 2017).

Bergin, Wind, Grajeda, and Tsai (2017) examined over 1,000 principals' rating accuracy of six teaching practices after their Observation of Teaching Practice (OTP) training within the teacher evaluation system. They found that accurate OTP ratings directly reflected the effectiveness of a teacher rather than just relying on a principal's judgments (p. 19). Bergin et al. (2017) explained the need for ensuring accurate ratings in the field not just at the end of training but also when being implemented in the field. Methodologically, this study examined data from

principal training for OTP in the summer of 2015 (Bergin et al., 2017). All participants of the study had between one and 5 years of experience conducting OTP in their respective schools. Principals from all levels, elementary through high school, were included in the study (Bergin et al., 2017). The data for this study were collected through a state-wide database called the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE), which serves as the state of Missouri's teacher evaluation system and is used by over 265 school districts. Data analysis was conducted using a Many-Facet Rasch (MFR) model to explore the accuracy of scores within the OTP.

Bergin et al. (2017) concluded that principals had a high overall accuracy when rating teachers. Interestingly, while principals overall tend to be accurate, some teachers are still being evaluated by principals who demonstrate low accuracy, which could prove to be a disadvantage to those teachers (Bergin et al., 2017). An explanation for this may be linked to the attributes of each principal (Bergin et al., 2017). Bergin and colleagues proposed that new principals may not be as accurate as those who have conducted OTP for numerous years; for example, a principal who is a former elementary math teacher may more accurately score in his or her content area and grade level (p. 24). Ultimately, even within a large and authentic teacher evaluation system that provides training and a high-quality rubric, variation among principals' rating is still evident, which may lead to advantaged or disadvantaged teacher ratings (Bergin et al., 2017).

Performance Appraisals

Systems of appraisal have been common in the workplace since 1914 (Law, 2007). Whether they have been called performance reviews, annual reviews, merit ratings, or employee ratings, these systems have been a staple of business and the public sector for decades (Law, 2007). "Performance appraisals are nearly as pervasive in the modern workplace as are the cubicles and long meeting" (Johnson, 2004, p. 83). One of the most commonly held beliefs in

America is that an individual's pay should directly reflect their performance and contributions made to the organization (Grubb, 2007). Moreover, people believe money is a driving force for improving performance (Grubb, 2007). As a result of this belief system, many organizations across the nation associate individual pay with annual performance ratings (Grubb, 2007). Grubb (2007) offered four reasons in support of performance appraisals: (1) to promote organizational efficiency and effectiveness; (2) to enhance employee performance; (3) to simplify administrative processing; and (4) to ensure that management retains control of employee behaviors. At face value, performance appraisals are a basic tool for employer-employee communication and understanding within the work environment (Stilling, Byrd, Mazza, & Bergman (2018). According to DeNisi and Murphy (2017), performance appraisals are defined as:

> Performance appraisal refers to a formal process which, occurs infrequently, by which employees are evaluated by some judge (typically a supervisor) who assesses the employee's performance along a given set of dimensions, assigns a score to that assessment, and then usually informs the employees of his or her formal rating. (p. 421)

Organizations typically base a multitude of decisions concerning the employees on the ratings. A second term, which expands upon the definition of performance appraisal is "performance management." DeNisi and Murphy (2017) refer to performance management as being a wide variety of activities, policies, procedures, and interventions that have been designed to help employees improve their performance. Initially, programs like these begin with a traditional performance appraisal but also incorporate feedback, goal setting, and additional training. Essentially, performance management programs begin with an appraisal as a starting

point then move and expand that system by focusing on improving individual performance (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017).

Most organizations have been using and relying on performance appraisal systems for many years (DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006). Research on these systems dates back to at least the early 1920s and has continued through present-day (DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006; Weber, 1995). According to DeNisi and Pritchard (2006), the gap between research and practice has been documented by many writers who suggest that it is no real surprise to see that same gap in the area of performance appraisals (p. 254). DeNisi and Pritchard (2006) argue that improving the reliability, accuracy, and validity of performance appraisals is clearly a worthwhile goal; however, most of the earlier research tended to focus on better ways to measure performance without consideration to the larger performance management goal of performance improvement. They suggested that early appraisal research was more heavily focused on rating errors and rating scales, which were based on the assumption that decreasing those errors would, in turn, create a more effective system. DeNisi and Pritchard (2006) point out that this type of research approach was the main focus of appraisal research throughout the 1940s and 1970s.

By the end of the 1970s, concerns were being raised over the efficacy of the researcher's efforts to increase rating accuracy (DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006). These concerns indicated that training raters to reduce scoring errors within the system might actually have the opposite effect and decrease rating accuracy (Bernardin & Buckley, 1981; Woehr & Huffcutt, 1994). This was later affirmed by Murphy and Balzer (1989) who concluded that there is no relationship between rater training and rater error (as cited in DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006). Continuing through the end of the 1980s and mid-1990s, rating accuracy was considered important in its own right but also as a proxy for evaluating validity. DeNisi and Pritchard (2006) discussed how rating accuracy as

a criterion for assessing performance appraisal systems was eventually challenged by numerous authors bringing us back full circle to the basic issues of why we conduct performance appraisals.

Deming, one of the most prolific experts on performance appraisal research in the U.S. and Japan (Carson & Carson, 1992; Mento & Giampetro-Meyer, 2000), gained most of his notoriety later in life after working with Japanese manufacturing firms post-World War II. Deming became most popular in the early 1980s when he appeared on an NBC documentary entitled, "If Japan Can Do It, Why Can't We?" According to Carson and Carson (1992),Deming argued against quantitative evaluation goals. He felt poor worker performance was not due to the lack of motivation but rather due to the underlying problems of management and the system (Carson & Carson, 1992).

Deming created fourteen points for management in order to create a framework for success. The following is an outline of those fourteen points: (a) constancy of purpose; (b) the new philosophy; (c) cease dependence on inspection; (d) end 'lowest tender' contracts; (e) continually seek out problems; (f) institute training on the job; (g) institute supervision; (h) drive out fear; (i) break down barriers; (j) eliminate exhortations; (k) eliminate targets; (l) permit pride of workmanship; (m) institute education; and (n) top management's commitment (Neave, 1987).

According to Mento and Giampetro-Meyer (2000), Demings' fourteen prescriptions were intended to guide the transformation of organizational management for the purpose of nurturing and fostering constant change and improvement. The researchers go on to say that performance appraisals create a "shortage of winners" within an organization and do very little to help motivate an employee's motivation and job satisfaction (2000). Deming also noted that when people are judged and evaluated based on their performance, they often tend to "shut down"

(Mento & Giampetro-Meyer, 2000). Based on the management literature, the same notion could be applied when referring to teacher evaluation systems (Mento & Giampetro-Meyer, 2000).

Policy Implications

The literature has been fairly consistent over the last 20 years. Systems of teacher evaluation often required significant improvements and modifications (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; Firestone, 2014; Ingersoll, 2002; Kane & Staiger, 2012; Kimball & Milanowski, 2009; Kraft & Gilmour, 2017; Lavigne, 2014; Murphy et al., 2013; Weisberg et al., 2009). According to Weisberg et al. (2009), the following recommendations reversed the Widget Effect across the nation:

1) Adopt a comprehensive performance evaluation and development system that fairly, accurately, and credibly differentiates teachers based on their effectiveness in promoting student achievement and provides target professional development tohelp them improve.
2) Train administrators and other evaluators in the teacher performance evaluation system and hold them accountable for using it effectively.
3) Use performance evaluations to inform key decisions such as teacherassignment, professional development, compensation, retention and dismissal.
4) Adopt dismissal policies that provide lower-stakes options for ineffective teachersto exit the district and a system of due process that is fair but streamlined and efficient (pp. 27-30).

Overcoming all these issues bedeviling U.S. teacher evaluation systems will require commitment and investment of all stakeholders involved throughout the educational system (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2019; Weisberg et al., 2009). Furthermore, according to Goe,

Holdheide, and Miller (2014), the lack of available research-based methods and models on comprehensive teacher evaluation obstructs the state's ability to offer assistance to districts.

Principals' Perceptions of Teacher Evaluation

The implementation process for teacher evaluation systems across the nation has created both challenges and opportunities for increasing teacher effectiveness (Bradley, 2014; Brown, Partelow, & Konoske-Graf, 2016; Cannata, et al., 2017; Grissom & Bartanan, 2019). According to Kersten and Israel (2005), school improvement was the focal point for educational leadership in the twenty-first century. These improvements were grounded in the areas of student test scores/achievement, classroom environments that meet the needs of all learners, and a positive learning environment for teachers and students (Kersten & Israel, 2005). The researchers indicate that school administrators were viewed less as managers and more as catalysts for improvement. The increase in teacher evaluations and the number of evaluation models have only added to the complexity of school-level administrators (Kersten & Israel, 2005). As the evaluation systems' expectations grow, so does the demand on administrator's time and resources (Kersten & Israel, 2005).

Principals play a vital role in how evaluation artifacts are implemented (Halverson, Kelley, & Kimball, 2004). Halverson et al. (2004) pointed out that principals shoulder most of the burden within the teacher evaluation process. They conducted a case study to examine principals' perceptions of a complex teacher evaluation artifact in their local school setting. Three schools having to implement district policies within the same district participated in this study. Data were collected through principal interviews and written teacher evaluations. Analysis of the data revealed that principals' perceptions of teacher evaluations ranged from an opportunity to develop morale and team-building to a significant time management problem

(Halverson et al., 2004). Principals saw merit in the system despite indicating that teacher evaluation itself was not the sole force for improving teaching, but many gave up significant personal time to complete all the evaluations (Halverson et al., 2004). Also, principals generally did not assign unsatisfactory ratings in any of the 485 written evaluations reviewed (Halverson et al., 2004). This supports the findings of Kraft and Gilmour's (2016) follow-up study of the Widget Effect.

Goldring et al. (2015) used surveys and semi- structured interviews to examine data from hundreds of principals about their human capital decision-making choices. They found that value-added measures (VAM) may play a less important role in principals' decision-making when determining who to hire, whom to keep, professional development, and assignment to classrooms. Goldring et al. (2015) found that teacher observations, supporting evidence, and rubric scoring appear to be the main driving force for determining teacher effectiveness and human capital decisions. Principals identified numerous shortcomings regarding the overall usefulness of student test score models, such as real-time results, perceptions of validity, and specificity played a role in the identification of the listed shortcomings. In contrast, the researchers found that teacher observation data may address many of these shortcomings identified in the study by principals. The observation data appeared to be emerging as powerful

drivers of principals' data use. Principals resonated with using observational scores because they were timely, transparent and clear (Goldring et al., 2015). The researchers identified three main themes: (1) consistency of the data, (2) transparency, and (3) specificity of data. They suggested that value-added data might become less of a driving force for data usage among the principals studied (Goldring et al., 2015).

Teacher Evaluation Models

Manatt's Mutual Benefit Evaluation and Redern's Management by Objectives Evaluation models had been implemented in some school districts. These evaluation models were characterized by goal-setting, teacher involvement in the evaluation process, and the centralized teaching standards and subsequent criteria (Darling-Hammond et al., 1983). Manatt's model was designed primarily to improve upon teacher performance rather than focusing on identifying teachers who were not meeting standards. Both models outline four steps as the basis for teacher evaluation. The first step determined the criteria for minimum teaching standards, which was typically created and implemented by the school board and administration. The second step diagnosed an evaluation that was performed to assess a teacher's present status about the identified standards. The third step focused on the creation of job targets or goals for the teacher's performance improvement. This was typically done in collaboration with the teachers themselves. The final and fourth step occurred after a specified period whereas the teachers were then re-evaluated, and from there new job targets could be set.

Moreover, before any evaluation can take place, both the teacher and the supervisor had to jointly establish individual objectives, action plans, and measurable progress indicators. These models represented both competency-based and outcome-based teacher evaluation concepts (Darling-Hammond et al., 1983). Each model was result-oriented and allowed for various explanations of results, which can appear as measurable increases in learning or simply the development and demonstration of new teaching proficiencies (Darling-Hammond et al., 1983).

Beginning in the early 1980s, the way in which school districts approached teacher evaluation and improvement varied depending on a few main criteria: (1) What teacher attributes

are considered important for effective teaching, (2) Which aspect of the instructional process a particular district or school hopes to affect, and (3) What are the criteria for evaluating successful or effective teaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 1983). Due to the magnitude of outlining a comprehensive list of teacher evaluation models, only a few of the more widely reported models will be discussed herein.

Georgia Teacher Evaluation Models

In November 1984, the Governor of Georgia accepted recommendations following a 2-year study from the Education Review Commission to introduce the Quality Basic Education Act (QBEA) (Georgia State University Law Review, 2012). According to the Georgia State University Law Review (2012), the QBEA examined four main changes to educational policy in Georgia. The first was teachers who were currently certified in the state were to be tested for competency and have their overall job performance evaluated when seeking renewal of their teaching certificates. The remaining changes within the law pertained to readiness testing for first-graders, funding for state allocations, and equal access for all students regarding educational resources (Georgia State Law Review, 2012). The main purpose of the law was to define better the roles and responsibilities of state and local governments regarding providing public education and promoting accountability at every level of the system.

Before the implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES), Georgia's Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (TPAI) received considerable attention in the early 1980s (Darling-Hammond et al., 1983). Georgia's evaluation system at the time required teachers to demonstrate mastery of 14 teaching competencies. The 14 competencies were broken down into three main categories: (1) Teaching Plans and Materials, 2) Classroom Procedures, and 3) Interpersonal Skills. The three categories were then broken down into individual

competencies that required teachers to possess professional knowledge and training to demonstrate mastery of the identified skills (Darling-Hammond et al., 1983). Teachers aiming to become certified at the time were also required to take and pass the Georgia Teacher Area Criterion-Referenced Examination Test to receive a 3-year non-renewable teaching certificate. After obtaining the 3-year certificate, teachers were then required to create a portfolio of lesson plans, test papers, and other documents to be evaluated by a committee of trained evaluators (Darling-Hammond et al., 1983). Once completed, teachers had to pass a classroom assessment based on the TPAI. The TPAI utilized three independent observers who would rate each teacher's performance in the classroom by comparing their performance to the teaching competencies (Darling-Hammond et al., 1983).

Detailed records and studies related to the following teacher evaluation systems in Georgia were almost non-existent following an exhaustive search on the internet. Upon contacting the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), I was able to obtain two manuals from the associate superintendent housed in the Division of Teacher and Leader Support that briefly outline two subsequent evaluation systems used in Georgia following the TPAI. Sometime in the late 1980s to early 1990s, Georgia began implementing the Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program (GTEP) in response to the Quality Basic Education Act (Georgia Department of Education, 1991). This instrument was piloted during the 1986–987 and 1987–1988 school years with the statewide field test being conducted during the 1988–1989 school years (GaDOE, 1991).

According to the GaDOE (1991), the purpose of the annual performance evaluation was to identify and reinforce teaching strategies, improve instructional effectiveness, and identify teachers who do not meet the minimum standards so that appropriate action can be taken. The

GTEP includes the use of two subsequent instruments called the Georgia Teacher Observation Instrument (GTOI) and the Georgia Teacher Duties and Responsibilities Instrument (GTDRI). According to the GaDOE's (1991) manual, these two instruments were conducted on teachers that had been employed for 120 days or more and were required to have a teaching certificate. The *Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program: Technical Manual (1986-90)* describes eight steps in the GTEP process, which are listed below, followed by a brief outline of each step:

1) Orientation
2) Pre-evaluation
3) Observations
4) GTOI scoring and written comments
5) Post-Observation/Notification Conference
6) Annual Evaluation Report
7) Annual Evaluation Conference
8) Professional Development Plan (GaDOE, 1991).

According to the GaDOE's (1991) manual, all teachers had to receive an orientation to the GTEP before any initial observation. Teachers were provided with copies of the manual, an overview of the procedures, content, and terminology, and any supplemental information (GaDOE, 1991). Pre-evaluation was not a mandatory procedure but was designed to provide opportunities for teachers to obtain further clarification of GTEP criteria (p. 5). During step three of the GTEP process, teachers were observed via the GTOI instrument which consists ofno less than three unannounced classroom observations lasting at least twenty minutes each (GaDOE, 1991). The results of each observation were then recorded and returned to the teacher within five business days (p. 7). The manual stated that teachers evaluated under thestandard

evaluation process would fall into five main categories:

- Teachers with fewer than three years of teaching.
- Teachers with three or more years of teaching but are newly employed with a LUA.
- Teachers in categories one or two that obtained an unsatisfactory performance the previous year.
- Teachers eligible for the formative process who are placed into the standard process via the principal.
- Teachers with three or more years' experience who are not newly employed at a LUA and have satisfactory ratings following two years in the formative process.

The formative evaluation process consists of a minimum of one unannounced observation of at least twenty minutes, which is recorded and returned to the teacher within five days (GaDOE, 1991). Teachers who fall into this category must have three or more years of teaching experience, not newly employed with the LUA, and has a recent satisfactory rating under the standard process (p. 8). Upon completion of the observations, scores and comments for each criterion will be addressed if requested by the teacher or evaluator (p. 10). The remaining steps of the GTEP process include post-observation conferences to discuss the GTOI results, an annual evaluation summary report, followed by the annual evaluation conference with each teacher, and a professional development plan for teachers receiving unsatisfactory scores (GaDOE, 1991).

In regard to the Georgia Teachers Duties and Responsibilities Instrument (GTDRI) notification and documentation, all criteria should be scored satisfactory on the annual evaluation summary by exemption unless prior to the process the teacher has been notified via writing, received documentation of unsatisfactory performance, or had a conference in regard to his/her unsatisfactory performance (GaDOE, 1991). Unless a teacher has failed to perform a duty or

responsibility which is a part of their job description or failed to remediate prior conduct deemed unsatisfactory, satisfactory scores should be given (GaDOE, 1991).

The CLASS Keys Process Guide was an additional instrument used by Georgia in the early 2000s by some districts and was the predecessor of the Teacher Keys Evaluation System (C. E. Saxon, personal communication, November 11, 2017). According to the Georgia Department of Education (2008), CLASS Keys was a teacher evaluation system developed on behalf of the state of Georgia to assist school districts in reforming teacher evaluations. CLASS Keys was considered both a formative and summative tool used for identifying a teacher's level of performance across five elements of teacher quality (GaDOE, 2008). The five elements included Curriculum and Planning, Standards-Based Instruction, Assessment of Student Learning, Professionalism, and Student Achievement (p. 7). The following represents the seven main objectives for the CLASS Keys Process Guide:

- Evaluates teacher performance using qualitative rubrics.
- Provides support and resources for instructional improvement and standards-based practices.
- Factors the academic achievement gains of students into the teacher's Annual Evaluation in accordance with Georgia law.
- Engages teachers in the evaluation process and their own professional growth.
- Supports the achievement of school and district improvement goals.
- Allows evaluators to give teachers more detailed feedback, using the language of the elements.
- Allows evaluators to use an array of evidence from multiple sources over time to review teacher performance inside and outside of the classroom (GaDOE, 2008).

The CLASS Keys instrument validity was tested through a small pilot test. The pilot test focused on one component of the evaluation system, the teacher-completed self-assessment and reflection activity. The pilot test was conducted in three schools: elementary, middle, and high school. The purpose of the pilot test was to obtain teachers' perspectives on the elements of propriety, utility, and the feasibility of the CLASS Keys (GaDOE 2008). The results of the study were collected via written feedback and one-hour focus groups at each of the three schools. In all cases, it was reported that the elements of the instrument captured all aspects of a teacher's job (GaDOE, 2008). Reliability information regarding the CLASS Keys was conducted in 2009. Descriptive and statistical tests using actual data from the evaluator training were used in order to address inter-rater reliability issues within the instrument (GaDOE, 2008). In collaboration with the Georgia Department of Education and faculty from the Dewar College of Education at Valdosta State University, a pilot inter-observer reliability study of CLASS Keys was conducted. Four fifty-minute recordings were collected from teachers delivering instruction to students. These recordings were then analyzed by volunteer administrators and Georgia Department of Education Teacher/Leader Quality Specialists (GaDOE, 2008). These results were then analyzed by faculty at Valdosta State University. The results indicated that, in all cases, the overall percentage exceeded the cut-off percentage making the CLASS Keys reliability very desirable (GaDOE, 2008).

It does not appear that the evaluation system was designed to be mandatory, based on personal communications with the associate superintendent of the GaDOE. This is supported by the following statement within the GaDOE's (2008) manual, "all school systems and educational agencies are encouraged to use the CLASS Keys" (p. 5). Given that only some districts in Georgia implemented this instrument only a brief overview has been provided.

Teacher Attrition and Retention

Teacher attrition has been a focus of research over the last 20 years (Adnot, Dee, Katz, & Wyckoff, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Scafidi, Sjoquist, & Steinbrickner, 2007); Sedivy-Benton & Boden McGill, 2012; Shen, 1997; Stinebrickner, 2002; Tye & O'Brien, 2002; Viseu, Neves de Jesus, Rus, & Canavarro, 2016; Watlington et al., 2004). Teacher turnover has long been identified as a key challenge in the quest for more effective teachers within public schools (Burkhauser, 2017). Educational reforms over the past 10 years have been shifting the focus on more significant efforts to recruit, select, develop, evaluate, and retain teachers who are highly effective (Kraft, Marinell, & Shen-Wei Yee, 2016).

According to Darling-Hammond (2003), significant attrition rates within the first few years of teaching have been a long-standing problem within the teaching field. Roughly one-third of teachers leave the field within their first 5 years, and the rates of attrition from schools and districts include in this data teachers who transfer from one school or school district to a different one for a variety of reasons (Darling-Hammond, 2003). In the early 1990s, the rate of teachers exiting the teaching field had been increasing and by the mid-1990s, that rate of leavers was outnumbering the number of teachers entering the field (Darling-Hammond, 2003). According to Sedivy-Benton and Boden McGill (2012), high attrition rates among educators were negatively impacting student achievement and potentially creating a financial crisis in schools and districts across the nation.

Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, and Marinell (2017) completed a study using longitudinal data that focused on teacher attrition and found a year-to-year district attrition average of 13% (varied between 8%–17%). Their study examined 16 urban school districts spanningseven

states. Data were collected from the Strategic Data Project (SDP), which is housed in the Center for Education Policy and Research at Harvard University. Papay et al. (2017) concluded that 45% of teachers across the sample left the teaching field within the first 5 years. Adnot et al. (2017) found similar district results when comparing the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). The researchers reported an annual teacher attrition rate of 18% within the district, and indicated that this attrition rate is comparatively high and may reflect on the intended/unintended effects of their current teacher evaluation system (p. 58).

The Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) samples educators within the elementary and secondary school systems who participated in the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) (Keigher, 2010). The reasoning behind the TFS included but was not limited to examining teachers who left the teaching field the year after the SASS and of those who continued to teach in the field. The focus was to provide insights into teachers' mobility and attrition among that sample of teachers across all 50 states, including the District of Columbia. The Teacher Follow-up Survey, which is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, has been conducted six times over about fifteen years. The TFS (2008–2009) was completed by 4,750 current and former educators (Keigher, 2010). The following paragraph outlines the results of this report.

The Teacher Follow-up Survey presented eight different selected findings during the 2008–2009 school years. The first result of the TFS indicated that of the 3,380,300 public school teachers teaching during the 2007–2008 school year, 84.5% of teachers remained at the same school, 7.6% moved to different schools, and 8% left the profession the following year. Participants were categorized as stayers, movers, or leavers, respectively. The TFS also reported that 77.3% of public school teachers with 1 to 3 years of experience stayed at their respective

schools while 13.7% moved to other schools, and 9.1% left teaching altogether. Finally, the number and percentage distributions of teacher stayers, movers, and leavers from 1988–2009 show an increase in teacher attrition from 5.6% to 8.0% and 12.7% to 15.9% in the public and private sectors, respectively (Keigher, 2010, p. 9).

A subsequent report supporting the findings of Keigher (2010) revealed similar results about teacher attrition and mobility in the first 5 years. Results from the First Through Fifth Waves of the 2007–08 Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study showed that among beginning teachers in the 2007–2008 school year, 10% did not teach during 2008–2009; 12% did not teach during 2009–2010, 15% did not teach during 2010–2011, and 17% did not teach during 2011–2012 (Gray & Taie, 2015).

Principal leadership and support are two of the most important factors regarding teachers' decisions whether to stay in a school or the profession itself (Learning Policy Institute, 2017). According to the Learning Policy Institute (2017), studies across the nation have determined that leadership can have a significant impact on teacher turnover (p. 1). Recent data reports show that almost 25% of teachers strongly disagree that their administrators encourage staff, communicate a clear vision, and generally run a school well (Learning Policy Institute, 2017). The Learning Policy Institute (LPI) analyzed the Teacher Follow-Up Survey in 2013 and found that 25% of teachers were dissatisfied with school assessment and accountability policies, while 21% of teachers were dissatisfied with their administration (p. 2). Furthermore, the LPI cited two main components of school leadership—administrative support and leadership style— that contributed to teachers' decisions to leave or stay (p. 2). The recruiting and retaining of excellent teachers and principals are critical to the success of future generations (Learning Policy Institute, 2017).

According to Sutcher et al., (2019), current data and projections reveal that teacher shortages are occurring across many states, districts, and subject areas across the nation. The authors argue that reducing the current attrition rate from 8% to around 4% (which is the norm in high-achieving nations like Finland) could potentially eliminate the potential teacher shortages we face today. The researchers point out that a reduction in the attrition rate could reduce the overall hiring needs in the U.S. by roughly 130,000 teachers annually thereby reducing the current demands by almost half (Sutcher et al., 2019, p. 25). Ultimately, the researchers suggested, "a comprehensive set of strategies at the federal, state, and local levels that are focused on increasing the number of well-prepared entrants to the field," directing them to areas and locations needing the most help, and begin plugging the "leaky bucket of teacher attrition" (p. 27).

Time, Effort, and Financial Costs

In a comprehensive meta-analysis on teacher career trajectories conducted by Borman and Dowling (2008), the researchers reviewed 34 studies and collected information about 63 different characteristics related to teachers and their schools. The purpose of their study was to understand why attrition occurs and what factors moderate attrition outcomes. Most of the studies included in the analysis examined multiple moderators of attrition data spanning across five categories: (1) teacher demographics, (2) teacher qualifications, (3) school organizational characteristics, (4) school resources, and (5) school student body characteristics.

Teacher demographics helped the researchers analyze the potential difference in attrition related to gender, race, age, marital status, and whether the participants had children and if they did how many. Teacher qualifications included four general categories of teacher training, experience, teacher ability, and teacher specialty area. School organizational characteristics were

broken down into categories such as school location, sector, size, administrative support, mentoring programs, collaboration, communication with administrators, opportunities for advancement, and bureaucracy. School resource variables were categorized into class size, student-teacher ratio, expenditure for support, expenditure for materials, teacher aides, instructional spending, per-pupil spending, and teacher salary. Finally, school student body characteristic variables were categorized into three general subsets: (1) school socioeconomic composition, (2) student achievement levels, and (3) race/ethnic composition (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

Borman and Dowling (2008) concluded that the personal characteristics of teachers in the field are important predictors of teacher turnover. They also determined that odds of attrition are higher for teachers who are White, young, and married with at least one child. Regarding teacher qualifications, the chances of a teacher leaving the field of education were greater among those who did not hold a graduate degree, specialized in math or science, had more years of experience, or who had just a regular certification. School characteristics also played an important role in teacher attrition. The researchers found higher attrition rates in urban and suburban schools, private schools, elementary schools, and schools that lack collaboration. Additionally, schools with higher enrollments of poor, minority, and low-achieving students suffered from higher attrition rates among teachers teaching in those schools. Lastly, regarding school resources, the researchers found higher attrition rates among schools that lacked funding for instructional spending, lower teacher salaries, and average money spent per student (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

Borman and Dowling (2008) concluded that "proactive policy changes centered on collaboration and mentoring appear to have benefits to retention" (p. 399). As stated earlier,

given the high rate of attrition among teachers within their first 5 years, proactive school policies to ease transitions from pre-service to live teaching appear promising. In addition to proactive policies, defining the roles of senior teachers and administrators may help improve teacher retention rates. Borman and Dowling (2008) also concluded that initiatives that decrease the bureaucratic organization of schools and their respective systems might help increase retention as well.

According to Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2012), "one negative consequence of high levels of beginning teacher attrition is the loss of new teachers before they are able to fully develop their skills" (p. 20). Data from past years indicated that the teaching force at the time was slowly but steadily becoming less stable (Ingersoll et al., 2012). This instability had been especially true in the case of attrition, those leaving teaching altogether. The following statistics presented below were national data compiled from the Schools and Staffing Survey and Teacher Follow- Up Survey. For example, from 1988 to 2008, the yearly attrition rate in education rose 41%, which brought the overall statistic from 6.4% to 9% (Ingersoll et al., 2012). Beginning teachers had the highest turnover rate, regardless of other variables (Ingersoll et al., 2012). Statistically, 40% to 50% of those beginning teachers who enter the field leave within five years (as cited in Ingersoll et al., 2012). The rates of first-year teachers that left the field rose from 9.8% to 13.1% from 1988 to 2008, indicating a 34% increase. Additionally, after the 1987–1988 school year, about 6,000 first-year teachers left teaching, while after the 2007–2008 school year over four times that amount (about 26,000) left the occupation. Essentially, members of the largest group within the largest occupation in the nation have been leaving at relatively high rates, and these rates have only increased over the last few decades (Ingersoll et al., 2012).

Teacher Empowerment and Self-Efficacy

Bandura (2010) defines self-efficacy as a person's belief about their capability to produce certain levels of performance that exercise influence over situations that impact or affect their lives (p. 1). Self-efficacy determines how people feel, think, get motivated, and, ultimately, how they behave (Bandura, 2010). The nature of teachers' work in today's world can be challenging. The ever increasing workload, new technology, increasing demands on curriculum and instruction, and standardization of teachers' work all impact teachers (Kimwarey, Chirure, & Omondi, 2014). Teacher empowerment has been increasingly gaining the attention of researchers and scholars over the last 30 years due to its positive connections to teaching quality, innovation, and job satisfaction (Davis & Wilson, 2000; Hemric, Eury, & Shellman, 2010; Lee& Nie, 2014; Short, 1994). According to Short and Johnson (1994), one of the main driving forces for the empowerment movement has been teacher effectiveness. Lee and Nie (2014) suggested that despite increased focus on teacher empowerment as a school effectiveness strategy, there is still debate on the understanding of the concept and process of teacher empowerment.

Scholars throughout the literature have defined teacher empowerment as the right to determine school goals and policies, or a process where teachers can take charge of their growth and development, or a teacher's power to control decisions in the classroom and learning environment (Balkar, 2015; Lee & Nie, 2014). Kimwarey et al., (2014) describe empowerment as a process where school participants develop the ability to take charge of their growth and address/resolve their own problems (p. 52). Teachers need to be empowered so that they can develop the skills and competence needed to address the responsibilities of everyday practice (Kimwarey et al., 2014). Teacher empowerment provides a platform for sustainability of the development of teachers through the autonomy of teachers and the positive influences it has on

job satisfaction (Balkar, 2015).

While it is critically important that evaluations of teachers define "effectiveness," the point of improving teacher evaluations is to help schools get demonstrably better results for their students (Doherty & Jacobs, 2013). According to Doherty and Jacobs (2013), more than two-thirds of states now require student growth and achievement as a part of the formal evaluation process to determine the effectiveness of teachers. The researchers point out that the teacher evaluation policy should help all teachers improve, not just low performers. If teacher effectiveness is the goal of evaluation in aiding all teachers with improving their teaching thenall teachers need quality feedback (Doherty & Jacobs, 2013). In a recent study, Ford et al. (2017) concluded that one way to build teacher commitment and strengthen teacher evaluation is by investing in a teacher's feelings of self-efficacy. In doing so, the possibility of intrinsic motivation for better instructional strategies and overall instructional improvement stands a greater chance of being cultivated (Ford et al., 2017).

Framework for Teaching

Charlotte Danielson (2013) developed "The Framework for Teaching: Evaluation Instrument" to help identify the aspects of a teacher's responsibilities that have been documented through empirical studies and theoretical research for promoting and improving student learning (Borman & Kimball, 2005; Garet, Wayne, Brown, Rickles, & Song, 2017; Heneman, Milanowski, Kimball, & Odden, 2006; Kimball, White, Milanowski, & Borman, 2004; Kimball & Milanowski, 2009; Sartain, Stoelinga, & Brown, 2009). While the framework itself is not the only possible description of practice, it helps define what teachers should know and be able to do in the performance of their job duties. Danielson (2013) broke down The Framework for Teaching into four distinct domains—planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. She

emphasized that the framework can be used for a multitude of reasons, but its main focus is grounded in the foundation for professional conversations among educators and sought to enhance skills in and out of the classroom (Danielson, 2013). The framework can be used as a foundation for districts and schools during the teacher evaluation process (Danielson, 2011, 2013; Danielson Group, 2017).

According to Danielson (2011), credibility in an evaluation system is essential. She proposed that school administrators must be able to report to a school board and the public that every teacher who teaches in a district or school is good and be able to provide the data to support that statement. Teacher evaluations are critical in schools because they depend on public funds, and the public has a right to expect high-quality teaching. However, there are two more basic purposes for why we have teacher evaluations: (1) ensuring teacher quality, and (2) promoting professional development (Danielson, 2011). Regarding teacher quality, one of the most widely used systems to define the quality of teaching is the Framework for Teaching (Danielson, 2011).

Danielson's (2013) Framework for Teaching outlines not only teaching that occurs in the classroom but also the planning and preparation needed to be an effective teacher. Danielson asserted that within each component of good teaching, the framework includes four levels of performance—unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished. Further, everyone from the teachers to the administration must possess a shared understanding of this common language to increase the value of classroom observations (Danielson, 2011). Additionally, administrators/supervisors must become skilled evaluators and be able to recognize the different components of practice, interpret evidence of performance, and engage teachers in meaningful and productive conversations about their practices (Danielson, 2011). Danielson argues that

evaluators must be able to assess teacher quality accurately to provide valid judgments.

The second basic purpose of teacher evaluation is to promote professional development. Commitment to professional development is important not because teaching may be of poor quality but rather because teaching is difficult and always has room for improvement. No matter how good a lesson may be or how much time is spent developing a unit, a teacher has an obligation to be involved in a career-long quest to continually improve their performance (Danielson, 2011; Danielson Group, 2017). The following section outlines the major components of the Framework for Teaching in a narrative format.

Danielson (2013) proposed that planning and proper preparation is the first domain within the Framework for Teaching and is a skill that teachers must have to gain command of the subjects they teach. She elaborated that teachers know which concepts and skills are fundamental to a discipline and which are peripheral. They must also be aware of students' misconceptions within any discipline and work to dispel them (Danielson, 2013). While knowledge is very important, it is not enough to proficiently advance students' understanding. Teachers must also be familiar with the most impactful pedagogical instructional practices best suited for their particular discipline (Danielson, 2013).

Furthermore, teachers must not only have knowledge of their content but of their students as well. Given that teachers teach the material to students and not in the abstract, it is important to note that students' interests and needs, using formal and informal information about students, and teacher participation in community events will assist in planning for the diverse students in the classroom (Danielson, 2013). Effective instructional outcomes can then be directed at specific learning outcomes for students (Danielson, 2013). Instructional outcomes should determine the instructional activities (structured lesson plans, activities that facilitate high-level

thinking, student choice, learning groups) within the classroom, resources needed (textbooks, internet resources, community resources, and other materials), meet the needs of diverse learners, and the methods for which students will be assessed (modified assessments, formative assessments, and clearly written expectations for each level of performance) (Danielson, 2013; Danielson Group, 2017).

The second domain outlined by Danielson (2013) is the essential skill of managing relationships with students and creating a positive learning environment that is supportive of all students' needs. These skills help foster an environment of rapport and respect. In an environment of respect and rapport, students feel valued, safe, and comfortable taking intellectual risks. Therefore, it is vital that teachers create a classroom culture grounded in student learning and support. Indicators of this type of environment include belief in the value of what is being learned, high expectations, quality work, and recognition for learning (Danielson, 2013). Creating this type of environment does not come without its challenges. A finely tuned classroom is essential to good instruction and facilitating student engagement (Danielson, 2013). Indicators that reflect a finely-tuned classroom include proper functioning of all routines, little to no loss of instructional time, and students knowing when and what to do (Danielson, 2013). Managing students' behavior is another element of domain within the framework. Danielson suggested that for any student to be able to stay engaged and on task, the classroom environment must have rules and procedures that are made explicitly clear to students. According to Danielson (2013), "in a productive classroom, standards of conduct are clear to students; they know what they are permitted to do and what they can expect of their classmates" (p. 45). Likewise, a teacher's use of the physical space to promote learning is considered a hallmark of an experienced teacher (Danielson, 2013; Danielson Group, 2017).

Instruction is the third domain outlined within the Framework for Teaching. Danielson (2013) outlines some of the major elements and indicators that fall within this domain as being critical for properly communicating with students, using effective questions and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, using assessments within the instruction, and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness. Some of the major elements included within domain three are expectations for learning, directions for activities, explanation of content, student participation, effective questioning and discussion techniques, student participation, assessment criteria, feedback, lesson modification, and response to students. For example, student engagement is the one major element at the centerpiece of the Framework for Teaching, and all the other components contribute to this (Danielson, 2013; Danielson Group, 2017).

The final domain outlined by Danielson (2013) is the professional responsibilities expected of our teachers. Domain four establishes elements and indicators about the reflection of teaching, maintaining accurate records, communication with families, participation in the professional community, professional development, and demonstrating professionalism (Danielson, 2013). Danielson indicated that the first major element, reflecting on teaching, encompasses teachers' thought processes directly following any instructional event. An analysis of both the planning and implementation of an instructional event then leads to making revisions and modifications to use for future lessons. These reflections, over time, become an acquired skill that can help lead to the overall improvement of teaching (Danielson, 2013). Another element vital to the professional responsibility of teaching proposed by Danielson is maintaining accurate records. These include lesson plans, student assignments, and other non-instructional documents that are part of the day-to-day functions within a school. Maintaining accurate records can lead to better communication with students' families. While the abilityof

parents/families varies greatly regarding how much they can participate in their chidren's learning, it is the overall duty of teachers to provide opportunities for them to understand both the instructional program and their child's progress (Danielson, 2013). A teacher's genuine effort to foster communication with a student's family helps convey the teacher's caring, which is valued by families with students of all ages (Danielson, 2013; Danielson Group, 2017).

Participating in the professional community and professional development activities is vital to promoting student learning (Danielson, 2013). Danielson proposed that teachers have a duty to work with their colleagues, departments, and teams to share ideas, foster collaborative planning, and plan for the success of their students. The school is considered a professional organization for teachers. Beyond participating in the professional community is a teacher's obligation to grow professionally, according to Danielson's framework. Given the complexity of teaching, continued growth and development are essential for teachers to remain current. Academic disciplines continue to evolve, and along with that comes the need for teachers to evolve with their discipline (Danielson, 2013). Educators increase their effectiveness in the classroom by belonging to professional organizations, reading professional journals, attending conferences, and taking additional coursework (Danielson, 2013). A teacher's ability to work within a professional environment and seek growth and development opportunities is one of the core functions within teacher evaluation (Danielson, 2013; Danielson Group, 2017).

Georgia's Teacher Keys Effectiveness System

In 2013, Georgia passed House Bill 244 in response to the state's Race to the Top (RTTT) application requirements. The bill was passed to revise certain provisions related to annual performance evaluations and to help provide a platform for the development of the Teacher Keys Evaluation System (TKES). The original RTTT application included 26 school systems that

educate nearly 40% of Georgia's public school students. In 2012, the same 26 school districts piloted the TKES and the Leader Keys Evaluation System (LKES) during the first five months (Grigsby et al., 2015). In 2016, Senate Bill 364 was passed and signed into law by Georgia's Governor. The Senate Bill helped modify the landscape of Georgia's educational system by reducing the number of state-mandated tests that students must take, in turn, reducing the percentage that student test scores count for TKES evaluations. The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE, 2016) noted some of the major changes as listed below:

1) Weight of student test scores on TKES reduced from 50% to 30%, with the remaining 20% coming from professional growth plans, allowing the evaluation system to become more of a coaching tool.
2) Students must be in attendance in class 90% of the instructional days of the course in order to count toward a teacher's evaluation (the previous version was only 65% enrollment).
3) The number of state-administered assessments reduced from 32 to 24, allowing schools to focus on literacy and numeracy in the early grades, giving students a better foundation for success.
4) Modified observations for our best teachers, allowing administrators to spend more time with new or weaker teachers while giving teachers who receive high evaluation scores the benefit of fewer observations and more flexibility in the classroom.
5) Student surveys are now an optional part of TKES rather than a requirement.
6) One growth measure per teacher required instead of two, decreasing the number of tests that must be administered (p. 3).

Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards

Every student has different skills, abilities, and challenges (GaDOE, 2012). Classrooms face the same variables as no one classroom can be considered the same (GaDOE, 2012). Evaluations in education are unlike most other professions. Therefore, teacher evaluations must reflect the unique variables faced in the classroom (GaDOE, 2012). TAPS was included in the TKES to provide a fair and comprehensive evaluation system that elicits enough detail and accuracy so that teachers being evaluated and the evaluators can fully understand the expectations put before them (GaDOE, 2016). Five domains and ten performance standards define the expectations for teacher performance. Figure 3 depicts the five domains and performance standards used to evaluate teachers.

Planning
1. Professional Knowledge The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, pedagogical knowledge, and the needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences.
2. Instructional Planning The teacher plans using state and local school district curricula and standards, effective strategies, resources, and data to address the differentiated needs of all students.
Instructional Delivery
3. Instructional Strategies The teacher promotes student learning by using research-based instructional strategies relevant to the content area to engage students in active learning and to facilitate the students' acquisition of key knowledge and skills.
4. Differentiated Instruction The teacher challenges and supports each student's learning by providing appropriate content and developing skills which address individual learning differences.
Assessment Of And For Learning
5. Assessment Strategies The teacher systematically chooses a variety of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment strategies and instruments that are valid and appropriate for the content and student population.
6. Assessment Uses The teacher systematically gathers, analyzes, and uses relevant data to measure student progress, to inform instructional content and delivery methods, and to provide timely and constructive feedback to both students and parents.
Learning Environment

7. Positive Learning Environment
The teacher provides a well-managed, safe, and orderly environment that is conducive to learning and encourages respect for all.

8. Academically Challenging Environment
The teacher creates a student-centered, academic environment in which teaching and learning occur at high levels and students are self-directed learners.

Professionalism and Communication

9. Professionalism
The teacher exhibits a commitment to professional ethics and the school's mission, participates in professional growth opportunities to support student learning, and contributes to the profession.

10. Communication
The teacher communicates effectively with students, parents or guardians, district and school personnel, and other stakeholders in ways that enhance student learning

Figure 3. TAPS Performance Standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2016).

The performance indicators listed in Figure 3 provide evaluators and teachers with observable and tangible behaviors for each standard. These indicators help guide teachers in a better understanding of how to successfully meet each criterion. Performance appraisals rubrics are then used to provide a summary scale that assists evaluators in assessing how well one of the five standards/domains is performed.

Professional Growth

According to the Georgia Department of Education (2016), the second major component of TKES (Professional Growth) is viewed as a coaching tool rather than a punitive measure. Professional growth is measured via Professional Growth Goals (PGGs). Admittedly, the GaDOE (2016) states that these goals may or may not be reflective of the Professional Learning Goals or Professional Learning Plan as outlined by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission [GaPSC] (GaDOE, 2016). The report also states that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are required to determine the criteria for rating this component. Thus, the GaDOE (2016) highly recommends that this TKES component be reflective of the GaPSC recertification requirements. The PGGs are allowed to consider the following for rating this area:

- Weaknesses identified through the TAPS process;
- Teacher's individual professional goals;
- School Improvement Goals;
- District Improvement Goals;
- Any other district or school identified need.

A sample rubric has been provided by the GADOE to assist LEAs in rating teacher's professional growth; it is considered optional and is to be used merely as support.

Student Growth

The third and final component of TKES is student growth which, comprises Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) for teachers, courses, and LEA Determined Measures (GaDOE, 2016). In the GaDOE's (2016) report, it states that a student's academic achievement only provides part of the story for overall student performance and teacher effectiveness. It is a measure to show student growth and reflect on the progress made each year. Each year, the GaDOE calculates SGPs via state assessment data to describe a student's growth relative to academically similar students. These growth percentiles can range from 1–99 with lower percentiles indicating lower academic performance and higher percentiles indicating higher academic growth (GaDOE, 2016). These annual SGP evaluations are then compiled along with the previous components of TKES to assign an overall rating for teachers called the Teacher Effectiveness Measure (GaDOE, 2016).

Teacher Effectiveness Measure

The Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM) is the final annual evaluation of a teacher that combines the scoring of TAPs (50%), professional growth (20%), and student growth (30%) (GaDOE, 2016). Once all the scoring has been applied, teachers of record are assigned an

overall rating of exemplary, proficient, needs development, or ineffective. The TEM is calculated by multiplying the rating level of each component and is then compared to a rubric where standard rounding rules are applied when applicable. Tables 1 and 2 provide an example of this scoring guide (GaDOE, 2016).

Table 1

TAPS Summative Cut Scores

Final Ratings	TAPS Summative Cut Scores
Level I	0-6
Level II	7-16
Level III	17-26
Level IV	27-30

Table 2

Student Learning Objective Attainment Rubric

Teacher Rating	Student Results
Level I	< 50% students demonstrating expected or high growth.
Level II	> = 50% to 64% students demonstrating expected or high growth.
Level III	> = 65% to 89% students demonstrating expected or high growth.
Level IV	> = 90% students demonstrating expected or high growth and > 30% high growth.

Summary

Teacher evaluation has evolved over the last 30 years and is continuing to do so. The literature review described a variety of evaluation models and the path that has finally resulted in

the teacher evaluation system used in Georgia public schools. Many states are implementing comprehensive models as a result of the focus by current educational policy on teacher evaluation. The literature reviewed in this chapter provided a basis for a better understanding of teacher evaluation, the TKES model, and teacher attrition and retention rates across the nation and within the state of Georgia. Danielson's (2013) Framework for Teaching provided the context regarding teacher evaluation and a framework from which to create these formal evaluations. While teacher evaluation has been a major focal point within the literature, there is a dearth of research about Georgia's TKES and the perceptions of current and former teachers. Regarding teacher retention and attrition, literature is abundant discussing reasons why teachers leave the profession. However, most of these studies do not pertain specifically to the TKES. Further study of K-12 teachers on the impact of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System on teacher retention and effectiveness would be valuable to the literature on value-added comprehensive evaluation systems.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the research questions and methods utilized for this study. For this investigation, the researcher applied a qualitative research design to explore the perceptions and life experiences of both current and former teachers who have been evaluated using the Georgia Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). The focus of the study is not on teacher evaluation but instead on the impact of the TKES system on teacher retention, effectiveness, and empowerment.

Fifty percent of new teachers leaving public education within their first 5 years is an issue that educational policy circles have long recognized (Scafidi, Sjoquist, & Stinebrickner, 2006). In Georgia, 44% of teachers are quitting the field within their first 5 years (GaDOE, 2016), and teacher evaluation was cited as the number-two reason for public educators leaving the profession within the state (GaDOE, 2016). The purpose of this study was to examine how the application of Georgia's teacher evaluation system (TKES) is impacting teacher retention rates through the perceptions of current and former public school teachers. Additionally, this study sought to examine the career experiences of teachers in order to determine if the teacher evaluation system is empowering teachers to do their jobs more effectively. This chapter outlines the qualitative research design, sampling procedures, research site, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, validity, and relevant ethical issues.

Research Design

Qualitative research designs and methodology provide ways for researchers to study

complex phenomena within their contexts. It becomes a viable method for educational researchers to evaluate programs and develop strategic interventions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A basic qualitative interpretive research design with face-to-face semi-structured interviews was used to gather rich and descriptive data. Therefore, a qualitative design was chosen for this study to identify reoccurring patterns that characterize the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Qualitative researchers are focused on finding and understanding the meaning people have constructed by examining the experiences people have in the world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). According to Baxter and Jack (2008), the advantages of a case study method include data collection and analysis within the context of the phenomenon and the ability to capture complexities of real-life situations. Thus, the phenomenon studied can be investigated at deeper levels. According to Yin (2003), a case study design is used when you want to cover contextual conditions because they are relevant to the phenomenon under study. The purpose of this study was to investigate TKES within the context in which it occurs; therefore, this qualitative research took the form of a case study in which the participants discussed their understanding and experiences with the TKES. This method allowed the investigator to be immersed in the characteristics of everyday events as they related to the implementation of Georgia's TKES evaluation system.

Research Questions

Based on the literature review and the analysis of those findings, the researcher developed three areas for further study. This investigation was guided by the following research questions:

RQ 1. What are the career experiences of current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system identified as Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) designed for building teacher

effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state?

RQ 2. How have teacher retention rates been impacted as perceived by current and former teachers in an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system identified as Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state?

RQ 3. Do current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state perceive TKES enables teachers to be more effective?

Rationale

This study examined teachers' perceptions of Georgia's TKES teacher evaluation system in an average-performing public school district located in northeastern Georgia. Research question one provided details of the career experiences of teachers and their perceptions of Georgia's teacher evaluation system. An understanding of teachers' perceptions provided the researcher with insight into the effectiveness of the system and its implementation. Research question two provided details of how the teacher evaluation system in Georgia may be influencing teacher retention rates. The findings of this question directly related to the Georgia Department of Education's (2016) report that provided statistics regarding the reasons teachers were leaving the profession.

Research question three provided details about whether the TKES enabled teachers to do their job more effectively. The primary focus of the TKES is cited as the continuous growth and development of teachers by compiling performance data within a system based on a fair and

solid set of performance standards (GaDOE, 2018, 2019). These standards are intended to provide enough detail and accuracy, so both teachers and evaluators understand the full range of teacher performance and identify areas for professional development. For these objectives to be met, it was useful to determine if the goals of Georgia's TKES correspond with the perceptions of those who are evaluated and ultimately impacted by the resulting scores.

The overarching purpose of this study was to examine and explore a case study in-depth enough to obtain an understanding of how teacher retention rates in Georgia may be impacted by the TKES as well as understanding how the TKES may or may not empower teachers to do their job more effectively. For this reason, a basic interpretive research design was selected as the most logical framework to use in this study. Basic qualitative studies can be found throughout the disciplines and are probably one of the most commonly used frameworks for conducting qualitative research found in education (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), a central characteristic of all qualitative research is that individuals construct reality. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) point out that constructivism underlies what we are calling a basic qualitative study. In this study, the researcher is interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their world, and the meaning they attribute to those experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The purpose of this study was to obtain an understanding of how teacher evaluations in the state of Georgia may be impacting teacher retention rates and whether it empowers teachers to hone their practice to higher levels of teacher effectiveness.

Setting

A public school district located in northeastern Georgia served as the site for this study. Using the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) (GaDOE, 2017), state-level

demographics, and county-level demographics (including socioeconomic data), a district that best represented the state was selected. According to the Georgia Department of Education's website, in the 2018 school year, the average score of all school systems within the state reported an average CCRPI readiness score of 79% for elementary schools, 82% for middle schools, and 73.4% for high schools. The district selected for this study aligned closely with the overall state averages. The actual percentages for this district were not reported in order to ensure anonymity.

Additionally, in order to maintain anonymity for participants from each school and the district, only a very basic description of the school district is reported. The site was selected based on its current CCRPI scoring profile, which aligns with the state average of all school districts within the state of Georgia, state-level demographics, and county demographics, including socioeconomic status (median household income). District X is located just outsidethe foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in northeast Georgia and has a current population just under 200,000 and a median household income around $51,000. The median household income for the entire state of Georgia in 2016 (most current data available) was $51,037 (United States Census Bureau, 2018). Additionally, data reported on this county showed that 13.7% of the county's population lives in poverty. Georgia's current data on person's living in poverty is at 16%. The 2018 demographics for District X are just under 14% Caucasian, over 50% Hispanic or Latino, under 20% African American, 3% Asian, less than 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and less than 1% Native Hawaiian (GaDOE, 2018). This district currently serves under 10,000 students and has an average CCRPI readiness score between 65-75 for elementary, middle and high schools (GaDOE, 2018).

Researcher Role

The role of the researcher in this study was to gain an outside view of how the teacher

evaluation process is perceived by the participants. The researcher remained as objective as possible by not becoming a member of the group or research site. As a professor at a local university, we have numerous partnerships with the district chosen for this study. There are many principals and teachers that I have established relationships with over the last 3 to 5 years while serving in the teacher education program. Due to these relationships, participants I know personally were excluded from the study. Bias is always a concern when conducting any research. Therefore, eliminating known participants from the study ensured that researcher bias was minimized.

Participant Sampling and Selection

According to Patton (2001), there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry, and sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose, consideration of time, and what will have credibility. Purposeful snowball and criterion sampling were used to identify the participants for this study. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) propose that purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to discover and gain rich, detailed, and insightful data by sampling from a location where the most can be learned.

The participation criteria for this study were addressed in two ways. First, the participants in this study were current public school teachers who have been teaching from 1 to5 years. Based on the Georgia Department of Education's (2016) report, most teachers leave within their first 5 years making this an appropriate experience range. Secondly, participants in this study were former teachers who left teaching within the last 1 to 5 years. This study focused on both current and former teachers with a variety of years of experience. The rationale behind this was to obtain as much depth and detail regarding the TKES evaluation system aspossible.

Snowball sampling was used to identify teachers who have left the field within the last 1

to 5 years. Due to ethical and confidentiality restraints, it was difficult to identify former teachers via traditional sampling methods. This strategy was used to help contact and recruit teachers no longer teaching in the field. Participants already identified through criterion sampling were asked during the interview process to help identify former colleagues or friends who left the teaching field within the last few years.

The recruiting process for this study consisted of an email to the principal of the selected district/school that briefly outlined the purpose of the study, participant criteria, and general expectation guidelines for the interviewing process (see Appendix A). During the recruitment process, I gathered participant names and contacted participants who qualified for the study. The identified qualifying participants for the study were individually emailed, and interviews were scheduled based on researcher and participant availability. Informed consent was obtained during the interview process via digital recording.

Sample size and saturation are dependent upon the questions being asked, the data being gathered, and the analysis in progress (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), reaching a point of saturation or redundancy means you begin hearing the same responses to your interview questions or seeing the same behaviors in observations. In this study, sample size and saturation were addressed by analyzing data during the collection process. Since there is no set number for the sample size, as participants began being interviewed, data analysis was conducted. Patton (2001 recommends specifying a minimum number of participants based on reasonable coverage and the purpose of the study. For this study a minimum of six participants was interviewed. As data was being analyzed, a point of saturation occurred, and no further participants were interviewed for the study.

Data Collection

Traditionally in this type of study, data would be collected via interviews, observations, or collection of documents (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this study, data collection was achieved via semi-structured interviews and researcher field notes. The data collection method employed face-to-face semi-structured interviews and a detailed record of all field notes taken by the researcher. Triangulation occurred through the collection of relevant documents, interviews, and field notes.

Interviewing Process

A series of interviews were conducted with each participant in order to establish the context of the participants' experiences, reconstructing the details of their experiences, and finally reflection of their experiences (Seidman, 2006). Denzin and Lincoln (2017) state that compared to more structured interviews, semi-structured interviews allow more flexibility for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee. This allowed the researcher to become visible as a knowledge-producing participant instead of strictly adhering to a pre-set interview guide (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). This type of interview allowed the researcher to create a mix of more and less structured questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). More structured interview questions were used to obtain specific information about the teacher evaluation system in Georgia. Less structured interview questions were used to explore more deeply issues that emerged and allowed the researcher to respond to the situation at hand (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

A modified Seidman's three-interview series was used as a framework for interviewing, which provided the foundational framework for the interviewing process in this study. According to Seidman (2006), the first interview task is to put the participants' experience into

context by inquiring about the person's life and career experiences related to the topic over a span of time. The purpose was to gain insight into how participants' life histories played a role in where they are today and their feelings and perceptions within these roles. The second and third interviews were combined and focused on present life and career experiences of each participant specific to the purpose of the study.

Additionally, participants were asked to reflect on the meaning of these experiences. Interviews were spaced from three to five days (Seidman, 2006), and the total duration of data collection was dependent upon when the researcher obtained saturation. A preliminary timeframe of four weeks was used to conduct all interviews. The combination of exploring the past to illuminate the experiences or events leading up to the present and then describing the details of their present experiences establishes the conditions for reflecting upon them in thefinal interview (Seidman, 2006).

Interviews ranged from sixty to ninety minutes to allow more-in-depth questions to be asked. Interviews were conducted either at the school during planning periods or after-school hours when students were dismissed. Participants were notified via email with a list of days and times to participate in the interview process. Once a day and time were selected, each interview was conducted using the following guidelines:

1) Introduction, welcome, and thank you for participation in the study.
2) The purpose of the study was reviewed.
3) Participants were presented with a consent form that outlined the confidentialityand privacy parameters of the study.
4) Each participant was informed that digital recordings would be used along with note-taking by the researcher during the interview process.

5) After the interview, participants were reminded of the confidentiality and privacy parameters of the study.
6) Participants were asked for information on teachers who had left the field within the last 1 to 3 years (see Appendix C).

A series of four to five open-ended and semi-structured questions were used for each of the three interviews to gather information and experiences in order to reconstruct their prior circumstances leading them into the teaching profession. The first interview focused on past experiences with mentoring, tutoring, teaching, school, and coaching leading up to their current profession (see Appendix D). Subsequently, the participants were then asked less-structured questions in order to capture the teachers' career experiences with the application of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. More structured interview questions were used to guide the interview in order to obtain specific information and experiences regarding the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System's influences on teacher retention through the perceptions of each participant. The researcher wanted to explore what specific aspects of the TKES may have influenced teachers to leave the profession. The final research questions was addressed by employing less-structured interview questions. The less-structured interview questions during this phase of the interview allowed participants the flexibility to discuss how the evaluation system empowers teachers to be more effective in the classroom (see Appendix E).

According to Seidman (2006), the question of "meaning" is not one of satisfaction but rather to address the intellectual and emotional connections of work and life. Having participants make sense or make meaning ultimately requires them to look at how factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation (Seidman, 2006). Seidman points out that when we ask participants to tell stories of their experiences, they frame it with a beginning,

middle, and an end, thereby making it meaningful.

Data Analysis

Data from each of the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed in Microsoft Word. Once the transcriptions of each interview were completed, data were analyzed via open coding. Open coding was done at the beginning of the analysis in order to be expansive in identifying segments of data that may be useful later on (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Open coding was used to identify major patterns and insights related to the purpose of the study. Once open coding was completed, axial coding began by grouping together the themes identified during open coding. Axial coding is a step beyond descriptive coding because it comes from interpretation and the reflection on meaning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Axial coding assisted in constructing and grouping more comprehensive themes into categories. A running list of these themes was kept in a separate journal/memo for further review after all themes had been identified. Each set of data was outlined this way while comparing themes from prior data sets. Once open and axial coding had been completed, the use of "computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software" was used in order to help organize and categorize major themes outlined during the axial coding phase of analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The use of this software was for categorizing and organizing all data collected during the study. This software does not have the capability of analyzing qualitative data.

Validity Issues

All research in the applied fields is concerned with producing valid and reliable information in the most ethical manner possible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In order to ensure valid and reliable results from this study, the researcher selected a site that has no personal or professional connections. Credibility was also critical to the success of the study. While

establishing a rapport with each interviewee was important, being objective was crucial for valid and reliable data. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) and Shweder (1980), the two biggest threats to the validity of a qualitative study is the selection of data that fit theresearcher's goals and the selection of data that stand out to the researcher (as cited in Maxwell, 2012). This subjectivity or researcher bias in a study is the first threat to validity. In order to address this issue, participants from this study had no personal or professional connections with the researcher.

Credibility

The credibility of this study rests on the assumption that results may be replicated in a similar study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Credibility was assessed through multiple techniques. First, this study addressed credibility concerns through the process of triangulation. Triangulation occurred through the process of interviewing, field notes, and collection of documents. Seidman's (2006) three-interview series was used as a framework for conducting the interviews and establishing prolonged contact with each participant. Interviews were conducted until saturation had occurred at which time the data collection process stopped. Field notes were taken during each interview in order to record the personal thoughts and ideas of the researcher. All sources of data were compared in order to check one another. Finally, reflexivity was taken into consideration given the extensive time spent reviewing the literature. It was important to note what the literature states about teacher evaluation and not project any researcher opinions concerning this topic.

Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which the findings of this study were applied and discussed in other situations. Given the nature of qualitative research, it was difficult to address

transferability given such a small sample at one research site. However, in order to address this issue, the researcher used a highly descriptive and detailed presentation of the findings to increase transferability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Ethical Issues

The identity of each participant, the site, and the district was kept anonymous in order to deter bias from people outside the study. Principals nor staff of the school were notified of the interviews being conducted. Participants were also asked not to share information regarding the study with fellow peers, staff, or administration during the data collection and analysis phase of the study. Participants' identities were protected by removing names and coding them with pseudo names. Additionally, the list of participants was not provided to the principal or administrative team to deter biases that could threaten the results of the study. Transcripts from each interview were secured and kept behind a locked door. Participants of the study were read informed consent during the beginning of each interview. Approval for this study was granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Valdosta State University and the school district where the study took place (Appendix A).

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine how the implementation of Georgia's teacher evaluation system (TKES) was impacting teacher retention rates through the perceptions of current and former teachers. The study used a basic qualitative interpretive method by conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews and collection of documents. Interviews were outlined by the Interview Guide/Protocol. Participants of this study included teachers who have been teaching for less than 5 years or those who had left the field of teaching within thelast 5 years. Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, coded, and categorized during thedata

collection phase. Field notes were taken during the interviews to record personal thoughts and ideas. Lastly, documents relevant to teacher evaluations were collected and analyzed in order to compare with field notes and interviews. The next chapter presents the participants' profiles.

Chapter IV

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The Georgia Department of Education conducted a research study on current public school teachers in 2015 to identify some of the primary reasons teachers were leaving the field within the first 5 years. The study found that the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) was the number-two reason why teachers were leaving the profession (GaDOE, 2016). The researcher interviewed and examined the experiences of both current and former public school teachers within a public school district to examine the following research questions:

RQ 1. What are the career experiences of current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system identified as Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state?

RQ 2. How have teacher retention rates been impacted as perceived by current and former teachers in an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system identified as Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state?

RQ 3. Do current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state perceive TKES enables teachers to be more effective?

Data for the study were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, research

memos, and documents. Next is a summary of participants' characteristics and contextual background information via narrative profiles.

Background of Participants

In this study, the researcher interviewed three current public school teachers who range in teaching experience from 1 to 5 years and three former public school teachers who either left the profession or retired within the last 1 to 5 five years. All participants were evaluated by Georgia's Teacher Keys Effectiveness System during their tenure. The participants' profiles provided general background information and lived experiences leading up to their teaching careers. Table 1 is an outline of each participant's personal and professional data.

Table 3

Participants' Background Information

Pseudo Name	Gender	Race	Highest Degree Earned	Years of Teaching Experience
Allyson	F	W	Bachelors	3
Barbara	F	W	Bachelors	3
Carla	F	W	Bachelors	3
Deborah	F	W	Bachelors	2
Eva	F	W	Master's	20+
Frank	M	W	Master's	19

Participant Profiles

Allyson

Allyson was born in Gainesville, Georgia, but raised in Flowery Branch, Georgia, just twenty minutes south of Gainesville. She graduated high school in Flowery Branch and

completed college with a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education. Additionally, she has reading and ESOL endorsements. Allyson has three brothers (one of whom is deceased) and one sister. She has lived in the Flowery Branch area her entire life. At the time, Flowery Branch was a small town and lacked basic conveniences. People had to walk over a mile to the local store to shop for items needed on a daily basis "and never thought a thing about it." Allyson reflected on her old city with nostalgia: "It was just a very tiny, very quaint small town." It was the town where everyone knew everyone.

Allyson's parents divorced while she was young and was raised by her grandparents for the most part. Her father neglected to meet Allyson's financial and emotional needs. She stated: "Dad really didn't do too much…. financially nothing…. every once in a while he would pick us up, but mostly he really wasn't there." On the other hand, although her mother worked three jobs, she still could not adequately provide for her children. Specifically, even child-care services were not an option. This forced her to outsource Allyson's care to her parents before starting school. After a few years, she was able to get her child back with her and moved the family to Canton, Georgia. This neighborhood was even smaller than Flowery Branch, Georgia. After six years with her mother, she moved back to Flowery Branch. She stated, "My grandparents just couldn't handle being without me." Allyson continued to live between her biological mother and grandparents's home until she was old enough live on her own.

Allyson was conflicted about school. On the one hand, she confessed her dislike for school as a student. She stated, "Just to be honest…. I hated all of school from day one to graduation and never enjoyed it." On the other hand, she aspired to become a teacher. She expressed her confusion saying, "I don't know why I hated school but wanted to be a teacher. I don't know. That was kind of a disconnect."

Allyson did not have good memories about teachers throughout her entire school days except for one teacher whom she connected with and "loved." This teacher changed her view of school from negative to positive, which pleasantly surprised her grandmother. However, when the elementary school population grew, Allyson was moved to another classroom with a different teacher. Now she felt "even worse than before because they took me out of that classroom."

Allyson hated math as a student. It is surprising that she later became a math teacher despite her past experiences with it. As a teacher, she has become a strong advocate for her current math students. She can empathize with them and channel them to new approaches to learning math and overcoming their challenges. She had more positive memories of reading classes and credited her grandparents for her success. "My grandparents read to me constantly at a young age, and I think that love of reading just continued from there."

Middle school was "miserable" for Allyson. She was frequently taunted as a "fat girl" and getting "picked on a ton." This forced her to retreat from her peers and become a loner. She shared: "At that point in time, I kind of went into a shell and didn't really have any friends much and just hated it." During her transition into adolescence, she met a new best friend who helped her become more amiable. She stated, "When I met her, I guess that's how I came back out … I was outgoing again." Allyson's social needs were being met through friendships. In this state, she could avoid problems such as loneliness, depression, and anxiety, and felt loved and accepted by other people. The two continued their friendship through their ninth and tenth-grade years in high school and had much fun together. Moving into the eleventh-grade and senior years, Allyson lost interest in school and often stayed home when she could. Despite numerous absences, she maintained a 4.1 GPA. Interestingly, while Allyson stated earlier that she always wanted to be a teacher, she reiterated that during high school, she "didn't care anything about

teaching" or what she did in school. She stated: "I had no (future) plans."

After graduating high school, Allyson started a career as a front desk receptionist at a hotel. She quickly advanced to become a general manager. For a while, she was content with her career, but things changed: her priorities shifted after getting married and starting her own family. As a mother and wife, she needed a career that would allow her more time with her family. She lamented: "I was leaving in the morning before my child woke up, and I was coming home at night way after he went to bed." Driven by her love for children, she went back to school and became an early childhood teacher. She had to overcome many hardships to accomplish her goal of being a teacher, such as taking on two full-time jobs (waitressing and cleaning houses) "just to make ends meet" while getting her degree.

She enrolled in a night program to work during the day and attend classes at night. Her passion for teaching grew while in training as she observed others carrying out their day-to-day jobs in the school. By the end of the program, she entered her student teaching semester with a clearer idea of the grade level she would like to pursue. Allyson graduated college in December 2013 with her Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education. She taught Pre-K during her first year as a teacher. She joined the school halfway through the term—a time she considered as "the worst half-year of my entire life." Four years later, she now teaches second-grade.

I found Allyson to be candid and forthcoming about the circumstances that led her into the teaching profession. Throughout the interview, I felt teaching was the farthest thing from what she would eventually end up becoming, but it very well may be what steered her into this career. Her life experiences may have helped mold her into the teacher she is today. She has used her life experiences to help students reach their potential. She exuded confidence in her professional abilities to continue developing her craft and educating her students.

Barbara

Barbara was born in Jonesboro, Georgia, where she lived until she was eleven years old. She later moved from Jonesboro to Commerce, Georgia, in Jackson County where she attended both middle and high school. Barbara lived with her parents and two brothers: one brother four years older and the other eight years younger. She obtained her Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education with an ESOL and Reading Endorsement and currently she is married with one child.

During her early years in Jonesboro, she described her childhood home in a subdivision where they had room to play. She indicated that her subdivision was "a little lower class" and often felt "scared" when walking down the street. While living in Jonesboro, Barbara had "one best friend" she hung out with. Growing up, her mother worked in a factory while her father was a diesel mechanic. Like most families in her neighborhood, her parents had regular nine-to-five work routines.

Barbara first mentioned her feelings towards school during her elementary years. She stated: "I don't know that I really liked school. I wasn't very good at it. Actually, I failed at it so much that I didn't like that part of it." Barbara struggled in, "… every subject…" especially in math and reading. She reflected on one of her favorite teachers, who helped her regain her self-esteem in school. Barbara stated: "She never made me feel dumb." By late elementary school, Barbara improved her academic skills. She became one of the superior readers by fifth-grade and enrolled in a book club. With her newfound confidence, she pushed herself hard to succeed. She assumed a more positive attitude about school and looked forward to more educational achievements.

Beginning in her middle school years, Barbara moved from Jonesboro to Commerce.

This meant making all new friends, and that "became the hard part." Early in the transition into middle school, Barbara fell in love with dancing and later joined the dance team in seventh-grade. This activity helped her make a new group of friends and enjoyed a renewed sense of confidence in herself. Her dance team friends and practice schedule soon became the center of her life. As she transitioned into high school, she maintained membership in the dance team and further cemented middle school friendships. She excelled in school and enrolled in several AP and honors courses. She exuded confidence in school. She declared: "I was successful. I never felt like I was the smartest, but I knew I was okay. I had a good GPA." She had finally found joy as evidenced by her many successful experiences and outcomes. Barbara reflected on her journey through school in the following anecdote:

> I would say by middle school I was starting to like it. It was my elementary years where I would go home crying because I just felt so dumb, and I knew I was behind the other kids. I was aware of it even though I was really young. I think people don't realize how much they (elementary-aged kids) are aware. But by middle school, like I said, I think that dancing really helped me find my thing. Finally, like something clicked. I could actually do the work. So, I was successful, and that made me like school.

Barbara was drawn to teaching as a young child. She captured this view in the following narrative: "I liked teaching when I was a kid. My little brother, bless his heart, had to be the student, which I think he liked too." As she grew older, her career interest shifted to the medical field. She stated, "I kept hearing the medical field, medical field. That's where you need to be." At that point, she seriously contemplated becoming a surgical technician because it would only be a two-year degree but worried about the financial strain on her parents. "I knew we didn't

have a lot of money, and I wasn't sure if I could handle college." So, two years of college, as I understood it, was a more viable option for her. She was also influenced by a friend to consider going into nursing. After careful consideration, Barbara contemplated enrolling in a nursing program here in Georgia. She became worried about qualifying for admission into the nursing program and thus switched her major to early childhood education.

Barbara regretted her program's focus on classroom work rather than fieldwork. She completed only sixty hours in the classroom for an entire semester. The following sketch illustrates her frustration with the program organization:

> The first placement was like you had to go to kindergarten or first grade, and then it was second or third, and the next placement you had to pick fourth or fifth grade. I mean, I don't remember being in the classroom very much with the kids, but I just remember mostly doing schoolwork at that time. I even took summer classes and observed students at the Boys and Girls Club. This counted as being in the classroom. So…I say that because I didn't think that was really helpful. I feel like I spent a lot of hours in class.

She did not think the program prepared her adequately to start as a classroom teacher. She was convinced that more training time "should have been in the classroom a lot more than in the college setting." She enjoyed student teaching which she described as "fabulous" under the guidance of a skilled 16-year veteran who exposed her to well-planned lessons and classroom management techniques. She observed that students were always engaged and on task. Barbara just connected with her mentor and credits her for inspiring her to be the educator she is today.

I found Barbara to be a caring and soft-spoken person. She was open and honest with her responses to my questions. Like Allyson, she discovered her calling for teaching late in her

college career and numerous life factors lead her into the teaching field.

Carla

Carla was born and raised around Athens, Georgia, but she spent most of her childhood living in Oconee County, Georgia. She has an older sister who is in the Allied Health field and a younger sister who works at a pet clinic. Her parents are separated, and she does not communicate with her father. She has two college degrees in Business and Early Childhood Education. At a social level, she is single and happily shares her life with "two babies" (dogs) whom she loves. She moved to the Lake Lanier area when she accepted her first teaching job and currently is in her fourth year of teaching

Growing up, Carla lived in the country in "the middle of nowhere." She enjoyed living in a rural environment and preferred it to urban living. She shared her dislike of the city: "It's just too noisy, too much traffic, and too many people." She reminisced about playing outside with her sisters and a childhood friend who lived nearby. "It wasn't like you had a whole neighborhood (of friends) to come and play. It was one of those…. you went and played…. you listened for somebody to holler to come home."

Growing up, Carla was influenced by her grandparents, especially her grandfather, more than her parents. She worked hard not to disappoint her grandfather above everyone else in the immediate family. She shared: "He, to me, was more like my mother and father." She and her sisters would work with their grandfather on just about everything, including yard work. He, in turn, always met their needs. He taught them the importance of working hard. She recalled working in his print shop to earn money to pay for things. She regretted not having spent much time with her dad as he was gone from the home with work-related issues most of the time. She was grateful to her grandfather for emotional support and sharing most of her childhood

experiences.

Carla started her early education at a private school for the first 2 years because private school was more economical than traditional daycare. While attending the private school, she noted that being from the country was considered somewhat unsophisticated and that somehow, she did not match their idea of a model student. At one point, the school wanted to hold Carla back in the first grade, but before that could happen, her parents moved her into the public-school system. Carla found her third-grade year quite memorable because of her experiences with the teacher she had. She remembered her third-grade teacher spending time with her and helping to get her academics back on track. She attributes her love of math to this teacher saying, “That is my subject. It has been since then the strongest subject I have.” Other than that, she remembered nothing else except a school coach who helped her run the fastest mile in third grade.

Carla’s middle school experiences were not the best. She candidly described her time in middle school: “It was rough. I was just making it.” She pointed out she did not enjoy school at that time. “It was one of those (experiences) I just made it through.” She reiterated not liking school nor the subjects she had to study. She was more interested in the social aspects of making friends and being accepted. She described herself as a quiet person but liked to talk and have a good time. She enjoyed having friends and talking to them at school because when you lived in the country you never got to see anybody once you got home. She had a tough sixth-grade teacher who changed her attitude about school. She developed an appreciation for music under this teacher’s guidance. This new interest led her to the marching band. Middle school, especially seventh and eighth-grades, were considered more about “social time” rather than academics. Transitioning into high school, Carla enjoyed high school more than middle school.

She joined the marching band playing the bass clarinet and percussion instruments. Her high school highlights included an overseas trip to London and participation in the New Year's Eve Day Parade.

Carla developed a passion for kids and teaching, leading to her college years. She dreamed of opening her own daycare upon graduating from high school but was constrained by a lack of experience and financial resources. So, while she worked at a bank, she enrolled in college and began working on an Associate Degree. She had very helpful college professors who made her education experiences enjoyable. Her professors were either former principals or teachers with real classroom experiences, and she admired their educational skills and knowledge. She neatly captured her student teaching in the following anecdote: "You observed (the mentor teacher) a little bit, and then you always did something (a lesson plan) with them (the students)." She thoroughly enjoyed her practicum where she spent a "month or two" doing weekly classroom.

Carla came across as quiet and shy. However, once we began chatting about her life, I found her to be open and honest about her experiences before teaching. Like Allyson and Barbara, she seemed to have a circuitous path to teaching. While she enjoyed children, teaching did not seem to emerge as a path for her until later in adulthood.

Deborah

Deborah was born and raised in Snellville, Georgia, in Gwinnett County where she completed her K-12 schooling. She later obtained a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education. After 2 years of teaching, she transitioned into higher education as an administrative assistant. She is the oldest of three children with both a younger sister and brother. Her parents are still living in the area.

Deborah enjoyed a “privileged” childhood growing up in an upper-middle-class neighborhood in a “pretty well off” household. Her parents worked nine-to-five jobs, which afforded them ample family time. Her dad set his own schedule as a salesman while her mother worked as a secretary until she remained at home after the birth of their third child. A typical evening in their household consisted of kids coming home from school where both parents were there to greet them. The mother would sit the kids down to complete their homework. She commented: “My dad didn’t go to college, so my mom was always much more like the big push for school and all.” Once homework was done and her mother was busy preparing dinner, dad would take the kids outside for a walk or play driveway basketball. Being a sports-oriented family, these outdoor activities were “almost routine.” Deborah indicated there were plenty of kids in the neighborhood and often they would walk off to play in the nearby schoolyard. The day ended with a family dinner and everyone winding down from the day’s events.

Deborah required extra help as she progressed from elementary through high school. In kindergarten, she recalled doing “pretty good” but in first grade she fell behind in reading and needed extra help with writing. By the end of her first-grade year, placement in Reading Recovery was recommended. Also, her mother engaged a tutor over the summer to increase her reading skills. By the time Deborah entered second grade, her parents had her tested, and the results indicated an auditory processing disorder. Throughout her elementary years, she continued to be tutored and worked on her reading skills in middle school. She also mentioned being terrible at math and science. “I really struggled with it, but, in the end, that was what I was best at.” Later in her schooling, these became her two best subjects.

Deborah continued to receive extra coaching to keep her academically on track, especially in subjects with heavy reading assignments. Beyond academics, she actively

participated in a variety of extra activities in and outside the school. She shared her passion for baseball from an early age. She was drawn into baseball by her younger brother, who played ina school baseball team. They spent considerable time during their middle and high-school years practicing at the ball field. Although not as athletic as her siblings, Deborah was involved in their events. By the time she entered high school, her brother was traveling for baseball games, and her sister was playing softball. School and sports events consumed most of Deborah's free time during the week and on weekends.

However, she also expressed love for Art. This interest inspired her to consider college as an Art major. After appraising several private institutions, she found one that offered a minor in Art and was affordable. While touring this institution, her mother suggested majoring in teaching while minoring in Art. Deborah decided this was a good compromise since her parents concluded that a major in Art would not lead to a substantial career choice. She enrolled in college and started her classes. Her passion for Art was soon dampened by an uninspiring inapt Art professor who was ill-prepared to teach the course. She lamented, "I mean he ruined it. Like… you had to add him on Facebook to get your syllabus…. like… weird… stuff like that." She later dropped Art as her minor. Her pursuit of the teacher preparation program also presented a fair amount of challenges. In particular, she referred to her first semester of student teaching by saying, "I got into student teaching that first semester when I was at Smith County….and I like freaked out. I was like. Oh! I don't want to teach."

Disillusioned about teaching, she contemplated changing her focus and going to cosmetology school. Her parents, however, told her if she changed her career focus and moved back home, there would be consequences for continuing financial support (i.e., she would have to work full-time and attend church every Sunday). Ultimately, she stuck with teaching and

completed the program.

Deborah found the teacher preparation program “extremely stressful on a day-to-day basis.” She recalled alternating driving to their school with a cohort member because it was a long drive from where they lived. The institution she attended followed a professional development model. In this model, student interns were assigned to a school where they observed and had their college classes. She recounted how, in her fifth-grade classroom experience, she had “literally just sat at her computer every day because there was nothing to do.” Most of her conversation centered on the negative experiences she felt occurred in the program and student teaching. She appeared surprised about the economic status of the students—what little some students had in many of the schools. She had what one would describe as a “lightbulb” moment when she realized her growing up circumstances were somuch different from most of her students.

I found Deborah to be unguarded in discussing her childhood and family background. She willingly allowed me to probe and use follow-up questions to obtain details about her life and how she came to be a teacher. It was difficult to keep a consistent timeline because she had so many experiences to share. I would describe her background as differing significantly from Allyson, Barbara, and Carla’s. Her upbringing seemed to be more traditional regarding family dynamics, and her community setting reflected a higher socioeconomic status compared to the others.

Eva

Eva was born in Louisville, Kentucky, while her father was attending the Southern Baptist seminary. She has two siblings: an older brother who is deceased and a younger sister. When her father completed his seminary studies, Eva’s family moved to South Georgia where

they resided in several Georgia counties. Upon her graduation from Americus High School, the family moved to Rock Hill, South Carolina where her father was a minister, and Eva attended Winthrop College. She graduated from Winthrop College with an undergraduate degree in Political Science and a minor in History. She also obtained the Masters of Arts in Teaching from Piedmont College. Eva remained in the Rock Hill area for 15 years, where she pursued law school, and ultimately married and raised a child. Shortly after having their first child, she and her husband divorced, and she moved back to Georgia.

Eva fondly remembered her father as a very educated man who highly valued education. Her parents integrated education into all their family vacations as they visited places with historical value or significance. They frequently toured historical history, museums, and national parks in their home state of Georgia. Growing up in South Georgia, she enjoyed the simple pleasures of running barefoot "through the cornfields, playing in the barn, and horseback riding. She enjoyed helping her mother in the garden picking vegetables like beans and peas. Her small stature was very useful in the garden. She mused: "I figured out later why she always took me…. because I sat low to the ground and I could pick those beans." She also shared some adventures she had in their pecan orchard, as did most of her friends' families. Reflecting on her childhood in South Georgia, it reminded me of growing up in a typical small, tight-knit community where everyone knows your name.

Eva's childhood trips to historical sites laid a solid foundation for school courses, especially history, which "… came very natural to me." She also enjoyed extramural school activities including basketball and cheerleading. She played basketball through high school and later switched over to cheerleading. She conceded: "I really loved cheerleading, and that's what I did." Although Eva enjoyed schooling, sometimes she was erratic and underperformed on

tests, but her teachers would not let her slip up. She shared an incident when she was chided by one elementary school teacher for scoring poorly on a test. She recounted the teacher yelling at her in dismay: “What happened to you? You flunked the heck out of this test.” Oddly, this experience has stuck with her to this day and throughout her years of teaching.

Although Eva found joy in school, she had one major pet peeve—she “just didn’t like taking any tests.” She quipped, “Who does? Really? But I liked school. I just didn’t like tests too much unless it was history.” She struggled with math and avoided related courses like geometry and algebra. However, she tolerated business math and basic accounting. Upon graduating high school, Eva had no intention of becoming a teacher. During her college years, Eva spoke about her involvement in work-study programs and applied for grants to pay for her schooling. She said, “A lot of money was allocated for grants. So, I got grants.” Along with the work-study programs and grants, her parents also helped finance her education, but she paid“for a good part of it.”

After attending Winthrop College, getting married, and having a child, Eva worked for a Foundry Supply Company for 10 years as the office manager. She helped manage the daily office duties, including purchasing and transportation schedules. During that time, she enrolled in the Masters of Arts program with the hopes of enrolling in graduate school to pursue further education. Eva’s life took many different turns over the next few years. She became a single parent and returned to her home state where she took on several jobs to support herself and her son. She experimented with teaching as a substitute teacher at a private school for almost 2 years. She also volunteered to serve in state politics… giving adult’s lessons on how government worked. Her volunteering work landed her a job as a staff assistant in the governor’s office for the next few years. She finally enrolled in a teaching program at Piedmont

College and teaching became her third and final career.

Eva, like many others in this study, had a very interesting path to teaching. She was open and forthcoming with her life story. She came across as a person who holds people accountable for their actions and a strong interest in teaching others. That was evident even while she was working in politics.

Frank

Frank was born in Madison, Georgia, where he started elementary school. He shared joyful anecdotes of life in a close-knit neighborhood where "every kid on [his] street was [his] friend, and we were all friends, and we played." Depending on the time of year, they played a variety of sports: football, basketball, and baseball in the spring. He portrayed an active childhood in the following example: "We played all the time…. we rode bicycles…. we rode those to town…. we rode with no helmets, and nobody's worried." He, however, regrets not going "… on a big vacation with my family." He briefly mentioned a family vacation one year as a trip to Atlanta, spending the night in a hotel. "That was a vacation for us." He spoke about attending a few Braves games, but because money was "tight" there were not a lot of "frills" growing up. Mostly, he summed up his childhood by saying, "So, you know… I just did what my parents told me to do by and large."

For a short period during that time, he lived in Chicago when his father, who was in the military, was stationed there. Subsequently, his dad was re-stationed in Atlanta, and they moved back to Gainesville, Georgia. Frank also served in the Army for 3 years after high school and lived overseas "for a while." He obtained a Bachelor's degree in Math Education and later completed a Master's Degree in Education. He is a husband and father.

Frank's father was a state trooper who worked long hours and moved the family from

place to place for work. His mother worked part-time jobs throughout most of his childhood because "money was always tight growing up." His mom was the disciplinarian who "… spanked him twice a day" to make sure the kids stayed out of trouble. On reflection, he believes he has taken after his mother to become a disciplinarian.

As for elementary school, Frank acknowledged he really did not have a favorite subject outside of PE. He enjoyed math, but overall "nothing really stood out." He asserted he could recall all his teacher's names and what they looked like for every grade through college. He later participated in a variety of sports in middle/high school. His favorite sport was basketball. He attributed his limitations in football to his physic. He stated: "I was a tall, small-framed guy… and weighed a hundred and forty pounds…. so I didn't play football." Like most high school students, Frank found employment to make money to purchase a car. He shared his priority to work hard to raise money to buy his car rather than his academics: "I kind of wanted a car more than I wanted to do other stuff… so I worked sometimes 40 hours a week, so I could buy a car... School was… kind of secondary." Although he never thought about dropping out of school, it never really interested him. It was not until his junior year of college before he took a real interest in his education.

Upon graduating from high school, Frank was not keen on going to college to further his education. However, the college was a non-negotiable issue as far as his father was concerned. He emphatically commanded him: "You're going to college." Reluctantly, Frank enrolled in college for two quarters and ended up with a 1.3 GPA. He soon quit school to work with a construction company making approximately $5.00 an hour. Around this time, the U.S. Army was offering enrollment opportunities with a salary of $20,000 for a 3-year commitment. He decided to "take the plunge" and joined the Army since working construction was not proving

financially rewarding, and “hanging around on the weekends drinking beer was not getting me anywhere.” After completing his 3-year tour of duty, he returned from overseas and used the $20,000 to resume college. He started his college career majoring in math, but after 2 years switched to math education.

At the time he entered college, the programs were still on the quarter system. During his junior year, he participated in the September experience. He spent two weeks out at a local school he selected doing pre-planning, observing, and teaching classes. He taught one “really tough” class at this school. He continued taking his teacher education classes, which culminated with student teaching. His student teaching comprised an eight-week stint teaching a full load. The experience ended in March, which was disappointing since typically there are no new teaching jobs available at this point. Since there was a six-month delay before school systems began their search for personnel, he entered the Master’s program. He worked on his Master’s degree over the remaining spring and summer while also applying for jobs in the fall. While continuing to work in the math lab at the college, he received a phone call from his former basketball coach telling him about a job opening. Frank applied for the position and ultimately was hired to teach high school science and math.

Frank, like many other participants in this study, had an unusual path into the teaching field. He came across as a very organized and straightforward person. You ask a question, and he provides a direct answer. I also found him to be candid when asked about his childhood and growing up experiences. He spoke honestly about his background and career choices, and you could sense this during the interview.

Summary

The participants’ profiles detailed in this chapter provide the reader with an in-depth

background of their lived experiences leading up to teaching, their levels of education, years of career encounters, and areas of expertise. These profiles help the reader better understand each of these individuals, who they are, where they came from, and whom they have become in life. The following chapter will discuss the data analyzed as it relates to the research questions associated with their responses.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION OF THEMES

In 2015, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission reported an alarming statistic asserting that 44% of school teachers in the state are exiting the profession within the first 5 years of their employment and cited teacher evaluation as the number-two reason for leaving. Most teachers indicated that they were unlikely to recommend teaching as a profession (GaDOE, 2016). The purpose of this study was to examine current and former teachers' career experiences with Georgia's teacher evaluation system known as the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) and its influence on teacher effectiveness and retention. The following questions guided this study:

RQ 1. What are the career experiences of current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system identified as Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES)?

RQ 2. How have teacher retention rates been impacted as perceived by current and former teachers in an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system identified as Teacher Keys Effective System (TKES)?

RQ 3. Do current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) perceive TKES enables teachers to be more effective?

This chapter provides an overview of the processes used for analyzing the data collected from interviews, documents, and memos. I present the codes used to fracture data and reconnect them through the discussion of each theme. Each theme is discussed using a three-part approach.

Each theme is discussed within the context of the TKES framework, current research findings in the literature, and the participants' own words in order to provide the milieu of their experiences and establish a basis for their perceptions.

Data Analysis

A basic interpretive qualitative approach was used to explore participants' interpretations of their perceptions and experiences with the TKES. The researcher employed in-depth interviews, researcher memos, and documents to collect data. The documents analyzed throughout this study were directly related to the TKES, current literature on teacher retention, teacher evaluation, and state-level teacher attrition data. All participants participated in face-to-face semi-structured interviews using protocols developed and adapted from Seidman's (2006) three-part interview procedures (see Appendix C, D, and E). During each interview, participants discussed their life and career experiences within their school district. Interviews ranged from 50 to 110 minutes in length and were recorded using a digital audio device.

Data analysis is the process of interpreting and making sense of all the information collected in research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what the participants have said and what the researcher has visualized and read (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Prior to beginning each interview, I obtained informed consent from each participant and outlined the purpose of the study. The first interview was used to establish foundational background information on each participant and to create each participant profile. During the second and third interviews, information was collected to obtain participants' career experiences and perceptions about the TKES, teacher retention, and teacher effectiveness. Throughout the interview process, participants' comments led to additional probing as well as follow-up questioning. During and after each interview and during the transcription process,

memos were written in order to remain immersed in the data.

After completion of the third interview, analyzation of the data began. During the first round of open coding, the researcher reviewed each transcript and marked words or phrases based on the research questions and purpose of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Initial open codes were created based on the data and literature. Once each participant's transcript was reviewed multiple times via open coding, the open codes were then grouped into initial axial codes using the constant comparative method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Table 4 outlines a sample of the initial coding process.

Table 4.

Sample of Initial Codes Used

Code	Code Description
S	Subjectivity—perceptions of participants' feeling toward the evaluation process.
JS	Job Stress—participants' feelings about work and work-related conditions.
FB	Feedback—participants' perceptions of post-evaluation feedback.
AS	Administrative Support—support or lack of support provided by the administrators
TR	Teacher Retention—participants' perception of teacher retention within the state.
SC	School Culture—participants' perceptions of their school culture/climate.
TM	Time Management—how teachers can or cannot utilize their time while at work.
C	Communication—teachers' perceptions of effective or ineffective

	communication.
TE	Teacher Effectiveness—how teacher evaluation impacts teacher effectiveness.

The process of reviewing transcripts, field notes, and memos continued until the analyzation of open and axial codes led to themes naturally emerging from the data. Table 5 exhibits the sample segments of data utilized to create the theme *bias in classroom observation.*

Table 5. *Example of a Theme Created from the Data:*

Theme Created	Sample Segments of Data Used
Observer bias	1. I feel like you can't base a teacher's performance on something so subjective. And I feel… a lot of times, it's not constructive; it's negative, and that's a harm to the point to where it's not worth it anymore. (A) 2. But I do remember I planned with the same person. We planned together, and then we would do the lesson. We would talk afterward. Were you doing the same thing I was doing? Yes. We were both teaching the same lesson. And threes and fours on one teacher. Twos and threes on myself. (B) 3. I can probably tell you I had the lowest scores of everybody; ones and twos. But my kids had some of the highest growth… from the beginning to the end. And I had the most kids pass the milestone. Pretty much… all ones and twos. (C) 4. Yeah, I mean some teachers who have been there a long time... if they yield good results for their students, even if they're not using… the standard stuff, they will get great scores because they've been there for a while, and the principal thinks they always do great. And then the New Kids on the block; It was… really harsh... You knew that no matter what you did you were not going to get a good score. (D)

Note: A = Interview with Allyson; B = Interview with Barbara; C = Interview with Carly, and D = Interview with Deborah.

Themes

There are multiple ways to frame the concept of teacher evaluation. Generally, it is defined as a systematic procedure for reviewing the performance of a teacher in a classroom and analyzing the review to provide constructive feedback for the teacher's professional growth. Principals and administrative staff are involved in this evaluation process. The Georgia TKES evaluation system was specifically "designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state." It consists of three components targeted to provide multiple data sources. "The overarching goal of TKES is to support continuous growth and development of each teacher" (Georgia Department of Education, 2019).

In this research study, I examined both current and former teachers' perceptions of the TKES evaluation system, and the data analysis revealed three conceptual themes: (1) observer bias in the classroom, (2) unintended consequences of the TKES, and (3) the bureaucratic nature of TKES and teaching. Theme two included one sub-theme—lack of quality feedback. Table 6 illustrates the themes and sub-theme derived from the data. Each theme is discussed within the context of the TKES, the current literature, and the participants' perceptions.

Table 6.

Themes and Sub-theme

Bias in Classroom Observations	
Unintended Consequences of the TKES	Sub-theme: Lack of quality feedback
Bureaucratic Nature of the TKES and Teaching	

Bias in Classroom Observations

Bias in performance appraisal is defined as a subjective perspective of the evaluator that affects a fair and objective review (Lawson & Cruz, 2018; Maier, 2016). I found common threads regarding subjectivity and bias within the TKES across four of the six participants. Allyson is a current teacher who has been evaluated by the same administrative team in two different schools. She perceived the TKES evaluation system as being "interesting" and "unfair." She believes this may be a useful tool if implemented correctly, but she thinks the system is broken as it does not allow for objective teacher evaluation. She criticized: "I feel like you can't base a teacher's performance on something so subjective." Overall, she viewed the process as rather negative. She believed that she was evaluated unfairly when at her first school she received threes and fours on her summative TKES evaluation. However, after her whole school moved to a new site, miraculously her evaluations suddenly plummeted to twos and threes without any changes to her teaching. She was frustrated at her evaluator's inconsistent evaluation of her work. She stated: "He never gave me a two over there, but having moved from one school to the other downgraded me from a level four teacher down to a level two teacher." It is conceivable that the inconsistent evaluation may have been due to different work dynamics including serving a different student population with different learning needs.

Barbara conveyed mixed feelings about experiences with the TKES. On the one hand, she thought the evaluation system was a "good thing." She particularly found the standards very useful for teaching and learning. She stated: "I like those (standards) because that helps me know what I'm really… aiming for here…I know what I should be working on and doing in my classroom and it does help keep me accountable." However, she found teacher evaluation rather intimidating at the beginning. She admitted: "It was scary, I didn't do well, and I wasn't ready."

She described how the standards embedded within the TKES framework were useful and helped her prepare for future observations by the principal. She believes that the TKES is well-intended. She shared: "I mean… it's a rubric…. it's the basics of teaching, and I think everyone should be doing these things."

On the contrary, she questioned the authenticity of the assessment standards. She blamed principals for lacking a standardized system of evaluation that treated all teachers fairly. She lamented: "I think one principal can look at one teacher and see something different than another principal. I've seen it happen… where two different principals say two different things." Barbara was particularly adamant about one situation when a teacher whom she had worked with on teaching the same lesson received threes and fours while she received scores of twos and threes for the exact same lesson plan. Barbara chalked it up to the other teacher being more experienced and even stated that the other teacher is "a phenomenal teacher" but it still did not explain why two teachers who taught the same lesson received significantly different scores. Barbara was unclear as to whether she confronted her evaluator about this experience, but she did imply that she never received a plausible explanation for the different scores and was dissatisfied with the feedback received from the evaluation. She shared her exasperation in the following anecdote: "We talked about it. I talked to the principal, but I could never really quite understand what I needed to do better."

Carla, a current teacher, mirrored Allyson's and Barbara's sentiments about the TKES. She characterized the evaluation system as "… not a good system" that was "… based on opinion." She backed up this criticism with a bad experience she endured during her first year of teaching. She found herself caught between the principal and the assistant principal. On the one hand, the principal graded her poorly, and, on the other hand, the assistant principal thought she

deserved better and would not back the superior's decision. Thus, he could not score her as low as he intended. The principal, however, continued to score her poorly into her second year. She lamented: "the lowest out of everybody's." Her summative scores at the end of that year consisted of ones and twos. However, even though her students demonstrated some of the highest growth on their class assessments and having most of her students pass the milestones testing, she was still scored lower than her fellow teachers. Carla concluded that the principal's evaluations had nothing to do with her performance in the classroom. She sighed: "He didn't like me. Honestly, I can't tell you why he didn't." Disgruntled, Carla blamed her evaluator's erratic approach to the TKES evaluation system. She stated:

> It's hard to say because it depends on whom you're dealing with. I would say it's more punitive. Well, with one (administrator), I would say it's more of a feedback system, and with another, I would say it's punitive. Because if you're going to sit in the same class twice and one time you're going to give me all threes and then the next time you're going to give me twos. The first time I did the same thing, and you didn't say a word. Then during the second time you're going to fuss at me.

It appeared that Carla had deep feelings regarding not only the subjectivity of the evaluation process but with the scoring differences among evaluators as well. This also may be an example of personal bias that impacted the administrator's assessment. Negative teacher attitudes may reduce the likelihood of teachers and school leaders working together to increase teaching effectiveness and student achievement.

Deborah was conflicted about the TKES evaluation system. She believed the idea of the TKES was noble with good intentions. She was convinced that from a theoretical point of view,

the evaluation system was "logical and professional … measuring good things." However, she deeply abhorred the implementation of the TKES. She found no logic in the evaluation and what teachers are actually doing in the classrooms. "Like why are you getting graded on things never spoken about?" She also challenged the scoring by different evaluators:

> I mean, some teachers who have been there a long time if they yield good results for their students even if they're not using… the standard stuff…. they will get great scores… and the principal thinks they always do great. And then the new kids on the block…. You knew no matter what you did you were not going to get a good score. They all (administration) had different views.

Deborah believed the TKES implementation problems were pervasive throughout many schools. More problematic was the issue of inconsistency and bias by the evaluators that caused many teachers undue stress and frustration.

Eva believed that the TKES started with some major inherent problems. She commented, "From inception, the TKES tended to consume everyone as they focused all attention on teacher evaluation rather than the school's main mission of teaching and learning." She was grateful that the authorities later scaled back on the number of teacher observations and refocused on classroom instruction. Eva also believes that the TKES is a subjective evaluation of teachers. She explained, "I do feel (this way) because I had different evaluators whom I'd do the same thing, and each time viewed it differently." She shared an example of a time she was evaluated:

> I had one evaluator who said, 'Oh, I didn't see your standards posted up,' and they were up there. You kind of had a feel for when they were coming. I always had my lesson plans typed up and on my desk, so they could see them. That was a pain. But I had to do that, and I did it, so I would have someone who would say,

> ‘I would have liked to see more group work…. I would have liked to see more student led’…. and then I might do the same thing the next semester with a different evaluator, and they would say, ‘Oh. It was a wonderful day. Your students participated so wonderfully.’ But here again, I had a different group of students. You got different students. Yeah. They (evaluators) respond differently.

Eva also described instances when evaluators would walk in and look around, then tell her “you’re doing a great job” and walk out the door. She also mentioned having one evaluator who was known for trying to get you in some kind of (trouble) …. “Something… you know… that didn’t make the standard… the TKES check off.”

Frank’s perception of the TKES was direct and very brief. In very few words, he echoed similar problems of biased evaluations. Generally, he indicated that the TKES did not impact his teaching and felt the process stifled him. He did things that were required but did not believe they were necessary. Although he scored well, Frank felt that the TKES really did not help teachers develop professionally. He shared:

> I mean…. we know who was a good teacher and who wasn’t. You know, when I left, there were 100 teachers, and there were probably eight to ten, I would not let my child be in their class. I think they got some bad evaluations, but I think they might have been bad because the principal or whoever… knew that they weren’t very good teachers anyway. They were going to make sure they showed that despite what they might have done that day.

Frank pointed out that regardless of how a teacher performed that particular day, if the evaluator felt they were a bad teacher in general, they were going to receive a poorer score.

Summary

This theme "Bias in Classroom Observations" supports the Georgia Department of Educations (2016) report outlining teacher concerns over unfair or unreliable evaluation measures. This is further supported by multiple studies conducted over the last 10 years showing the inconsistencies within teacher evaluation (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016; Grissom & Loeb, 2017; Jacob & Lefgren, 2008; Kraft & Gilmour, 2017). Allyson, Barbara, Carla, Deborah, Eva, and Frank all illustrated in various ways the biased and inconsistent nature of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). Allyson, Carla, Deborah, and Eva were concerned over how subjective the evaluation could be depending on who the evaluator was. Each of them reported troubling instances of bias by their school principal when conducting classroom observations. Interestingly, Eva and Frank, who are former teachers with significantly higher years of experiences, both indicated that the TKES was more subjective than objective but did not feel it was a factor in their overall teaching careers.

The TKES has come a long way in defining effective teaching performances and developing an objective process to assist both teachers and school administrators in making performance measurements more rigorous and useful. Subjectivity and bias may not be eliminated, but effort needs to be made to reassure teachers that fairness is paramount. Failure to do so may continue to undermine the goals of the evaluation system in retaining skilled teachers and developing every teacher to their highest level of teaching effectiveness.

Unintended Consequences of the TKES

This theme focuses on the unintended consequences of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). The state of Georgia designed the TKES evaluation system to give every student in every community excellent and effective classroom teachers. Georgia developed the

TKES to provide teachers with more meaningful feedback and support so they can achieve the goal of increasing academic achievement for all students. Ongoing feedback and targeted professional development help teachers meet the changing needs of their students (GaDOE, 2019). The Georgia Department of Education intended the TKES to provide teachers with meaningful information about how their practice and performance impact students' learning. In the *Teacher Keys Effectiveness System: Implementation Handbook*, they also acknowledged the central role of teachers and sought to provide teachers the opportunity to refine their practice in order to continually and effectively meet changing student needs (GaDOE, 2018, 2019).

The TKES framework provides ample opportunities for teachers and evaluators todiscuss the observation protocols and feedback schedule. According to the TKES handbook (GaDOE, 2018, 2019), eight steps are outlined that cycle through orientation, self-assessment, pre- and post-observation conferences and summative evaluation. Throughout the process, there are strong recommendations that evaluators provide specific commentary to acknowledge performance strengths as well as growth areas for any of the ten performance standards. Commentary should include specific feedback to promote professional growth and should be shared with the teacher in a timely manner. The outcome is for evaluators to utilize evaluation results to provide high-quality, job-embedded, and ongoing mentoring, support, and professional development for teachers as identified in their evaluations (GaDOE, 2018, 2019).

Effective feedback, when given frequently and competently, helps to foster a successful school climate in addition to making sure all teachers are meeting the professional standards (Sprankles & McArthur, 2017). Specific, detailed feedback is the primary outcome of the TKES as it provides the talking points for instructional dialogue and setting goals for continued professional growth. Critical to the process is the involvement of the principal. While it is a

challenge, school administrators should do a practice of visiting classrooms once a month and provide feedback after each visit. This sets the stage for a school community that is committed to giving and receiving feedback on a systematic basis (Sprankles & McArthur, 2017). It is even more important to follow-up a formative assessment classroom observation with pertinent data and a coaching conversation.

Participants in this study expressed the need for dynamic conversations with their school instructional leaders. Deborah reiterates that these interactions help build trusting relationships with teachers and are a major characteristic of a learning community focused on professional development. She goes on to say, "I feel like we are measuring the right things, but it gets lost in translation because it's hard for principals to have a conversation with every teacher." She warns that failure to provide detailed and balanced feedback, engage teachers in building their expertise, and support their efforts by taking the time to meet with them, may have unintended outcomes on teacher motivation and effectiveness. Contrary to the good intentions of the TKES, all participants in this study indicated that the TKES did not have a significant impact on their teaching effectiveness.

While all the participants agreed that an evaluation system is critical to teacher development, they reported that the TKES fueled resentment and dissatisfaction with their jobs. Allyson complained that the TKES was not working for teachers. She stated, "It's not having a positive impact on teachers." She admitted that teacher evaluation is no easy feat as many different aspects—teacher characteristics, the students' abilities, and the school's environment—need to be factored into individual teacher assessments. She explained: "You can't compare apples to oranges and say this teacher had this much growth, while this teacher only had this much growth, so she's a better teacher…. You have to look at individual students' growth."

Ultimately, she associated teacher competence with student achievement and believes if there is growth in a student's scores, then the teacher is getting the job done.

Furthermore,Allyson felt if a teacher is not showing student growth, then they should not be in the classroom. She summarized her feeling of the evaluation system saying, "I'm not saying it's a terrible thing…. I'm saying that it needs to be completely taken apart and redone… with maybe some teachers' input… and get a whole bunch of really great teachers together and have them put it back together."

Carla stated, "I really haven't found that (TKES) has helped me much in planning and looking at things towards my classroom." She believes teachers' views about the system depend on the administrators and how it is applied within the school. Generally, she does not feel the evaluation system has assisted her in being a more effective teacher. Deborah believes the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) is measuring good things but that it gets lost in translation. She stated, "The things (TKES components) are very logical and professional." She feels the implementation of the system gets lost in translation due to the complications principals have not being able to spend quality time with teachers. Deborah elaborates on this point by saying, "I know it would be hard for the principal to have a conversation with every one of the teachers…. but…. at least try."

Eva criticized the evaluation system by saying "it was too cumbersome and did not help her do her job more effectively." Specifically, she mentioned that the evaluation system did not impact her planning by saying, "No, because when I devised my lesson plan, I had to show proof of it, but I was already doing it. I just had to put the concreteness to it." She felt that the evaluation system itself was not going to alter what she had already planned even when being observed. Having been a teacher for so long and teaching under multiple evaluation systems, she

felt that the TKES was not much different from the other evaluations she had experienced.

Frank bluntly asserted that the TKES did not help him do his job more effectively. He stated:

> No. I did what I was going to do… In fact, it probably stifled me a little bit. Because if I knew they were coming in, I knew they wanted to see a lesson plan and something written on the board like an objective and a question of the day.

Frank felt that the TKES did not truly reflect what teachers actually do in the classroom on a day-to-day basis. Instead, they plan to do impressive work on the evaluation day just to score high with the evaluator, and after that they go back to usual ways of classroom practice. He stated: "It was kind of one of those checklist things to indicate whether or not he's done it or not." Overall, he did not feel that (TKES) was necessary.

Lack of Quality Feedback

Observing teachers and providing quality feedback is the purpose of teacher evaluations. Teachers often become defensive when the feedback is negative, especially if they feel the administrator does not have a sincere commitment to improving their instructional effectiveness (Sprankles & McArthur, 2017). The term "feedback" can be defined as information about how one is doing to reach a goal (Wiggins, 2012). According to Wiggins (2012), this information does not include value judgments or recommendations on how to improve. "Helpful feedback is goal-oriented, tangible, actionable, user-friendly (specific and personalized) timely, ongoing, and consistent" (Wiggins, 2012, p. 10-16).

Allyson reported receiving constructive feedback only two out of the four times she has been evaluated since becoming a teacher. Additionally, she recalled an experience from her student teaching, where the principal told her directly if a teacher deserved a four, he refused to

assign that score because he needed to show growth. She retorted:

> If I'm a poor teacher and I'm doing a poor job, I should receive a poor grade regardless. If I'm a two teacher and I know I'm doing a two job, then you should give me that two, and let's figure out how to make me a three or four. But at this point…I mean…if you got to give a teacher a three or a two at the end of the year so you can show growth…. how authentic is that?

As a part of the TKES process, teachers develop goals in order to improve their effectiveness when necessary. However, Allyson expressed concern about this part of the feedback process and shared that the goals teachers need to create each year were "useless." She explained, "It's just something you type up and have so that it will look good on paper." She did not feel the evaluation and feedback process was authentic, and both teachers and administrators were "just going through the motions to get it done."

Carla believes teacher success is not always about milestone testing. She stressed you need to assess the growth that your students are showing throughout the school term. She believes that the TKES, and more specifically feedback, has not impacted her classroom in a significant way. She stated, "It's one of those things…my kids were being successful, but I was being told that I was an awful teacher." Referring to recent evaluations, she stated:

> Even when I get 'good' feedback…. it's not. They tell you what you're doing, but they're not explaining what's going on and what they're seeing. Like with her (the first AP), it was like a picture of what was going on in your classroom. With them (more recent evaluators), they say what you're doing and if you're doing right or not.

Deborah believes that the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) is meant to measure and

encourage good instructional practices but that it gets lost in translation. She stated, “The things (TKES components) are very logical and professional.” She feels that the implementation of the system gets lost in implementation due to the complications principals have being able to spend quality time with teachers. Deborah elaborates on this point by saying, “I know it would be hard for the principal to have a conversation with every one of the teachers…. but…. at least try.” Deborah was convinced that the written feedback sometimes was based on rumors and did not necessarily reflect the truth about the teacher being evaluated. She neatly captured these sentiments in the following anecdote:

> So, my vice principal came in and observed me…. and then under collaboration on teacher effectiveness she gave me a score of ineffective. She (vice principal) wrote in the comments, ‘Your team often says that you’re not in meetings with them’ …. and I was like what the heck! They know I’m calling parents. I never thought running into a team meeting five minutes late from time to time would be that big of a deal. What bothered me the most was the vice principal just gave me the ineffective score and wrote this earth-shattering comment that ruined my whole weekend. She didn’t even come talk to me and ask me for my communication log…. or take the time to ask me, ‘why are people even saying that?... at least give me a chance to prove what I was doing during my planning time.

Like others who participated in the study, Deborah had multiple bad experiences with feedback from her evaluators. She felt the feedback could be quite vague... “A lot of the times, the feedback would be… Ms. XXXXX is successful in her lesson planning.” Deborah understood this type of feedback to imply she was on target and no changes were needed. She also resented

interference from the principal in curriculum decisions that seemed illogical and not in the best interest of the students. She described an experience where her principal wanted her entire team to teach the same lesson on the same day. Deborah stated, "So... like if your class is behind…. you just have to jump ahead."

Eva explained that dissatisfaction with evaluations was the general cause of low morale among teachers in her school. She shared: "I could tell you, if you asked most of the teachers on any given day whom I taught with… TKES is very subjective." Eva believes that the TKES is a performance appraisal rather than a feedback system. She stated, "You would get some feedback from the evaluator, like a little, but nothing that I would say affect my performance. I would just say… Okay… I'll be sure to do that next time they walk in and observe me."

Theme Summary

Allyson, Carla, and Deborah viewed feedback as an important component but indicated that the frequency and depth of the feedback was lacking and inconsistent. Furthermore, all participants expressed a desire for more collegial conversations about pedagogy to justify low scores received after classroom observations. Within evaluation systems, this means the purpose of feedback is to communicate current instructional practices, and the impact is to communicate how to reach the desired instructional practices from understanding the current practices (Nabors, 2015). All the former teachers (Deborah, Eva, and Frank) echoed similar concerns about ineffective and inconsistent feedback.

The TKES is a sophisticated teacher evaluation system designed to increase teacher effectiveness, but the primary players do not perceive that the process is impacting their instructional expertise. All the participants in this study agreed that teacher evaluation is important and that the TKES model itself is a step in the right direction; however, the participants

felt that the implementation of the system lacks significantly.

The Bureaucratic Nature of TKES and Teaching Duties

This theme focuses on how the TKES has changed schools into environments structured around hierarchy, standardization, and specialization of certain skills. The TKES' highly-structured guidelines and protocols characteristic of bureaucracy has marginalized teachers who have been continuously ranked as low-performing. These teachers have criticized the process of TKES and the bureaucratized school system. Participants reported subtle forms of micro-level aggression based on their TKES evaluations. For example, Allyson, Deborah, and Carla felt they were unfairly treated/evaluated and made to feel inadequate in the classroom. Ultimately, this stratification of teachers is a factor in why they leave the teaching profession.

The TKES was implemented in school districts within Georgia to improve teaching and learning and ultimately to create positive school environments where students learn, and teachers thrive professionally. However, the data gathered from both this study and a statewide research study describes how the implementation of TKES has inadvertently created discouraging work environments for teachers leading them to consider exiting the profession (Owens, 2015). School administrators are currently evaluating teachers using the TKES guidelines to improve teacher performance. Not only has teacher evaluations changed the nature of teaching and learning, but teacher- administrator relationships have also soured in some cases. Both studies indicated that the TKES implementation was taking teacher evaluation beyond a useful practice of improving teacher performance to an emerging structure that divides teachers into different ranks based on perceived instructional abilities.

This theme, therefore, projects the view that the teachers in this study believe TKES has enhanced the bureaucratization of their schools. I use the word 'bureaucracy' here to denote a

teacher evaluation system in which most of the important decisions are made by school administrators/evaluators who use the TKES guidelines to evaluate teachers. The outcome results in giving performance scores that represent their abilities to teach, but often fall short in providing critical feedback, and support teachers need to move their performance to higherlevels of effectiveness. Participants also complained of a school environment that has become structured around hierarchy and teaching standardization in order to fulfill the TKES requirements.

Participants reported that the bureaucratization of schools through TKES had resulted in some teachers feeling marginalized due to low evaluation scores received and ultimately being alienated when they felt they could not improve their scores. In this bureaucracy, some teachers emerged as highly effective over others depending on their scores and sometimes on their relationships with the evaluators while other teachers emerge as needing remediation. These evaluation discrepancies inevitably were contributing factors leading some teachers into early retirement as they become disenchanted over perceived unfair evaluations and the stress related to time-consuming procedures and paperwork. This resentment surfaces as low morale and teacher dissatisfaction in the workplace (Hurley, 2016; Owens, 2015).

Weber characterized a bureaucracy as having a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labor, explicit rules, and impersonality (as cited in Muringani, 2011). From its inception, the TKES could be described as a top-down evaluation system. Policymakers started viewing teacher evaluations differently when lawmakers began demanding accountability for teachers at the same time that the federal government began providing incentives to states to redesign teacher evaluation systems through Race to the Top and No Child Left Behind. A senior policy analyst for the Center for Public Education suggested that until very recently, many teachers and

administrators considered teacher evaluations to be useless exercises in bureaucracy (Lu, 2013). Previous literature supports treating teachers as professionals, but then top-down policies are mandated that are insulting to serious educators (Gardner, Harlen, Hayward, & Stobart, 2011).

An analysis of the TKES Implementation Handbook (Georgia Department of Education, 2018, 2019) reinforces the bureaucratic nature of the TKES with a clear hierarchy of authority, a defined division of labor, explicit procedures and scoring guidelines, and impersonality. According to the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System Usage Statement, the TKES Handbookwas developed on behalf of the Georgia Department of Education, and school systems are required to use this supporting document for TKES implementation (GaDOE, 2018, 2019). The entire process is clearly outlined with exact steps to follow, a schedule of implementation of conferences and observation protocols, the frequency and nature of feedback, and summative scoring based on the components of the Teacher Effectiveness Measure. The entire yearly process requires an increase in both administrative and teacher time and paperwork in collecting data and supporting documentation on each of the required ten performance standards.

In a state report on *Georgia's Teacher Dropout Crisis* (Owens, 2015), the reasons teachers exit the profession within the first 5 years were asserted. The following responses were reported:

First, the emphasis on testing and the number of mandated tests was cited as the most consistent cause for teacher dissatisfaction and possible exit from the profession along with paperwork generated in teacher evaluations. Mentioned most often was the time spent on testing rather than on teaching, followed by concerns about the appropriateness of the test and its accuracy in measuring student learning. Participants in this study echoed these findings. Allyson felt that one of the most frustrating aspects of teaching is the politics and paperwork

"that is literally not benefiting the child." She asserted that one of the biggest challenges for today's students and teachers is feeling like they're doing too much. She sometimes feels things look good on paper, but when implemented it might not have the student's best interest in mind. Allyson believed the people who are making the decisions have been out of the classroom too long and they are not making the best choices for teachers and students.

Barbara asserted how frustrating it is that teachers must do so much more than teaching. She said, "I don't just come in here and teach. There is a ton of planning. I understand teachers have to plan…. but there's just a ton of paperwork." She views the biggest challenge in teaching today as the preparation and long hours now associated with the job. She also feels that there is more to do outside of the classroom. She mentioned having to do RTI (students below grade level assistance), and testing, and keeping up with so much data. She also feels there is no support provided to help with all these tasks. RTI means extra responsibilities. "We have to monitor their progress weekly, and then you have to put it into a spreadsheet weekly." She had six students on RTI, and while she did not mind helping those students, she expressed her anguish when thinking about all the paperwork associated with it. These extra duties coupled with the workload of planning individually and with her team add stress to her daily teaching duties. In particular, she emphasized that these tasks cannot be completed during the workday saying:

> Absolutely not. I do it in the afternoon after school. The planning is done during our planning time during the day, but definitely getting ready for stuff is after. It's late… I'm usually gone by 4:30 pm. So not too late but definitely after school.

She generally stays two hours after the students leave in order to stay prepared.

Carla complained that the requirements forced upon teachers today add undue strain to

the job. She stated, “The requirements put on us…. all the paperwork…. the stress when it comes to TKES… getting everything that everybody wants…. and still be able to teach.” She also articulated how much time is spent “collecting data sheets that are filled with student data, RTI paperwork… tons of that, dealing with parents… which sometimes needs to be done after school hours, and planning.” She then revealed how hard it is to complete all her duties within a normal workday. She stated:

> Well, as a teacher… I always feel you have something you’re behind on. You are never caught up. You always have something to be working on…. whether its grading papers, copying papers, writing lesson plans, or trying to find things to help the students working on, even in the summer.

Deborah also understood that some of the frustrations that accompany teaching are outside of the school’s control. She stated, “We have politicians setting the standards for education, and they’ve never worked a day in our life and school. I think if one of these politicians were in the classroom, even for just one day, things would change.” She also felt teachers are unable to do what they know is best for the students. She stated, “Like being told to do a standardized lesson plan or use a standardized book that doesn’t relate to the students’ backgrounds.” She believes that time management is extremely difficult with all the extra duties required. Deborah complained about the burden of planning and working with students who are more proficient in one area while other students need more help in other subjects. She felt it was “very hard” to manage her time when one student would need to use the restroom, or the office would call and interrupt class to call up a student to the office or a student needs water. “It was just always something, and it was really hard on her.” She stated, “I never felt like I got everything done.”

A second area for teacher dissatisfaction in the state report is related to the level of teacher participation in decisions, non-teaching responsibilities, and the level of pay. In general, the report asserted that teachers felt left out of important decisions both at the state and district-levels and that non-teaching duties impacted the already high demand spent on testing and teacher evaluations. Furthermore, the report indicated that low teacher salaries were also a factor in projecting feelings of "disrespect and deprofessionalization" of their work (Owens, 2015, p. 5).

Allyson felt that teachers are underpaid, saying, "I don't think you get paid for what we do." Allyson projects that teachers leave the field of teaching because they feel undervalued. She stated, "What I think (as a teacher) is not being taken into consideration. If I want to implement something into my classroom… I should be able to do that." Allyson explained:

> Right now, we have a program, and it's great… There's shared reading, read aloud, and they kind of embed the writing in with that. My children need writing time. They need a specific day and time everyday where they write. I mean, look at the Milestones… that's all there is. But I can't do that because I have to do this program today… and so that makes me so mad because you want me to have these students ready for…

Teachers need to feel they have input into their management of classroom content and student outcomes. Allyson expressed the frustration of not doing what she feels is best for the students. She also appeared aggravated about being told what to do in her classroom.

Carla also feels that the pay is a significant issue within education. She described how people do not understand or realize the pay that teachers receive:

> People think it's easy. You go to work, you get off at 3:15 pm, and you have

> summers off. It's not that… you have work to do…you have to work in the summertime, and you don't get paid for it. Yeah, you may get a check twelve months a year, but that's money you earn within those months you worked. It's not like you're just getting paid for summertime.

Deborah indicated several reasons she left teaching. "Standardized testing and the stress of it." She continued by saying, "I would say a lot more pressure from the administration and parents as well. And then, all that overtime that nobody gets paid for. I think it catches up with you." She also explained how the stresses of teaching expanded beyond the school day by stating:

> You know, I think every night, my fiancé and I were sitting at home cutting laminations so my students could have fun centers to do, and I'm not getting paid for that. We would go in on Saturdays like once a month, and you don't get paid for that either.

She reported that if she had not felt so restricted where she was teaching and how she was teaching, she could have been more creative. She believed if permitted to do what she felt was best for her students, it would have taken away the guilt she always felt. She stated, "That could have kept me longer."

Eva was very frustrated with some school policies that forced teachers to act more like "policeman" to students rather than teachers. She described the dress code enforcement as one of her frustrations within her daily duties. She stated, "We, at one time, went from no dress code to dress code, to no dress code, and it's very frustrating." She also hated doing duty. She expressed adamantly how much she hated hall duty. She also talked about how most of the teachers felt the same regarding teacher duties outside the classroom. Frank is no longer a

teacher and outlined the vexations associated with leaving his career. One of the most significant frustrations Frank pointed out was time management. He stated:

> As always, before and after school…that was a frustrating thing for me as an educator because you know we were supposed to be there at 8 am and stay until 4 pm. You had duty from 8:00–8:20 am and you had to then go right to class. Then you had duty from 3:30–4:00 pm. Then, you would go back to your room and get ready for the next day. I stayed until 5:00 pm most days and got to work at 7:30 am.

These are followed by reasons dealing with the level and quality of support and resources necessary for the job as well as school and district leadership. The report noted that school leadership makes a very important impact on teacher retention. When speaking about her fellow teachers and administration, Deborah indicated how competitive it was among the team. Her fellow teachers were constantly trying to get into a "good light" with the current principal, and that created a very competitive and stressful environment. She stated, "The principal put so much pressure on the team. It would be like everyone was stepping on each other."

Additionally, Deborah spoke about how unhappy the teachers at her school were because of strict administration policies. "A lot of the teachers there were pretty unhappy…and the principal was super strict… like insanely strict, and she wouldn't even listen to you if you had a problem. You couldn't even talk to her. She just kind of blew you off. And the assistant principal was the same way." Deborah indicated that a school's administration should be caring and empathetic of their students and teachers. She also believes principals should be in tune with all the stresses that are currently being dealt with. Deborah pointed out that two-way communication is critical for the administration to have with the staff. "I really feel like

principals should have a relationship with their teachers. Like when you fill out a TKES evaluation, and you receive a score of progressing or worse, or good… you need to talk to them." She also felt that if she had more support with planning, how to talk to parents, how to communicate better in professional settings, and not "getting paid like dirt," it may have impacted her staying in teaching.

Eva talked about overcrowded classrooms and not enough resources as being another frustrating factor in teaching. She was concerned about the additional students they were adding to classrooms, making it even more difficult to teach with so many students. She felt the district spent too much money sending people off to conferences rather than using those resources to better support teachers. She was concerned about the deteriorating relationship between the parents and the school later in her career. She believed that as time went on, the school administrators became more aligned with parents' views on a variety of issues to avoid being sued, thereby creating a divide with the teachers. She stated:

> When you don't stand behind the teachers, that doesn't bode very well at all. I think it's kind of gotten to where parents can threaten this and that and the system just buckles….That was one of my biggest frustrations when I left teaching, and that kind of pushed me toward retirement.

Two areas that were not cited in the state's report on top eight reasons but emerged both from additional reasons teachers might exit the profession and from participants' responses were related to student behavior and dealing with parents**.** Carla specifically mentioned how difficult it could be dealing with parents. She pointed out, "Parents being hard to deal with…and their wanting impossible things…or getting on to you for fussing at their child… and sorry… your child is not acting right."

Eva believes that student behavior and the environment of the classroom is a significant factor in teachers' frustrations. "I just got tired… I got burned out. The student behavior was just getting on my nerves… Parents to me weren't being parents… It was disrespect of authority that really began to get under my skin." She concluded that she may have stayed teaching longer if it were not for the students' behavior, increased classroom sizes, and disrespect.

Like Eva, Frank expressed concern over students' behavior. He stated, "I think people are shocked at how students behave. Student apathy as well." He also used the same verbiage as Eva when describing how he felt shortly before leaving the teaching field. He explained, "I was burned out. I mean, you know, all that [frustrations and variables] leads to burn-out. I guess I was mentally gone a good year before I quit." While there were some frustrating factors within his daily schedule, no one factor seemed to be the catalyst for teacher attrition.

The teachers in this study showed a desire to have their collective voices heard. Respondents painted strong feelings of being overworked and undervalued as they described their school environments and work-related stress factors. The reform efforts to raise student achievement test scores are worthy but linking it to teacher evaluations has demoralized the profession (Hurley, 2016; Lu, 2013). One of the downsides to bureaucratic organizations may be the insensitivity to individual needs and ideas. The system marches on because the rules and regulations are in place, and the handbook or policy manual must be followed. The consequences of continuing this approach may yet harbor far more unintended results for all stakeholders.

The TKES is based on the problematic assumption that teachers are to blame for poor student academic performance. This is especially problematic when, in fact, many factors contribute to student success. The TKES model of teacher evaluation based upon the notion of

'one-size fits all' is not well received by some teachers who flourish in less restrictive work environments. Increasingly, teaching, learning, and the educational system itself have been inundated by contemporary ideas that challenge the bureaucratic nature of TKES with administrative hierarchies, centralized decision-making, and tightly controlled structures.

Summary

In this chapter, the findings from this study were shared. An overview of the processes used for data analysis, open coding, axial coding, and the creation of themes was outlined. Data were collected via semi-structured face-to-face interviews, documents, and memos. The results of the data analysis process revealed three main themes outlined by the researcher: (a) *observer bias in the classroom* (b) *unintended consequences of the TKES*, and (c) the *bureaucratic nature of TKES and teaching*. Each theme was discussed using the participants' own words and phrases in order to establish a basis for their perceptions. Each theme's findings were connected to the Georgia Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) and current literature.

Research Findings

Theme One—Bias in Classroom Observations

Finding 1.1. Teachers perceived that evaluator subjectivity and biases were negatively impacting their classroom observation performance assessments.

Finding 1.2. Teachers perceived that evaluators' inter-rater reliability was not consistent when observing the same teacher and classes.

Finding 1.3. Teachers perceived that evaluators were not willing to discuss their classroom observation performance assessments, especially when they had low-scoring areas.

Theme Two—Unintended Consequences in the TKES

Finding 2.1. Teachers hold negative perceptions of teacher evaluation and the TKES system.

Finding 2.2. Teachers do not perceive that teacher evaluation has any significant impact on their teaching effectiveness.

Finding 2.3. Teachers perceive that the overall quality of feedback they receive is not useful in changing teaching practices.

Finding 2.4. Teachers perceive that the TKES standards, and scoring rubrics were very useful in defining effective teaching performances.

Finding 2.5. Teachers perceive that the frequency of feedback and dialogue about their performances was less than they expected.

Finding 2.6. Because teachers considered the feedback given was not accurate or confusing, they did not always alter their teaching practices.

Theme Three—Bureaucratic Nature of the TKES and Growing Resentment

Finding 3.1. Teachers perceive that their daily workload has increased significantly due to mandated testing and value-added teacher evaluations.

Finding 3.2. Teachers perceived that they are undervalued and underpaid.

Finding 3.3. Teachers perceived they are not valued as competent professionals capable of directing their own instructional effectiveness and professional development.

Finding 3.4. Teachers perceived that linking student achievement scores to their teacher evaluation scores is unfair and not a true assessment of either the students or the teachers.

Finding 3.5. Teachers perceived that the current working conditions, the stress of teacher evaluations, and the emphasis on testing does have a negative impact on retention.

Chapter VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study as well as the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research. The state of Georgia's teachers are leaving the field of teaching at a rate of 44% within their first 5 years of teaching and have identified the way they are evaluated as the number-two key reason for leaving the profession (GaDOE, 2016). Additionally, teachers revealed unfair and unreliable evaluation practices that changed without enough insight from teachers as being a significant factor for teacher attrition.

This study examined the perceptions and career experiences of both current and former teachers with the implementation of Georgia's teacher evaluation system, identified as the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES), and its impact on teacher retention and effectiveness. The participants of this study included three current elementary school teachers with 4 years of teaching experience, one former elementary teacher, and two former high school teachers. The range of each participant's teaching experience was 4 to 15 years. This study provides complex descriptions of how a select group of teachers experienced the TKES on a day-to-day basis by systematically capturing the teachers' behaviors, beliefs, opinions, and emotions to illuminate their experiences in order to develop shared concepts and themes. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ 1. What are the career experiences of current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system identified as the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES)?

RQ 2. How have teacher retention rates been impacted as perceived by current and

former teachers in an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system known as the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES)?

RQ 3. Do current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) perceive TKES enables teachers to be more effective?

Participants were selected using two forms of sampling procedures. Purposeful criterion sampling was used to identify three current teachers with less than 5 years ofteaching experience. Snowball sampling was used to identify three former teachers who left the field of teaching within the last 5 years. Data for this study were collected via semi-structured face-to-face interviews, researcher memos, and documents. An adapted interview protocol from Seidman's (2006) three-series interview protocol was used to collect participants' responses.

During the first interview, participants discussed their lived experiences before entering the field of teaching. In the second and third interviews, participants discussed their career experiences and perceptions of the TKES and its influence on teacher effectiveness and retention. An interview guide was used to maintain purpose and focus during each of the interviews (Appendix C). Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Data were analyzed via open and axial coding throughout the interview process. The first step in analyzing data involved open coding in order to identify major patterns and insights. Axial coding was then used to begin grouping chunks of data into themes. Following open and axial coding, a computer-based qualitative analysis tool (NVIVO) was used to organize and categorize major themes identified throughout the coding process. NVIVO was the last step in the coding process, which provided comparisons across each participant interview. Three main themes emerged from the data analysis: (1) Bias in classroom observations, (2) unintended

consequences of the TKES, and (3) the bureaucratic nature of TKES and teaching. Theme two included one sub-theme—lack of quality feedback. These themes support the existing literature on teacher retention and evaluation. In general, teachers described a profession stacked with mandated tests, evaluated by unfair or biased measures, and constantly revised without teacher input. These issues are further amplified with little compensation for additional time and education (Owens, 2015). Each theme was directly related to the research questions in this study. Table 7 is a comparison of each participant's overall agreement with these themes presented in this study.

Table 7

Comparison of Themes for Current and Former Teachers' Experiences

Themes	Participants					
	Allyson	Barbara	Carla	Deborah	Eva	Frank
Bias in Classroom Observations	+	+	+	+	+	+
Unintended Consequences in the TKES	+	-	+	+	-	-
Bureaucratic nature of TKES and growing resentment	+	+	+	+	+	+

Note. (+) indicates a participant's support of the theme; (-) indicates a participant's non-support.

The following sections include a discussion of the research questions and the study's limitations, implications, and recommendations for future research.

Research Questions: Summary and Discussion

RQ1: What are the career experiences of current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system

identified as the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES)?

Participants in this study revealed both similarities and differences in their professional teaching experiences, early childhood school experiences, and prior career work history.

Professional Teaching Experiences

Participants in this study shared similarities and differences in their professional experiences. Four of the six participants have elementary backgrounds, while the remaining two participants worked at the high-school level. The elementary school participants showed 5 or fewer years of teaching while the two high school teachers reflected 15 to 20 years of experience. All the teachers expressed a blend of teacher-centered and student-centered teaching philosophies and styles. Allyson, an elementary school teacher, has a traditional approach to her teaching. She outlined her teaching philosophy as being "not academic." She staunchly believes her students need to feel loved and safe and this is her priority as a teacher. She stated:

> I'm old school. I think if it's not broken, don't fix it. I think a lot of the things we're doing nowadays is a lot of fuss and we're going from this program to that program. And you don't even get one program started before moving on to another one.

Barbara is a second-grade teacher whose teaching philosophy is grounded in keeping the students engaged. She believes if you make learning engaging and develop a relationship with your students by making learning fun, the result will be positive student growth. She believes that keeping her students active through hands-on activities is what is best for her students.

Carla, a third-grade teacher, believes that every child can learn, but not every child will advance into higher education. She remarked, "I do know that not every child is going to college… you have to think of the students that are going to college and those that will be in the

trades." She described herself as being "laid back" and "getting done what needs to get done and move on." Deborah is a former elementary school teacher who described her philosophy as very "flexible." She felt that flexibility allowed her students the freedom they needed to have the best possible learning environment. This flexibility did not apply to her classroom rules. She did not tolerate her rules being broken, and when they were broken, that flexibility quickly disappeared. Deborah and Barbara enjoyed teaching in active classrooms where students freely moved and engaged in the lessons. She identified herself as a "facilitator" of learning.

Eva, a former high school teacher with over 20 years of experience, believes that every child could learn on some level and because she loved her subject, she felt that passion would trickle down to her students. She uses a blended teaching style comprising of lecture, group, and collaborative learning. Above all, she prefers collaborative learning and making learning joyful through group work and other role-playing activities.

Frank shifted through different teaching styles as he could not come up with specific preferences. He stated:

> They would say you need to know your teaching philosophy, and your principal would ask you that question… I struggled with that. I just made something up, I guess, to pacify whatever they needed to hear. I don't guess I ever really had one… honestly.

He commented, "I was there to do a job… I was there to teach. I tried to teach everyone as best I could ..." Frank surmised that teaching to the best of his ability was his overall teaching philosophy. "When I started…you lectured, or did examples of math problems for 20-30 minutes, and then you would let the students practice. That's how we did it in college, and that's how I learned." As time went on and curriculum approaches started to change, he moved

towards a more collaborative style of teaching to include more group work. He felt his teaching style evolved over time.

School Experiences

Participants shared strikingly similar elementary and middle-school experiences. Allyson and Barbara disliked school at various points in their childhood. Allyson did not have a specific reason for disliking school. She was disconnected in general from school at a very early age. She was frequently picked on and taunted as the "fat girl," which may have negatively affected her school experience. For a long time, Barbara did not like school because she was not good at it. This changed around middle school as she developed into a more successful confident student. Carla started in a private school and later transferred to a public school to improve her school performance and save her from being retained in the same grade. Deborah experienced so many learning challenges to the extent that her parents suspected that she might be having some form of learning disability. She was consequently tested for learning disabilities and was found to have an auditory processing problem. Two participants, Eva and Frank, described more positive elementary and middle-school experiences. Eva enjoyed school and was successful at all levels. Frank did not have any real interest in school except for athletics.

These school experiences indicate that early childhood does not necessarily shape adult life and careers. Participants' early experiences likely affected them in their careers as teachers. It is fair to suggest that due to variations in psychological makeup, some may have been more sensitive to the TKES than others as a result of their childhood school experiences.

Career Work History

None of the participants were interested in teaching after graduating from high school. Five of the six participants became teachers by default after exploring other jobs. For example,

Allyson started as a front desk receptionist at a hotel and quickly advanced to become general manager. She chose to become a teacher later after getting married and starting her own family. It is possible that she chose to go into teaching more for convenience. As a mother and wife, this job allowed her more time with her family. She confirmed: “I was leaving in the morning before my child woke up, and I was coming home at night way after he went to bed.”

Initially, Barbara was inclined to be a teacher. She captured this view in the following narrative: “I liked teaching when I was a kid. My little brother, bless his heart, had to be the student, which I think he liked too.” However, as she grew older, she seriously contemplated becoming a surgical technician or nurse because it would only be a two-year degree but worried about the financial strain on her parents. “I knew we didn’t have a lot of money, and I wasn’t sure if I could handle college.”

In contrast, Carla wanted to become a teacher and aspired to open her own daycare upon graduating from high school but resorted to banking due to financial constraints. So, while she worked at a bank, she enrolled in college and began working on an Associate Degree. Like Allyson and Barbara, Carla took a circuitous path to teaching. While she enjoyed children, teaching did not seem to emerge as a path for her until later in adulthood. Deborah stumbled into teaching at the persuasion of her parents. Eva first worked for a Foundry Supply Company then experimented with teaching as a substitute teacher at a private school for almost 2 years and ultimately into teaching. Finally, Frank first worked for a construction company and later joined the Army. He finally landed into teaching after serving in the military for 3 years.

There are two sides to this finding. First, based on these teacher professional trajectories, it is fair to suggest that teaching was the last resort for most of these participants. On the other hand, some researchers have suggested that teaching is not a last resort career. Instead there are

several social utility and intrinsic factors that motivate the students and other professionals to aspire for the teaching career (Karakus & Aslan, 2009).

RQ2. How have teacher retention rates been impacted as perceived by current and former teachers in an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system known as the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES)?

Participants expressed mixed views on whether the TKES influenced teacher retention in the southern state. They revealed several factors that may be contributing to teacher retention. These included the relationship between school contextual factors such as workload, salary, and additional time without compensation. However, teachers' perceptions of the school administration's implementation of TKES was by far the greatest influence on teacher-retention decisions. It is interesting to note that three practicing teachers and one former teacher believe that the TKES is having a negative impact on teacher retention while two former teachers with the most experience do not believe TKES had any impact on teacher retention. This suggests that there is a whole host of other factors that influence teachers' decisions to leave the profession.

First, I will discuss the TKES factors that forced teachers to consider leaving the profession. For example, Allyson felt undervalued through TKES. She could not make any meaningful association between her classroom performance and her low evaluation scores. She sincerely believed that she deserved better recognition for her teaching effort. She stated: "So, you're telling me I'm a two but when I look back at it… I know I'm not a two. I did everything exactly as I would have… I would do it again. I feel like that is kind of discouraging." She expounded, "It's never a positive experience."

Barbara echoed similar disappointment and believes that teacher retention has been

negatively impacted by the current evaluation system. She expressed a deep sense of disillusion towards the TKES evaluation. She stated, “I think it makes teachers feel like they failed when they don’t get a good score. And I don’t know if sometimes they [teachers] know what to do to fix it.” Ready to give up, she continued, “If I wasn’t doing well…I would probably leave. I don’t want to be somewhere where I’m not successful.” Barbara did not see how she could remain in the profession if she were faced with consistently poor evaluations.

Carla dismissed the entire TKES process as “not a good system.” She believes that TKES is harming teacher retention. She blamed her administrators for knocking people who are not doing well rather than supporting them so they can do well. She vented: “It’s frustrating because you just don’t know what to do to get what you need.” Deborah complained that this problem was even more pressing regarding school districts that associated teacher scores and teacher pay. She concluded, “I do not think teachers leave just because of TKES… you know… I would say 80% or 70% leave because of TKES and the things that go along with it.” She referred to lack of feedback and rigid standards as being possible variables in a teacher’s decision to leave. The remaining former teachers, Eva and Frank, did not feel that the TKES had any impact on teacher retention. Having secured tenure and maintaining satisfactory evaluations, their reasons for leaving related more to student discipline and management concerns.

Most of these teachers perceived the TKES as a factor why teachers leave the field of teaching, but there appear to be a plethora of variables to consider. While four out of the six participants agree that the TKES is having a negative impact on teacher retention, I cannot determine that their perceptions fully support teacher evaluations as the number-two reason why teachers leave the field. Furthermore, the literature suggests that teachers nationally are typically scored high on their evaluations (Kraft & Gilmour, 2017; Weisburg et al., 2009). This is a direct

contradiction to the perceptions of most of the participants in this study. According to Darling-Hammond (2012), the job satisfaction of being a schoolteacher has shifted dramatically. There is growing concern that the retention of beginning teachers is being impacted by working conditions, more accountability, and higher stakes testing (MacBeath, 2012; Sutcher et al.,2016). This is exacerbated by feelings of low self-esteem with poor evaluations and limited support from peers and administrative staff (Owens, 2015).

Bias in Classroom Observations

All six participants viewed that the evaluation system is subjective. Four participants complained about the lack of standardization of the TKES evaluation, and teachers' scores depended on the evaluator rather than the lesson. Research shows that bias can influence the outcome of performance evaluations (Campbell & Ronfeldt, 2018; Casabianca, Lockwood, & McCaffrey, 2015; Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016; Patrick & Mantzicopoulos, 2016). Skilled evaluators should keep personal opinions out of the performance review. Specifically, the participants in the present study described examples of personal bias they felt were in play. Deborah accused her principal of favoritism. She was frustrated "when teachers have been there for a long time…they will get great scores…because the principal thinks they always do great." Carla explained that one of her evaluators did not like her. She stated, "He didn't like me. Honestly. I can't tell you why." Several participants shared similar concerns over the TKES evaluation inconsistencies. Some evaluators did not encourage faculty to explore different instructional methods and potentially punished those who digressed from the norms with low scores.

Bureaucratic Nature of the TKES and Teaching

All of the participants felt overworked and undervalued. They complained of excessive

TKES paperwork that added to their regular instructional duties and responsibilities. Most worked extra-long hours to stay abreast of all the requirements. For example, Barbara sympathized with colleagues who left teaching for several reasons including the heavy workload. She reiterated: “It’s just too much work.” On a personal level, Barbara wanted to leave the profession because of difficult students, long work hours outside of school without compensation, teacher evaluation, and a higher paying position. Carla pointed out,

> Teachers need more time to plan to be effective… We’re always expected to do things, but we’re never given time to do any of it other than when you go home at night, or you stay at work late because we have a meeting here.

In a recent study, CooperGibson Research (2018), reported that the majority of teachers in the study (n = 53) felt that the level of work a teaching role required was unsustainable, reporting they had felt overwhelmed by the amount of marking, planning and data tracking expected. The workload was a factor for primary and secondary teachers irrespective of their length of service. Many teachers reported that workload levels negatively impacted their ability to maintain an appropriate work-life balance, stress levels, and general well-being, and that this was the main contributing factor in their decision to leave the profession.

Four participants of this study felt undervalued by some of their school administrators. They saw no relationship between their hard work and their low evaluation scores. They were frustrated with the lack of useful follow-up feedback on their performances. Lack of attention from the principal left current teachers feeling stressed and worried about keeping their job. Barbara captured these sentiments in the following anecdote: “It makes teachers feel like they failed when they don’t get a good score. And they don’t. I mean, I don’t know if sometimes they know what to do to fix it.” Deborah indicated her stress over being evaluated saying:

> It's like living in fear because you never know when they are going to pop in, and once you get an observation like that (a low score) back. You think… (are they) trying to find something wrong? And you know they are not going to talk to me about it. And sometimes I did not understand the comments that they were saying.

CooperGibson Research (2018), confirmed that most teachers experienced a lack of support with issues including workload, student behavior, and did not feel they had access to other sources of support. They affirmed that nearly half of primary and almost one-quarter of secondary teachers did not feel they were being trusted to do their job, and levels of scrutiny into lessons and teaching styles were too high. Classroom observations were viewed as intrusive, unproductive, and feedback could be demoralizing.

RQ3. Do current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district that implemented Georgia's common teacher evaluation system Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) perceive TKES enables teachers to be more effective?

Participants were split on whether the TKES enabled them to be more effective. This mixed view of the TKES is perplexing, considering that teacher evaluations are historically meant to address performance improvement and dismissal of those judged as inadequate or nonproductive. Most experts agree that systems for teacher evaluations are doing very little to help teachers improve their overall effectiveness in the classroom (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; Firestone, 2014; Ford et al., 2017; Ingersoll, 2002; Jiang et al., 2015; Kane & Staiger, 2012; Kraft & Gilmour, 2017; Lavigne, 2014; Murphy et al., 2013; Weisberg et al., 2009).

In this study, these two purposes conflict; the threat of criticism was the outcome of the evaluation, improvement was thwarted, and the teacher's sense of security was eroded. In

particular, Allyson, Barbara, and Carla expressed a sense of insecurity from a supervisor who possesses the power to judge their performance and professional advancement. The teachers feared that the request for assistance would be viewed as an admission of weakness. In this study, participants were not very sure what acceptable performance really meant and disliked receiving excessively prescriptive feedback. Hence, teachers were frequently unsure about what was expected and how to fulfill expectations.

Even teachers like Allyson and Barbara, whose performance is satisfactory, harbor self-doubts. They felt like it was not enough to do your best. Participants did not believe that their administrators explicitly defined the TKES processes, procedures, and policies. The use of rubrics, checklists, and other tools might have helped clarify levels of performance required of teachers. Ideally, these should be developed with the teacher. Even when teacher input is not possible, participants thought it was vital to communicate standards for their benefit. This may provide the essential information teachers need to evaluate their performance relative to the expectations, and for school leaders to initiate conversations related to teacher improvement.

Although the primary purpose of the TKES is personal and professional growth thatleads to effective performance, participants complained that their administrators did not serve them as faithful classroom facilitators for each teacher, just as the teacher serves as a facilitator for students in the classroom. The principals made the evaluation appear as a summative evaluation rather than part of a continuous improvement cycle designed to help the teacher. Administrators failed to play their active role in facilitating teacher's professional growth. For example, teachers expected them to ask questions that help them self-evaluate, design plans for improvement, and provide opportunities for professional development. The data indicates that teachers perceived some school leaders as TKES enforcers of directives rather than facilitatorsof

improvement.

It is reasonable to speculate that participants did not find value in their administrators' expectations and TKES, leading to their failure to do quality work. The TKES evaluators failed to involve the teachers being evaluated and create value in their evaluation experience, including feedback and developmental planning. The importance of self-evaluation for teachers' professional growth is critical as no other person can observe the teachers' performance often enough to document total classroom interactions and because there is no valid and reliable way to measure the totality of student learning (Fireside & Lachlan-Hache, 2005).

Teacher effectiveness, according to the TKES, is determined by data collection and analysis in three components: Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS), Professional Growth, and Student Growth. These factors contribute to an overall Teacher Effective Measure. Conclusions about each component are outlined below.

The Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS) outlines ten performance standards across five domains that define the expectations for teacher performance (GaDOE, 2018). The performance standards provide evaluators and teachers with observable and tangible behaviors for each standard and guide teachers in better understanding how to successfully meet each benchmark. Performance appraisal rubrics are used to provide a summary scale for evaluators in assessing how well the five domains and ten performance standards are performed (GaDOE, 2018).

Unintended consequences of the TKES

Overall, Allyson, Barbara, Carla, and Deborah indicated strong support for the domains and standards as significant guides in defining effective teaching performances; however, Eva and Frank, former teachers, did not feel they impacted their teaching. The interviews elicited

participants' views in all five domains: Planning, Instructional Delivery, Assessment for Learning, Learning Environment, and Professionalism and Communication. Allyson shared that learning how to align both the state and local standards built her confidence in lesson planning and applying the content standards: "Well, I can tell you… one of our teachers… is very aware of the standards, and I think all of us are… we are acclimated to them, and we know how to teach them." Barbara stated that "having the standards helps me to know what to aim for… keeps me accountable… helps me to be effective."

Deborah commented that the domains and standards "made me read over how teacher effectiveness was being measured." Eva corroborated, saying, "Standards definitely affected lesson planning… (I) thought some were unrealistic and were not necessary." Frank believed that the TKES stifled him and he "did things that were required but didn't think it was necessary."

Professional Growth and Development

The Georgia Department of Education updated the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System in the spring of 2016 by adding Professional Growth as a component of the evaluation system. To this end, a teacher's overall Teacher Effectiveness Measure is now comprised of three parts:

Teacher Assessment of Performance Standards (TAPS)—50%

The Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS) focuses on two data sources—observations and documentation. The totality of evidence and consistency of practice will be considered when an evaluator rates a teacher on all ten Performance Standards (GaDOE, 2019).

Professional Growth—20%

The TKES should be an evaluation system that is a true coaching tool, not a punitive

measure. The professional growth measure will make TKES a better tool for teachers because it will give credit for meeting important professional development goals that ultimately help students in the classroom (GaDOE, 2019).

Student Growth—30%

Academic achievement tells only part of the story of overall student performance and teacher effectiveness. Student growth tells a more complete story about the academic performance of students. It not only demonstrates the level to which students have grown but also reflects the progress made to reach that level. The third component of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System is Student Growth, which is comprised of Student Growth Percentiles (SGP) for teachers of SGP grades and courses and (LEA) Determined Measure(s) for teachers of non-SGP grades and courses. A minimum of one growth measure per teacher is required (GaDOE, 2019).

The professional growth and development of teachers are vital to ensuring that every classroom is led by an effective teacher. To support this effort, school leaders throughout the state are responsible for engaging teachers in professional learning experiences that help them meet the diverse needs of students. The results of a teacher's previous TKES Summative Assessment, a teacher's individual goals, and school/district improvement needs are considered when writing a goal or plan. Teachers record goals or plans in the state's TLE Platform. Principals must rate teachers on Professional Growth in the platform, indicating Level I, II, III, or IV, when completing their TKES Summative Assessments (GaDOE, 2018).

As it relates to two components—TAPS and Professional Growth—all participants in this study indicated that professional collaboration and quality feedback on their teaching performances and observations were not positively viewed as it was consistently not provided.

Five out of six participants pointed out that constructive feedback is valued if it is specific, detailed, and non-biased. Participants expressed a strong desire for more in-depth conversations about their teaching performances especially if the review resulted in low scores. Barbara commented: "It just seemed … like… I never knew what to fix. We talked about it. I talked to the principal, but I could never really quite understand what I needed to do better." Deborah stated, "I know it would be hard for the principal to have a conversation with every one of the teachers… but… at least try." She also described a low score given on collaboration with her colleagues and complained, "She (administrator) didn't even come and talk with me and ask for my communication log… or take the time to ask me… or give me a chance to prove what I was doing during my planning time."

Student growth is calculated in two aspects: Student Learning Objectives (SLO) measures student growth for non-state tested subjects. The aggregate measure of SLO performance for all non-tested courses taught by a teacher is used in calculating his or her TEM. Student Growth Percentiles (SGP) measures student growth for core state-tested subjects and are produced for the CRCTs (grades 4-8 reading, English/language arts, math, science, and social studies).

Overall, the participants in this study did not feel that judging teachers on student achievement scores was fair, especially if it impacted their salary, which they felt was already inadequate. Regarding student assessment, teachers viewed broader interpretations of student growth. Allyson emphasized that both formal and informal assessment techniques were important like checking for understanding through verbal questioning and hand signals. She also questioned using previous student data to evaluate teacher effectiveness saying, "We've looked at the numbers. I mean, the numbers are there. Was our training poor of those students or did

the vast majority last year (score low) already because you have no idea how they did with that teacher." Carla also emphasized that all student work is important both informal and formal by stating:

> I think anything the student does… it could be they show their knowledge by writing in their journal. They learn something… something as simple as that. It shows me they know it. Where if I gave them a test, they might not understand the question I'm asking, but they're showing they know stuff… It's just the way I was asking it. They didn't know it.

Deborah described more intangible aspects of teaching, saying, "It's hard to measure things like passion… teachers that will do anything to do good by a student even if it means… (more) hard work." She also indicated even if not all the students meet the standards, they have shown student growth, saying, "So, I'm not saying all the students are up to the standard (but) my students are as far as where they ended… but they have the most improvement in the class."

Eva fostered on group-centered learning and complex projects. She also stressed the importance of student's self- assessing their work and holding group partners accountable for their work by saying:

> You know, for me, for my AP kids, it was their final project. How they…synthesized everything together. And when they did, and they did it well, I thought well now... They're getting it. They're learning to communicate with one another…What did you learn in the project about communicating with one another? Holding each other accountable. You know, to me, when they start learning how to do that, to me that's a success because they're learning how to communicate with one another.

Eva talked about seeing students who do not start well, but by the end of the year they have progressed and establishing a positive relationship with troubled students and coaching them through the rough times. Eva shared:

> Well, to me, (it) was when kids would come back and say thank you. Just those kids who don't start off necessarily well, but by the end, you establish that camaraderie with them and that understanding, and then they progressed on and did good. And so that is so cool to see.

In general, the participants sensed that requiring student growth measures in teacher evaluations did not reflect all the aspects of being effective teachers. They mentioned that there are numerous factors that might influence a student's performance on a standardized test and his/her growth from one year to the next, such as living situation, conditions on test day, influence of other teachers, and so on. In short, participants indicated that the student growth measures are too narrow and do not account for all social and emotional support teachers provide to students and the school.

Implications and Discussion

The six school teachers in this study have affirmed the following issues: First, teaching was the last resort after they had explored several different careers. It is also important to point out that there were several social utility and intrinsic factors that may have motivated them to aspire for the teaching career. Second, TKES was not the sole reason that influenced teacher retention in the southern state. Participants revealed several contributory factors to teacher retention. These included the relationship between school contextual factors such as increasing workloads, emphasis on testing, and professional autonomy. However, teachers' perceptions of the school administration's implementation of TKES was by far the greatest influence on

teacher-retention decisions. Finally, participants were split on the effectiveness that the TKES had on their instructional performances. Rather than promote effectiveness, the TKES caused insecurity from administrators who possessed the power to judge their performance andconstrain their professional advancement ultimately forcing some to quit the profession. These insecurities are described as follows: (1) Evaluators have not been utilizing or are simply unable to fully implement TKES for its intended purpose set forth by the state; (2) Evaluators are demonstrating bias and subjectivity across multiple evaluations which may lead to flawed performance scores; and (3) Teachers reported that the evaluation system, as a whole, is not improving teacher effectiveness. These insecurities affirm Grubbs's (2007) notion that most performance appraisal systems are deeply flawed, make people unhappy, and cause defensiveness in those being evaluated.

Although this study focused on teacher perceptions of Georgia's Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, it has broader teacher evaluation implications, particularly for teachers and administrators. For example, the study described the everyday work dynamics of six teachers, which might need to be incorporated into the overall training of school teachers and administrators in the state.

Based on the findings of this study, it is apparent that the teachers seem to be overextended in their instructional role that encompasses paperwork and training beyond the traditional teaching responsibilities. It is possible that the TKES implementation process might be adversely affecting these work overloads. The results of this study support the need for research on how school administrators and state-level policymakers can reduce the bureaucratic nature of TKES and teaching. Addressing the cumbersome tasks of being a school administrator and maintaining objective evaluations may begin to impact teacher retention rates across the

state positively. The findings of this study also show the need for ongoing and better support for evaluators in order to address measurement errors. The state and local school districts should consider more in-depth and frequent training for evaluators, a reporting system for teachers who feel their evaluations were subjected to unfair practices, additional resources, and time for districts to provide ongoing training and support for evaluators.

Second, the results of this study indicate a need for the state to examine the daily stresses and duties of teachers. Teachers perceive that their daily workload has increased significantly due to mandated testing and value-added teacher evaluations. Teachers also expressed concern over increased student behavioral issues in and out of the classroom. Furthermore, teachers feel they are undervalued and underpaid leading to increased resentment within the field. These findings indicate that teachers are feeling overwhelmed with TKES, planning, students' behavior, parents, lack of support, and pay, which may be negatively impacting teacher retentionrates.

Policymakers and school administrators could use the information gained in this study to modify the TKES further to fit the needs of all stakeholders involved. Additionally, the information gained from this study may prove beneficial to evaluators, superintendents, and state policymakers who wish to examine the impact that TKES is having on teacher effectiveness. Lastly, I recommend that stakeholders across the state could begin mitigating the numerous stresses and concerns teachers have performing their daily duties as a teacher.

Limitations of the Study

In this study, I presented the perspectives of teachers as interpreted through my research lens. I cannot rule out the possibility that my interaction with the informants led them to raise particular issues and to ignore others. Second, I presented one slice of the TKES landscape. Since I did not have formal interviews with other administrators and students, I am not in a

position to triangulate what the teachers said about themselves with what other stakeholders say about TKES. Future studies along this line will need to look at perspectives of administrators by other individuals. Future studies will need multiple perspectives on the same phenomenon. Such studies may need to select principals from the same location with comparable experiences.

Decisions about where you conduct your research and whom to include are a critical part of any research study. Additionally, there is no "cookbook" or single correct way to conduct qualitative analysis (Maxwell, 2012). The data collected and analyzed during this study are limited to the experiences of an identified group of current and former teachers. Therefore, the results of this study may be restricted to the school district where the study was conducted.

Transferability is another possible limitation of this study. The school district used for this study was selected based on state-level CCRPI data and demographics to ensure it was representative of the state. However, the extent to which these participants'perceptions could be applied to other districts is limited. Nevertheless, due to the in-depth nature of the study, these findings may apply to similar districts with comparable demographics. The sample of participants was limited to three current teachers with less than 5 years of experience and three former teachers who have left the field within the last 5 years. Data collected from this study were self-reported, which may have limited participants' responses, especially for those teachers still currently teaching. The primary tool for data collection was semi-structured interviews. Interview data was limited to the perceptions of each participant at the time of the study.

Other possible limitations of the study include researcher bias and reactivity. While an interview protocol was implemented in this study, participants were welcome to share any additional information they felt may add value to the study. Personal experiences are also potential biases. Given my time spent as a university supervisor in the K–12 setting, those

experiences had to be balanced via member checking. Reactivity is always a possible limitation of this study. The influence I may have had on the participants is impossible to assess, but the goal was to reduce the chances of reactivity by avoiding questions that may lead the participant to respond a certain way.

The teachers are also at different stages in their careers, so I cannot claim whether their experiences will remain the same as they continue with their careers. It is reasonable to speculate that their perceptions of the TKES will likely change over time. Despite the limitations of this study, it contributes to the research about teacher evaluation and retention scholars studying school improvement in the U.S.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to examine current and former teachers' experiences and perceptions to determine if Georgia's Teacher Keys Effectiveness System was impacting teacher retention rates and teacher effectiveness. A basic interpretive qualitative approach was applied to analyze and interpret the results of the study. Based on the data gathered from face-to-face interviews, I recommend further research based on the following:

- A quantitative study on evaluator bias and subjectivity within TKES;
- A qualitative study conducted on the bureaucratic nature of TKES and teaching;
- A quantitative study conducted on reasons for why teachers leave the field of teaching;
- A mixed-methods study on the role evaluators have on teacher retention rates within the state; and
- A quantitative study conducted on teacher's perceptions of TKES and its impact on teacher effectiveness.

- To determine the effects of the impact of TKES on teacher effectiveness, replicate the study with teachers who are evaluated using the system on each component that results in the TEM score (Teacher Assessment of Professional Standards, Professional Growth, and Student Growth).
- Conduct a qualitative study of K-12 principals and assistant principals in developing collaborative conferencing and feedback skills to support professional growth following classroom observations and offset negative views of teacher evaluation.
- Conduct a qualitative study on principals' perceptions of evaluator subjectivity in the teacher evaluation system and the biases they perceive may exist.
- Consider expanding the training of TKES evaluators to include an assessment of personal biases and their impact on scoring and inter-rater reliability.
- The research study included only one school system for analysis; further research should be conducted with a larger sample to address the generalizability of results.
- Conduct a quantitative study on the daily demands of teaching and its role in teacher effectiveness and retention.

Conclusions

Teacher retention is a major concern within the state of Georgia (GaDOE, 2016). In this study, I examined the experiences of current and former teachers to determine if Georgia's Teacher Keys Evaluation System (TKES) was influencing teacher retention rates. Overall, the majority of teachers in this study described the TKES as predominately a negative experience. These negative experiences may explain why teachers leave the field of teaching. The participants summarized their perceptions of TKES as being subjective when scoring their performances and expressed concern about inconsistent scores among their evaluators. Their

perceptions of the impact of TKES on their teaching effectiveness were viewed in more positive terms regarding the quality and importance of the standards but showed concern for the quality of feedback provided and the lack of communication in the process. Also, the added stress of linking pay to performance was viewed negatively, especially if participant believed the assessment to be unfair, and disregard for other job responsibilities, duties, and extracurricular assignments that were positively viewed. Finally, all the participants emphasized that the workload of the job itself was overwhelming and further compounded by the paperworkrequired in the TKES process.

Teacher turnover is a critical issue for the public education community because it influences student performance, school climate, and employee morale. In the Southern United States, the turnover rate has been high; teacher morale is low, and teacher participation in the school community is lacking. Guided by Danielson's (2013) Framework for Teaching, this study examined the perceptions of six teachers about teacher retention and teacher effectiveness. The research questions focused on teachers' perceptions about their career experiences at an identified Georgia public school district that implemented TKES, the TKES' impact on retention rates, and whether TKES enabled them to be more effective. A basic interpretive study design was used to capture the insights of six participants using semi-structured interviews, documents, and researcher notes.

Three emergent themes were identified from the data through open coding; they involved bias in classroom observations, unintended outcomes related to the TKES, and the bureaucratic nature of TKES and teaching. The findings were validated through triangulation and member checking. Based on these results, this study may promote positive social change by increasing employee morale, staff cohesiveness, teachers' effectiveness, and reducing teacher attrition rates

among novice teachers. In closing, I believe that if state-level policymakers and district-level leadership begin adding teachers' perceptions and voices to future decision-making processes, teacher retention rates may begin to improve and ultimately create an environment for student success. If we hope to improve our schools dramatically, the fear of dismissal rankings must be eliminated for the vast majority of teachers who struggle with the day-to-day variations of their school environments. As Deming alluded to, the TKES evaluation tends to ignore these variations ultimately rewarding some teachers for being lucky rather than outstanding. This researcher demonstrated how the TKES evaluation caused resentment among teachers by creating winners and losers.

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APPENDIX A:

Letter of Cooperation

Date

Name of Principal
Principal of School
Address of School

Dear Principal:

I am a student in the Higher Educational Leadership Doctoral Program at Valdosta State University. I will be conducting a basic interpretive qualitative study involving current and former public school teachers in this district. The purpose of this study is to examine how the application of Georgia's teacher evaluation system (TKES) is impacting teacher retention rates as perceived by current and former public school teachers. Data collection for this study will be achieved via semi-structured interviews and collection of teacher evaluation reports.

The projected time frame for the collection of all data will be during the fall 2018 semester. All research involving the district, school, and participants will be kept anonymous for confidentiality purposes. Interviews may be conducted off school grounds after the school day is complete or during a teacher's planning period with permission from the administration. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns regarding this study.

I look forward to working with you and the teachers.

Sincerely,

Blake Podsen

APPENDIX B:

Institutional Review Board Approval

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
for the Protection of Human Research Participants

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 03440-2016 **INVESTIGATOR:** Kayla Capers

PROJECT TITLE: *Former Teachers' Experiences of Berry School District.*

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under Exemption **Category 2**. You may begin your study immediately. If the nature of the research project changes such that exemption criteria may no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- *Upon completion of your research all data must be kept securely (locked cabinet/password protected computer, etc.) for a minimum of **3 years**.*

☒ ***If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.***

Elizabeth W. Olphie *01/13/2017*
Elizabeth W. Olphie, IRB Administrator Date

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-259-5045.

Revised: 06.02.16

APPENDIX C:

General Interview Protocol

General Interview Protocol

Interviews will be designed to last from sixty to ninety minutes in order to allow more in-depth questions to be asked. Each interview will be conducted either at the school during planning periods or after school hours have been completed for the day. Participants will be notified via email with a list of days and times to participate in the interview process. Once a day and time has been selected, each interview will be conducted following these guidelines:

1) Introduction, welcome, and thank you for participation in the study
2) The purpose of the study will be reviewed
3) Statement of consent will be read out loud to participants
4) Each participant will be informed that digital recordings will be used along with note-taking by the researcher during the interview process
5) At the conclusion of the interview, participants will be reminded of the confidentiality and privacy parameters of the study.
6) Participants will be asked if they are willing to provide information on teachers who have left the field within the last 1-3 years.

APPENDIX D:

Interview Protocol 1

Interview Questions

Interview Protocol 1:

Questions for Teachers:

1) Describe to me where you were born and grew up?
2) Can you describe your family? What was life like growing up in your family?
3) How would you describe the community you lived in?
4) What types of activities did you participate in with your friends growing up?
5) Describe what you remember from elementary school, middle, and high (favorite teachers, subjects, etc.)?
6) Can you describe how and when you became interested in teaching?
7) What was college like for you? How would you describe your teacher preparation and student teaching?

APPENDIX E:

Interview Protocol 2

Interview Protocol 2

Questions for Teachers:

RQ 1. What are the career experiences of current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district implementing Georgia's common teacher evaluation system identified as Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state?

What is your teaching philosophy?

What do you find most frustrating about teaching?

What are your strengths as a teacher?

What is your biggest weakness as a teacher?

How do you interact with parents?

Where do you see yourself in five years?

How do you handle classroom management?

What is your favorite subject?

What do you like best about teaching?

Tell me about your teaching style

How do you manage your time to get all your teaching duties done within schedule?

What is the biggest challenge today's students face?

Describe your worst day in class.

How do you motivate students to learn?

How have you helped a "tough" student?

What is the school's culture like?

What are the other teachers like?

How is the interaction between the school and the parents?

What do the other teachers like most about this school?

How do you handle bullying?

How do you approach student discipline?

How do you measure teacher success?

How have state, local, or common core standards affected your lesson planning process?

If I walked into your classroom on a typical afternoon, what would I see going on?

What would your master teacher or cooperating teacher say about you?

Name three words that describe you.

What is the biggest challenge in teaching?

What is the scariest thing about teaching?

What are the important aspects of a good principal?

What type of in-service topics would you be most interested in?

What do you feel is wrong with public education?

How would one of your students describe you?

Imagine you are at your retirement party at the end of your career. How would people describe you as a teacher?

Who do you look up to and want to emulate?

Would you say that you are a tough teacher?

How do you prepare students for standardized testing?

Give me examples of how you communicated with other teachers in your department?

Give an example of effective communication with an administrator.

Tell me about the three people who have most influenced your own education and

educational career.

Tell me about a golden teaching moment?

Describe your knowledge and experience with the GA content standards applicable to your content area.

What sorts of assessment, both formal and informal, do you view as being important indicators of successful performance for students learning your content area?

Since we will be held accountable for standardized test results, what will you do in the area of curriculum development to ensure that students do well on the test without teaching the test?

Describe the evaluation instruments used to assess teacher effectiveness.

What is the role/responsibility of a teacher in a classroom?

1) How long have you been an educator in the state of Georgia?
2) How do you plan for instruction each year?
3) What is a typical teaching day like for you?
4) How has the current evaluation system impacted your typical day?
5) How many times have you been evaluated by TKES?

RQ 2. How has teacher retention rates been impacted as perceived by current and former teachers in an identified Georgia public school district implementing Georgia's common teacher evaluation system identified as Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state?

1) How would you describe the current teacher evaluation system?
2) What was it like when you were evaluated for the first time?
3) What type of impact do you feel TKES has had on teacher retention within the state?

4) What is different about the system now versus a year ago? Two years ago?
5) Give me an example of how the implementation of TKES impacted your classroom?
6) Can you tell me how the evaluation system will impact your staying in the teaching profession?

Interview 2:

Questions for Teachers:

RQ 3. Do current and former teachers at an identified Georgia public school district implementing Georgia's common teacher evaluation system identified as Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) designed for building teacher effectiveness and ensuring consistency and comparability throughout the state perceive TKES enables teachers to be more effective?

1) Tell me how the evaluation system has assisted you in doing your job more effectively.
2) Can you explain any modifications of TKES over the last year or two that have impacted your teaching?
3) Given what you have stated about your life before teaching and as a teacher, how do you understand teaching in your life? (Seidman, 2006).
4) Given what you have stated about how the teacher evaluation has or has not assisted you, can you walk me through what this means for you in the future?
5) How do you perceive teacher evaluation as a whole in your current teaching position?

Questions about why teachers left the profession

What factors contributed to your decision not to continue teaching at this school?

Would anything have kept you at this school longer?

What were you (will you be) looking for in a new school/district?

Did you consider changing to another job other than teaching?

At what point in the year did you decide to pursue a job at another school/district?

What support did you get at this job that helped you?

What support do you wish you had gotten that would have helped you in this teaching position?

What was most satisfying about your job?

What was the least satisfying about your job?

Did anything trigger your decision to leave?

Did you feel prepared to do your job effectively?

What should we do differently to help the person who takes your place?

How satisfied were you with your pay, benefits, and other incentives?

Did any school or district policies or procedures make your job more difficult?

Would you recommend working at this school or district to your family and friends?