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PROGRAM EVALUATION OF THE J-1 VISA TEACHER EXCHANGE PROGRAM
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EXCHANGE TEACHERS WITHIN A RURAL
SCHOOL DISTRICT

By
Gradesa Lockhart

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner Webb University
2021

Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Gradesa Lockhart under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Abstract

PROGRAM EVALUATION OF THE J-1 VISA TEACHER EXCHANGE PROGRAM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EXCHANGE TEACHERS WITHIN A RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT. Lockhart, Gradesa, 2021: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University.

Teacher shortages have had a significant impact on student learning outcomes in a time of immense testing accountability; yet, the way rural school districts handle the teacher shortage varies, from policies to incentive pay, to the use of international teachers.

International teachers have become a significant resource for some rural districts to address teacher shortages. This study focused on the lived experiences of a subset of international teachers who are working in United States schools via the Exchange Visitor Program (EVP). The findings of the study authenticated the purpose of the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1946, more commonly known as the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, which has remained evident in increased participation in the exchange program since its inception. The mutual exchange program effectiveness was not dependent upon whether or not the participant returns to their home country. Study recommendations included a focus on professional development on teaching in a multicultural setting, classroom management, and continued growth of collective efficacy among international and non-international teachers through frequent, purposeful collaborative interactions. Implications from the experiences of the participants over time support consideration of coordination between the federal Department of State and Department of Education in regard to J-1 visa reform supporting rural school recruitment, retention, and student achievement.

Keywords: teacher shortage, Great Recession 2008, exchange visitor program

(EVP), J-1 visa, certificate of eligibility, program sponsors, host organization

Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
EVP.....	4
Purpose of Study	8
Research Questions	9
Assumptions.....	10
Limitations	10
Delimitations	11
Conceptual Framework	11
Definitions.....	11
Summary	13
Chapter 2: Literature Review	15
Introduction.....	15
Conceptual Framework	15
Constructivism Theoretical Framework	17
Social Constructivism	18
Historical Context of Teacher and Student Relationships	18
Program Evaluation	19
Overview of Teacher Shortage	21
Historical Context of the EVP	26
Program Sponsor.....	29
Host Organization	30
Research Questions	30
Chapter Summary	31
Chapter 3: Methodology	33
Problem Statement	33
Rationale of the Study.....	33
Research Site and Participants	34
Methodology	35
CIPP Evaluation Model	35
Research Questions	36
Instruments.....	37
Validity of the TALIS Questionnaire	37
Reliability of the TALIS Questionnaire	38
Timeline of Research Activities.....	38
Chapter Summary	40
Chapter 4: Results	41
Introduction.....	41
Research Question 1–Context and Input.....	44
Participants.....	45
Site	46
Quantitative Phase–Input Evaluation.....	46
Background Context	46
Years of Experience	48

Quantitative Phase–Process Evaluation	50
Provisions of Induction	55
Summary of Research Question 1–Aligned to Constructivism Theory.....	58
Quantitative Phase–Process Evaluation	58
Summary of Research Question 2–Aligned to Constructivism Theory.....	60
Qualitative Phase–Product Evaluation.....	60
Summary Research Question 3–Aligned to Constructivism Theory	62
Conceptual Framework	63
Chapter Summary	65
Chapter 5 Discussion	67
Introduction.....	67
Restatement of the Purpose of the Study	67
Research Questions	68
Review of Methodology	68
Interpretation of the Findings.....	69
Conclusion of Findings	72
The Significance of the Study.....	73
Recommendations for the Exchange Visitor Teachers, Host District, and District Sponsor	74
Recommendations to the Secretary of State in Regard to J-1 Visa	75
Summary of the Recommendations	75
Limitations of the Study.....	75
Implications.....	76
Future Studies	77
References.....	81
Appendix	
Photo of the Signing Into Law of the Revised Fulbright-Hays Act 1961.....	87
Tables	
1 Researcher Timeline	40
2 Questions 1, 2 ,6, and 7.....	49
3 Collective Preparedness of Participants by Element for All Respondents Indicating Areas Included in Formal Education or Training	51
4 Number of Elements Each Respondent Identified as Being Included in Their Formal Education or Training... ..	53
5 Question 11: Depth of Training and Preparation Regarding Content.....	55
6 Representation of the Superordinate and Some Related Ordinate Phrases From Interview and Focus Group Responses	62
Figures	
1 Key Relationships Within the Study	16
2 All Students Planning Education Majors by Ethnicity	23
3 Student Enrollment in Public Schools	25
4 Questions1: Gender.....	47
5 Question 2: Highest Degree Earned.....	48
6 Question 4: The Percent by the Element of the Frequency of Selection by Respondents Having the Concept Included in Formal Education or Training	52

7	Question 12: When You Began Working at Your Current School, Were the Following Provisions Part of Your Induction or Orientation?.....	56
8	Question 13: Control Over Provisions.....	57

Chapter 1: Introduction

The essence of intercultural education is the acquisition of empathy-the ability to see the world as others see it, and to allow for the possibility that others may see something we have failed to see, or may see it more accurately. The simple purpose of the exchange program is to erode the culturally rooted mistrust that sets nations against one another. The exchange program is not a panacea but an avenue of hope. (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2019, para. 9)

Our forefathers had no idea the impact the idea to change the image of America following World War II using various cultural exchange programs would eventually have on our current reality in the classroom. In the 1940s, America had a wartime image; therefore, reimagining America following the war to highlight the cultural diversity, heritage, civic pride, and character of the United States via the Fulbright-Hays Act, the original cultural exchange program, was an important decision. What could not have been imagined at the time was the fact that the cultural exchange programs used to initiate the rebranding of these Americas would still be a thriving program in the 21st century. The cultural exchange programs continued flourishing as a critical aspect of our educational system in the United States. Over time, the evolution of the titles attached to the United States cultural exchange programs did not impact the different programs' various core values.

One of the Fulbright-Hays Act programs, the teacher category, focuses on cultural exchange among international educators to promote the interchange of American and foreign teachers in public and private schools; to enhance mutual understanding between the people of the United States and people of other countries; to strengthen international

education programs in U.S. schools through the delivery of a global perspective to students; to provide U.S. teachers with an opportunity to expand their international understanding by working alongside foreign colleagues; and to provide opportunities for the development of lasting links between U.S. and foreign schools (Lerner, 2013). The teacher category of the Fulbright-Hays Act has had a positive impact on teacher shortage and teacher retention; so much so that in 2013, the Daily Journal of the United States Government sought public comments regarding proposed regulation changes to the Exchange Visitor Program's (EVP) teacher category's current rules. The proposed changes were due to the occasional excessive use of the EVP to fill labor needs in U.S. public schools. According to Lerner (2013), the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Private Sector Exchange of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, this new use of the teacher exchange program to address teacher shortages rather than to facilitate its original purpose raises concerns for the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

In stark contrast to Lerner's (2013) concern regarding the teacher exchange program was a significant inequity in education: teacher recruitment and retention in the rural school districts. Often, rural school districts in North Carolina have lacked the funding sources to offer bonuses and higher teacher supplements. Regardless of where one lives, all students should be taught by a highly qualified teacher; however, that was not guaranteed in various rural school districts for some students in North Carolina. Non-educators have made an assumption that anyone can teach, which research shows is an incorrect assumption. In the education profession, classroom-trained adults lead classrooms. Education as a profession does not have the luxury to "close up shop" when no teachers are in the school. The purpose of this study was to address the conundrum of

the original meaning of the EVP and one's perceived reality as a teacher shortage solution. The study sought to clarify the EVP in more detail from participant perspectives and the hosting school district.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher recruitment and retention continue to plague many school districts. According to Sutchter et al.'s (2016) report, between 2009 and 2014 (the most recent years of data available at the time), teacher education enrollment dropped from 691,000 to 451,000, a 35% reduction. The most recent data on the number of teachers employed comes from the February 5, 2020, Annual Report on the State of the Teaching Profession (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2020). In 2018-2019, there were 94,672 employees with an attrition rate of 7.5% and a mobility rate of 4.53% (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2020). Of the 94,672 teachers in North Carolina in 2018-2019, 78,981 teachers were categorized as experienced, licensed teachers, whereas 15,691 were categorized as beginning teachers. The attrition rate in 2018-2019 by category was 5,347, or 6.8%, which references the number of experienced, licensed teachers who left the profession compared to the 1,768 beginning teachers, or 11.3%, who left the profession. In 2018-2019, the attrition rate for beginning teachers was almost double that of the experienced, licensed teachers. When looking at the Visiting International Faculty (VIF) teachers employed in 2018-2019, there were 1,382 employed with an attrition rate of 15.8%, which was higher than the beginning teacher's attrition rate. Regarding the number of "before contract term" VIF teachers, there were 1,058 employed with an attrition rate of 11.1% in 2018-2019 (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2020).

Regarding the Public Schools of North Carolina (2020) report, the VIF attrition

data are significantly higher when looking at the other categories; however, the use of VIF teachers is a strategy for filling teacher vacancies even though the mobility of the teachers negatively impacts the annual attrition rate data. The report articulates the ever-growing issue of teacher vacancies. State and educational leaders continually seek short-term resolutions using the EVP (i.e., VIF) to fill the teacher vacancies. This study's primary purpose was to define teacher shortage, define the federal EVP, and make known and interpret the lived experiences of a purposeful sample of exchange teachers in a rural school district. Additionally, the purpose was to examine the EVP teachers and the experience of enduring the emotionally complex transition into their new American school culture while simultaneously establishing positive relationships with their American students in a rural school district. In addition, this study clarified the EVP in more detail from participant perspectives and the hosting school district.

EVP

The EVP originated under the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1946 with the program's primary purpose being to facilitate cultural exchange through various programs. This research assessed whether a program of cultural exploration expanded its purpose to include its role as a recruiting tool for rural school districts to address teacher shortages. Rural schools were frequently overlooked and perceived as being less than essential than the much larger school districts; however, rural school districts play a significant part in their local communities because rural school districts were often among the largest employers in a rural community. In North Carolina, public schools were considered the largest employers in 59 counties. With a significant need to hire teachers in rural school districts, educators utilized alternative teacher employing approaches. According to

Public Schools First, North Carolina is the second-largest state to implement the EVP (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2019). The original purpose of the federal EVP and J-1 visa was to provide opportunities to allow foreign nationals to temporarily reside in the United States and participate in a variety of educational or training programs and to promote cultural exchange between the United States and other countries according to the American Immigration Council's (2016) brief on the EVP and J-1 visas. The EVP was created as part of the original Fulbright-Hays Act, also referenced as the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (American Immigration Council, 2016).

President Kennedy reaffirmed the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1946 as the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 on September 21, 1961, as depicted in the appendix. The Exchange Act of 1961 promoted cultural exchange between the United States and other countries to increase mutual understanding through an educational and cultural exchange (American Immigration Council, 2016). Additionally, the expectation of the Mutual Exchange Act of 1961 was strengthening the ties that united us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the United States and other countries as described by the American Immigration Council (2016). The 15 categories identified under the umbrella of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, were au pairs, camp counselors, college and university students, government visitors, interns, international visitors, physicians, professors and research scholars, secondary school students, short-term scholars, specialists, summer work travel program, teachers, trainees, and regional and special initiatives. Each exchange visitor participant secures a J-1 visa to participate in

any of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 programs.

The American Immigration Council (2016) defined a J-1 visa as a temporary non-immigrant visa issued to an exchange visitor to participate in any of the 15 previously identified exchange programs. Since the origination of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, the Department of State has not capped the number of J-1 visas available each year; however, each year there has been a pre-set number of Certificates of Eligibility allocated to the various program sponsors. A candidate for participation in the EVP and their dependents must have all the required Department of State documents, in addition to a Certificate of Eligibility to schedule an interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate to apply for a J-1 visa to enter the United States (American Immigration Council, 2016). The number of J-1 exchange visitors in 2000 was approximately 300,000. Over time, as indicated in the data from the American Immigration Council report, the number of J-1 exchange visitors has risen to over 520,000 participants who are being admitted into the United States annually.

According to the Office of Private Sector Exchange Designation (2019) flyer, there were 3,454 new teacher exchange visitors, and they represent more than 200 countries and territories. The top five sending countries in 2019 were the following: the Philippines, 932 exchange visitors; Jamaica, 383 exchange visitors; China, 223 exchange visitors; India, 176 exchange visitors; and Colombia, 174 exchange visitors (Office of Private Sector Exchange Designation, 2019). Approximately 86% of the exchange visitors are younger than 30, and 53% are female. The top five states United States destinations for J-1 exchange visitors in 2019 were North Carolina, 565 exchange visitors; California, 315 exchange visitors; South Carolina, 301 exchange visitors; Texas,

270 exchange visitors; and Florida, 265 exchange visitors (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2019).

Before an exchange teacher enters a classroom in the United States, the exchange visitor has taken many steps to acquire the position. Once in the United States, the complexity of the process becomes evident in that foreign-trained educators must now matriculate into an American educational program with an expectation of producing increased student achievement; however, the original premise of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 was that of a mutual understanding between the United States and those from other countries for cultural exchange through various teaching assignments. Though the EVP's purpose remained the same in 2020, using the cultural exchange program to fill teaching vacancies while mutually increasing student achievement in United States schools has grown significantly. This research sought to examine the impact of J-1 exchange teacher beliefs and self-perceptions on their student-teacher relationships within a rural school district, considering the complexity of the process an exchange teacher must complete. Chapter 2 delves deeper into the EVP through the lens of the sociocultural learning theory. Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory of learning explained that learning occurs during social interactions between individuals. One of the dominant theories of education today proposes that learning happens first through social interaction and second through individual internalization of social behaviors. In the social constructivism theory, students and teachers form relationships in the classroom to help the student learn. The connections helped facilitate social interaction and active participation in the learning tasks. Students learn through observation, listening, and talking through their lessons. In the context of

the EVP's participants, they also learn from the social interactions and their internalization of social behaviors, which was even more prominent since the participants were not American-born.

Purpose of the Study

In recent years, the Department of State has been strengthening the rules throughout the Exchange Visitor Program (22 CFR Part 62) to ensure that this program is consistent with the purpose of Section 109 of the Fulbright-Hays Act and that this program is not being used for other purposes. (Lerner, 2013, p. 25675)

According to a statement from the Department of State in 2013, public comment was sought regarding the notice of proposed rulemaking which

seeks to: (i) Reform the teacher exchange program; (ii) ensure that the program better protects the health, safety, and welfare of program participants; and (iii) fortify the program's prestige as a world-class U.S. public diplomacy initiative. (Lerner, 2013, p. 25670).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to measure the impact of the implementation of the teacher category, which is one of the 15 categories of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, more specifically in a rural school district struggling with teacher recruitment and retention.

In recent years, some sponsors have used the teacher exchange program in a manner that falls outside the program's original intent, as explained by Lerner (2013) in the statement of need. This research would discern from a group of J-1 visa exchange teachers working in a rural school district in North Carolina if their experiences in the

program were consistent with the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961. The underlining purpose of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 was to ensure students gain a greater understanding of other cultures and comprehend global issues and to increase the number of students studying foreign languages and cultures. I conducted a program evaluation to understand better the J-1 teacher exchange program's implementation in a rural school district.

Research Questions

J-1 exchange teachers must persevere through the drastic learning curve of transitioning from their home country's educational culture into their new American school culture within a small rural district. J-1 exchange teachers must transition into their new school culture while establishing positive relationships with their American students and navigating a unique life experience. The complexity of the process for becoming an exchange visitor was detailed procedurally and in regard to the complex emotions of the experience.

The research questions are aligned to the four parts of the context, input, process, and product (CIPP) evaluation model (Stufflebeam, 2003) to answer the following research questions:

1. What has an impact on the experience of a J-1 teacher transitioning into an American rural school? Context & Input
2. How do J-1 teachers who are transitioning into an American rural school establish student-teacher relationships? Process
3. How effective is the implementation of the EVP as measured by J-1 teachers' perceived reasons for being in the program and the reality of their placement?

Product

During this research, the hope was that the findings would provide insight for rural school districts on how to ensure the founding tenets and attributes of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 are evident in the exchange experience and increased student achievement.

Assumptions

I assumed I would learn from the experiences of the international visitor program participants and the host organization to enhance the overall participant experience and positively impact student achievement considering the teacher shortage plaguing rural school districts. Additionally, I assumed I could determine what, if any, discrepancies existed between the intended objectives of the study and the actual outcomes, in addition to identifying recommendations that could be made to the host organization to improve the program experience.

Limitations

For this evaluation, the specific limitations present included my bias, host organization bias, and program participant bias. Also, some data were not available from the host organization pertaining to retrieving only the Teacher Working Condition Survey results for EVP participants only. Other potential limitations were a low response rate for the survey and a low participation rate in the focus group. The focus group was held virtually via Zoom because of COVID-19. One final limitation that existed was a change in the number of participants eligible to participate as a direct result of the program parameters related to visitation timeframes.

Delimitations

Within the scope of this study, I could not engage with all the eligible EVP participants in the rural school district in focus group sessions; therefore, I defined this study's parameters to be limited to teachers at the secondary level within the rural school district. Another delimitation is the fact that I work in the school district.

Conceptual Framework

Many theories could have been selected as the primary driving force of this study; however, Vygotsky's social constructivism views of teaching and learning were the theoretical focus of this study (McLeod, 2019). Constructivism was described as learning "from the inside out" (Vande Berg, 2016, p. 21). It was the theory that was acting on our awareness of our own and others' sense-making. Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory emphasized the collaborative nature of learning, and he rejected the assumptions made by Piaget that it is possible to separate learning from its social context. In terms of adult learners, Vygotsky (1978) argued, "learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function" (p. 90). In terms of this study, the argument was that learning did not simply comprise the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by learners rather it was the process by which learners were integrated into a knowledge community (Vygotsky, 1978).

Definitions

Teacher Shortage

The inability of schools to staff at current wages with individuals qualified to teach in the fields required (Walker, 2019).

Great Recession of 2008

A period of marked general decline observed in national economies globally between 2007 and 2009. According to Wikipedia, the Great Recession met the International Monetary Fund criteria for the recession, which caused the Great Recession to include a combination of vulnerabilities that developed in the financial system, along with a series of triggering events that began with the bursting of the United States housing bubble in 2005-2006 (“Great Recession,” 2019).

EVP

According to the American Immigration Council (2016), EVP was created as part of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961. “The EVP promotes cultural exchange and engagement with visitors from specific countries or regions of the world” (American Immigration Council, 2016, p. 5).

J-1 Visa

“The Exchange Visitor J-1 non-immigrant visa category is for individuals approved to participate in work-and study-based exchange visitor programs” (U.S. Department of State, 2020, p. 3). According to the American Immigration Council (2016), there was no cap on the number of J-1 visas.

Certificate of Eligibility

Certificate of Eligibility (Form DS-2019) is the pre-set allocation the Department of State sets annually for the various program sponsors. The program sponsors issue certificates of eligibility to potential participants in EVPs across the country. Together with the other necessary Department of State documents, potential exchange visitors and their dependents are scheduled for an interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate to apply for a J-1 visa to enter the United States (American Immigration Council, 2016).

Program Sponsor

Sponsors were designated by the Secretary of State to conduct an exchange visitor program. Sponsors may be government agencies, academic institutions, educational and cultural organizations, or certain types of businesses or non-profits. In some cases, the sponsors are also the hosts. However, in most cases, sponsors are third parties that work with the hosts, the Department of State, and the exchange visitors to administer an exchange visitor program and provide the necessary Certificate of Eligibility (DS-2019) to apply for the J visa. More than 1,500 designated sponsors participate in the EVP program. (American Immigration Council, 2016, p. 5)

Host Organization

A host organization was a school, business, camp, or other entity in the United States that provides the actual internship, training, or education program in which the exchange visitor participates. Hosts providing employment, an internship, or training experience must show that they will not engage the J-1 visitor in ordinary employment and will not use a J-1 visitor to fill a position for which a U.S. worker could have been hired. (American Immigration Council, 2016, p. 4)

Summary

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 included the introduction, the statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, theoretical framework, and keywords. Chapter 2 contains a review of the essential literature about the Mutual Educational Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, the EVP, teacher shortage, hosting schools, and program sponsors. Chapter 3 includes a description of the participant

group and methods used in data collection, using a program evaluation as the structure.

Chapter 4 includes qualitative and quantitative analyses of the data collected during the research. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results, draws conclusions, describes limitations, outlines implications of the study, and makes suggestions for further improvement and research in J-1 visa exchange teachers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In 2006, Secretary Margaret Spellings was quoted saying, “One of the most important factors in raising student achievement is a highly qualified teacher” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 1). Under the No Child Left Behind legislation, the law recognized the magnitude of the impact of highly qualified teachers on student achievement and defined a highly qualified teacher as a person meeting “the three essential criteria: (1) attaining a bachelor's degree or better in the subject taught; (2) obtaining full state teacher certification; and (3) demonstrating knowledge in the subjects taught” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 1). No Child Left Behind was intended to protect students from being taught at disproportionate rates by ineffective, inexperienced teachers in predominantly low-income communities.

Conceptual Framework

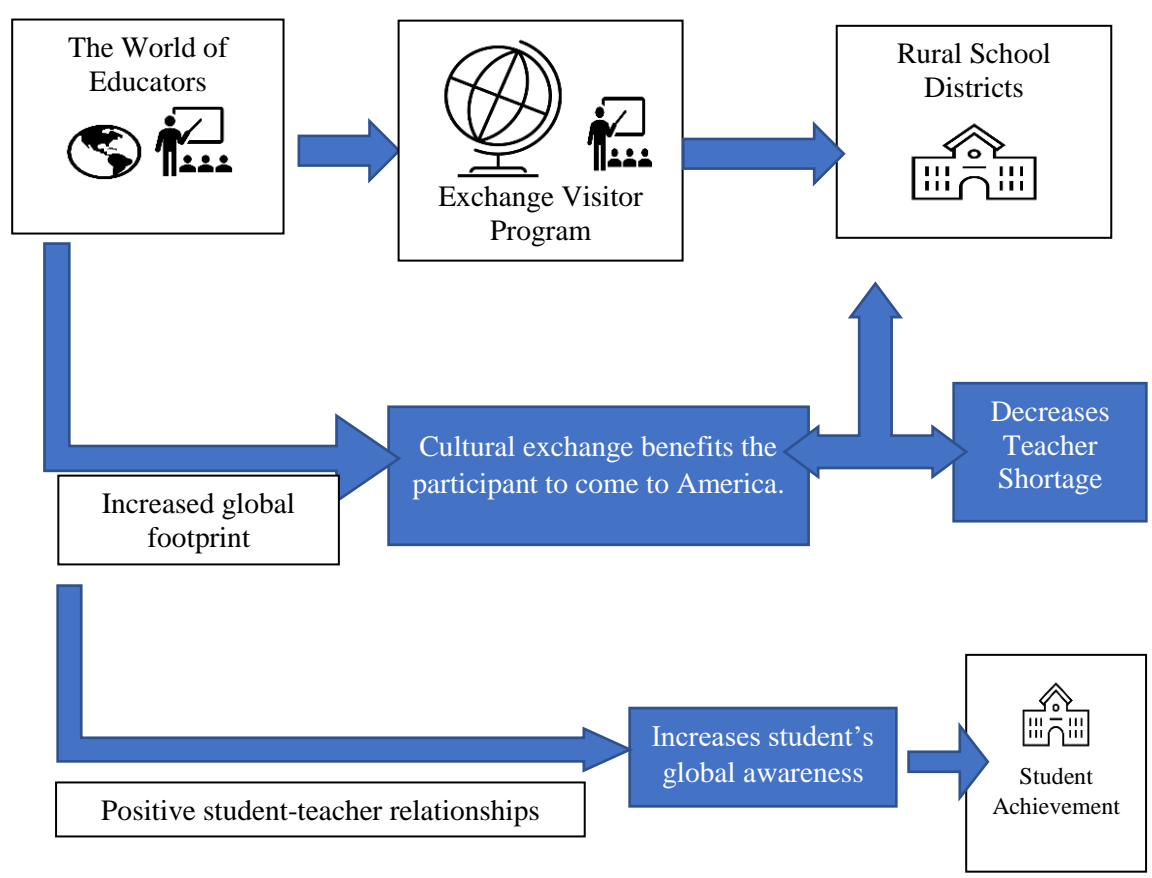
The conceptual framework referred to specific ideas to be utilized by me in the study. I constructed the model to explain the relationship that existed between the main variables in the study. For students to be educated, they must have a teacher; and in some school districts, hiring teachers has become a crisis despite the many issues already facing educators. This study's theoretical framework was centered around the learning process of the adult learner and students in terms of constructivism. From participant experiences, I anticipated results would lean toward the significance of the EVP as a way to address the teacher shortage. It was presumed that the participants would speak to their cultural experience and their cultural background as a way to establish positive student-teacher relationships. This study focused on the EVP from the perspective of the

participants who sought cultural exchange opportunities via the J-1 visa process.

Participants of the EVP attributed their acceptance into the program to how American school districts are decreasing the number of vacant teaching positions. The study provides data on the EVP program's role in the teacher shortage in rural communities. In addition to the impact their culturally diverse background had on student-teacher relationships, the participants were learning new professional norms in a foreign country and culture. The key relationships within the study are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Key Relationships Within the Study



Constructivism Theoretical Framework

All knowledge and meaning are contingent upon human practices and experiences in the constructivist paradigm (Crotty, 1998). In the context of an exchange teacher entering a new culture of pedagogy, the exchange teacher was the student whose conceptions of constructivism shaped the pedagogical landscape of their exchange experience as framed by the individual's understanding of the nature of truth and its role and expectations (Mensah, 2015). There were three broad categories within the constructivism continuum: cognitive constructivism, social constructivism, and radical constructivism; however, for this study emphasis was on the cognitive and social constructivism as the foundation of the rationale for this dissertation (Constructivism and Online Education, 2019).

International teachers had a range of experiences that, according to Mensah (2015), were relevant to their experience as participants in the EVP.

Thus, constructivism acknowledges the learner's active role in the personal creation of knowledge, the importance of experience (both individual and social) in this knowledge creation process, and the realization that the knowledge created will vary in its degree of validity as an accurate representation of reality.

(Constructivism and Online Education, 2019, p. 1)

The active roles of participants in the exchange program and their experiences before participating in the program shaped each person's reality of the overall experience to varying degrees. For participants in the EVP, adaption was a relevant aspect of their success. The international teacher took new information into their existing cognitive structure. Then the international teacher accommodated the new information by

establishing new reasoning configurations in a totally new environment.

Learning was defined as the process of reconstructing external reality through a process of internalization within cognitive constructivism. More specifically, learning becomes the process when one builds an accurate internal representation that mirrors external structures within the “real” world, which resonates with the “new” world of the teachers in the EVP. “This perspective on learning focuses on (a) the procedures or processes of learning, (b) how what is learned is represented or symbolized in the mind, and (c) how these representations are organized within the mind” (Constructivism and Online Education, 2019, p. 1).

Social Constructivism

Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory emphasized the collaborative nature of learning. Vygotsky rejected the assumptions made by Piaget that it is possible to separate learning from its social context. Vygotsky believed all cognitive functions originate in (and must therefore be explained as products of) social interactions and that learning did not simply comprise the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by learners; it was the process by which learners were integrated into a knowledge community (Constructivism and Online Education, 2019). In terms of an exchange teacher arriving in the United States, the collaborative aspect of their learning in a new culture is the primary aspect of their social interactions at this stage of their experience. During this stage of their exchange experience, the cognitive aspect of their social interaction is the foundation of their experience.

Historical Context of Teacher and Student Relationships

In 1840, Mann said, “the aptness to teach involves the power of perceiving how

far a scholar understands the subject matter to be learned and what, in the natural order is the next step to take” (Mann & Cremin, 1957, p. 16). According to Mann, teacher intuitiveness leads pupils’ minds to discover what they need to know and then supplies them with what they require them to know (Mann & Cremin, 1957).

An educator needs to discern what attitudes are conducive to continued growth and which ones are detrimental and use that relational knowledge to build worthwhile educational experiences for students, according to Dewey (1938). “Teachers are the agents through which knowledge and skills are communicated and rules of conduct enforced” (Dewey, 1938, p. 18). It is the duty of the teacher to know how to “utilize the surroundings, physical and social, to extract from them all that they have to contribute” (Dewey, 1938, p. 40) to build up worthwhile educational experiences. Dewey also wrote that “all human experience is ultimately social: that it involves contact and communication” (p. 38). Participants of the EVP are tasked with being able to discern their perceptions through a blurred lens of reality in that they themselves are new to the educational and societal culture in which their students were raised. Also, the participants of the EVP had to get past common dialect and general nuances to establish a student and teacher relationship.

Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using the information to answer questions about projects, policies, and programs, focusing on their effectiveness and efficiency. According to Wikipedia, program evaluation has been at the center of all improvements, whether one is talking about a school’s effective work or the quality of the education. Evaluation designates the monitoring of progress towards

desired goals and objectives (“Program Evaluation,” 2019). This study aimed to evaluate the EVP's implementation in a rural school district using Stufflebeam’s CIPP evaluation model (Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2003). Panchal (2020) has defined evaluation as the process of determining the extent to which educational objectives have been achieved.

Program evaluation is the process of determining the extent to which objectives are attained to appraise achievement and improvements. Formative and summative evaluations are the two ways of performing an evaluation. According to Gay (1985, as cited in Aziz et al., 2018), program evaluation is the collection and analysis of data to determine how objectives have been achieved to make effective decisions. According to Panchal (2020), evaluation is the analysis and comparison of actual progress versus prior plans, oriented toward improving plans for future implementation.

Formative and Summative Evaluation

Formative evaluation refers to information used to improve the instruction, project, and process and ensure that all aspects of a program or project are likely to produce success (Eel & Frisbie, 1991, as cited in Aziz et al., 2018). It is conducted to monitor instructional processes and learning progress to provide continuous feedback that identifies learning errors (Gronlund, 1985, as cited by Aziz et al., 2018).

Summative evaluation ensures whether necessary processes have been carried out and objectives are being met. Summative and formative evaluations occur whenever an evaluation exercise is conducted, which was the case in this study as I used the CIPP program evaluation model.

CIPP Program Evaluation Model

This dissertation evaluated the EVP in a rural public school district using the

CIPP program evaluation model, which was described by Kellaghan and Stufflebeam (2003) as a comprehensive framework for guiding evaluations of programs, projects, and systems.

Context evaluation assesses needs, assets, and problems within a defined environment (Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2003). The input evaluation assessed competing strategies, work plans, and budgets to investigate other existing programs that could serve as a model for the program currently being evaluated (Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2003). Process evaluation monitored documents and assessed program activities to inform constituents of the progress made during the implementation of activities (Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2003). Product evaluation was referred to as impact evaluation because it assessed a program's reach to the targeted audience to make a judgment of the extent to which the program addressed the needs of the population it serves (Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2003). This model was selected to evaluate this EVP at a rural school because it emphasized comprehensiveness evaluation within a larger framework of organizational activities (Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2003).

Overview of Teacher Shortage

A teacher represents the greatest asset to improve student achievement; and when it comes to rural school districts, there were not a plethora of applicants for teacher vacancies. Many rural communities were left with only one or two applicants; and for some, it was even worse in that there were no applicants for their teacher vacancies. The teacher shortage was a nationwide issue with varying causes. In essence, rural districts were trying to find teachers who wanted to make a life in rural America. That was not an easy task because of the population decline in those areas, school isolation, and low pay.

In addition to employment concerns, social considerations were compounding the teacher shortage in rural school districts including fewer dating and restaurant options in these communities. The result was that in many rural school districts, there were no applicants to choose from; and we know this deficit affects student learning.

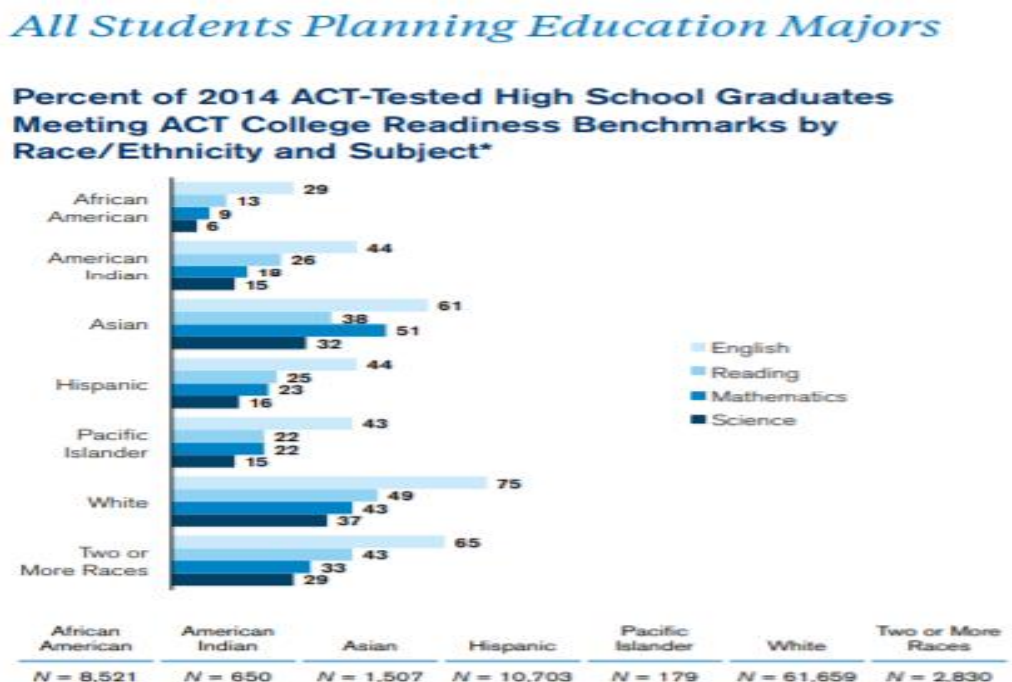
The teacher shortage has much to do with the overall quality and condition of the teacher labor market, which has drastically changed as noted in a 2014 national analysis report of teacher recruitment and retention.

ACT has conducted groundbreaking research on college and career readiness since its founding in 1959. Over the past decade in particular, ACT research has provided data and information guiding some of the nation's most important education and workforce issues and related initiatives. (ACT, 2014, p. 2)

There were four key findings from the 2014 report about students interested in becoming educators: The number of students interested in becoming educators continues to drop significantly; they have lower-than-average achievement levels, particularly in STEM areas; interest is lower among males; and there is a lack of diversity among students interested in education (ACT, 2014). In reality, there are fewer high school graduates interested in pursuing education majors and fewer college students interested in pursuing teaching careers, according to the National Condition of Educators 2014 Report (ACT, 2014). Even more alarming was the percent of high school students interested in the education majors who did not meet the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks as indicated in Figure 2 by race and ethnicity (ACT, 2014).

Figure 2

All Students Planning Education Majors by Ethnicity



A thriving teacher labor market requires qualified applicants who at one point matriculated mostly through public schools themselves. The startling data model the puzzle of the teacher labor market; to prepare high school students to be successful in college as measured by the ACT, highly qualified teachers are needed. However, when districts are operating amidst a teacher shortage, the quality of education high schoolers receive was significantly impacted when they were taught by teachers who were not qualified or by no teacher at all. Additionally, the perceptions of the high schoolers of the profession may taint their desire to pursue a career in education, based on their personal experiences with a less than qualified teacher or no teacher at all.

The Great Recession and Teacher Shortage

The teacher shortage became more evident in many school districts across the

United States following the Great Recession of 2008-2012, as defined by Sutchter et al. (2016). During the Great Recession, pink slips were common practice; and as the economy began to improve, so did the need for school districts to restore positions and programs pre-recession. Therefore, one would assume there were unlimited numbers of candidates seeking to return to teaching; however, school districts quickly became aware that was not the case. Over time, the growing discrepancy between the ever-increasing student population and the decrease in teachers became even more apparent. Sutchter et al. (2016) identified the types of teacher shortages as specific subject area shortages, as shortages of teachers within and across school districts, and more specifically as teachers of color. According to Sutchter et al., there is no single explanation for teacher shortages across states. According Sutchter,

Based on the evidence available, the emerging teacher shortage appears to be driven by four main factors:

1. Decline in teacher preparation enrollments,
2. An effort to return to pre-recession course offerings and class sizes,
3. Increasing student enrollment, and
4. High teacher attrition. (p. 32)

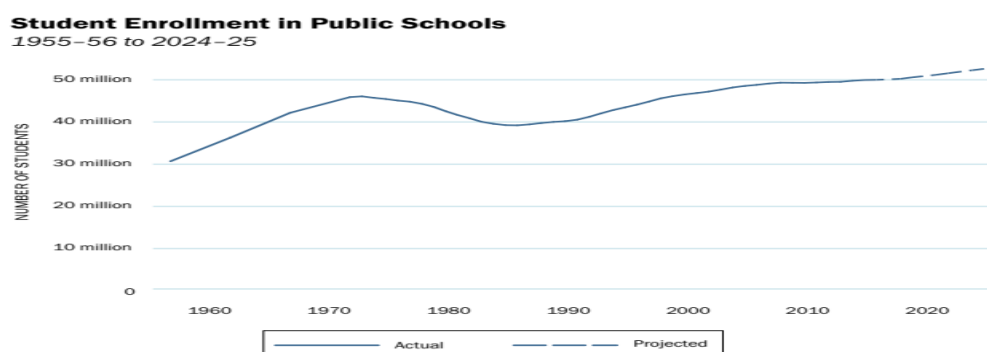
The need for alternative teaching candidates was not a problem that could be solved within 1 school year of hire. It was a problem resulting from systemic issues. The decrease in teacher preparation enrollment was a precursor to the recent increase in demand for teachers. Sutchter et al. (2016) reported teacher education enrollments dropped from 691,000 to 451,000, a 35% reduction between 2009 and 2014, the most recent years of data available at the time.

Another impact on the decline of teachers was the reduction of special programs during the great recession. Many districts seek to reinstate many of the classes and programs dissolved or canceled during the Great Recession, where approximately 145,000 teaching positions were cut. Sutchter et al. (2016) identified the teacher shortage as not just an issue of replacing the 145,000 teaching positions. However, districts and states must also address the ever-looming current teacher shortage while simultaneously reinstating classes and programs.

As seen in Figure 3, student enrollment in public schools since the Great Recession has steadily increased, serving as another reason for teacher demand.

Figure 3

Student Enrollment in Public Schools



Source: National Center for Education Statistics (2015). Digest of Education Statistics. Public and private elementary and secondary teachers, enrollment, pupil-teacher ratios, and new teacher hires: Selected years, fall 1955 through fall 2024. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Pupil-teacher ratios. Pupil-teacher ratio is another component of teacher demand.⁴⁹ The number of additional teachers needed by a school district is dependent on the change in desired class

At the time of this report, it was projected that student enrollment in 2020 would be over 50 million students, which is about a 4% change since 2010.

The fourth main factor in teacher demand is teacher attrition which, according to Sutchter et al. (2016), was the most important factor impacting teacher shortages. High-performing nations have average attrition rates of approximately 3-4% compared to a 10-year average attrition rate of 8%. Even though school districts were striving to decrease

the number of teachers needed, a significant aspect of any school district's plan should include retaining current teachers. Teachers are leaving the profession for various reasons, one being to leave hard-to-staff schools. Hard-to-staff positions continued the teacher shortage cyclical cycle, in that the new teacher is hired and then by the end of the year, that new teacher transforms to a higher-performing school.

Sutcher et al. (2016) endorsed simply revising local policy to meet the teacher demands, but that was not the only solution because, as Sutcher et al. described, the United States was lacking a systematic approach to recruiting, preparing, and retaining teachers and for using the skills of accomplished teachers to help improve schools. Some districts have begun using the national EVP J-1 visa more readily to address teacher shortage issues.

Historical Context of the EVP

The EVP was created as part of the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1946, more commonly known as the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961. According to Immigration History (2019), the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1946 used the following objectives to achieve the purpose of the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1946:

- (1) an information service to disseminate abroad information about the United States.
- (2) an educational exchange service to cooperate with other nations in—
 - (a) the interchange of persons, knowledge, and skills.
 - (b) the rendering of technical and other services;
 - (c) the interchange of developments in the field of education, the arts, and sciences.

SEC. 3. In carrying out the objectives of this Act, information concerning the participation of the United States in the United Nations, its organizations and functions, shall be emphasized. (p. 3)

The program was created to allow foreign nationals the opportunity to temporarily reside in the United States, to participate in a variety of education or training programs, and to promote cultural exchange among countries. The Fulbright-Hays Act of 1946 is 74 years old and though there have been different iterations of its name, the true purpose of the exchange program remains true.

On September 21, 1961, President John F. Kennedy signed the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act (Immigration History, 2019) in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, D.C. (JFK Library, 1961). The purpose of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Program as defined by United States Codes (1961) Title 22: Chapter 33 is grounded in U.S. public diplomacy efforts, and its stated purpose is as follows:

Sec. 2451. – Congressional statement of purpose. The purpose of this chapter is to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations, and the contributions being made toward a peaceful and more fruitful life for people throughout the world; to promote international cooperation for educational and

cultural advancement; and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world.

The namesake of the Fulbright-Hays Act, Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas, was quoted by the New York Times (1986) as saying, the ultimate goal of the program “is to avoid a nuclear war” (p. B7). The avoidance of nuclear war was even more evident as stated in the New York Times article, where

it was the shock that he and so many other members of Congress felt after the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that inspired J. W. Fulbright, then a Democratic Senator from Arkansas, to propose legislation in 1945 that gave rise to what today is a renowned educational foreign exchange program bearing his name. (p. B7)

Following the victory of the United States during World War World II, the focus was on “[passing] a law to send our young men and women to universities in countries that were our allies and in countries that were our enemies” (New York Times, 1986, p. B7). According to the New York Times (1986) article, the Fulbright Program was a way for Americans to broaden their awareness and knowledge of their role in the world at that time. The exchange program funding source at the time was foreign currency funds accrued in the United States from sales to other governments of property abroad that were considered surplus after World War II (Dudden & Dynes, 1987, as cited in Encyclopedia.com, 2018).

Subsequent acts of Congress, including the Fulbright-Hays Act later referred to as the Mutual Education and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961,

broadened the programs and authorized the use of such currencies from other sources and the appropriation of dollars if needed for the effective administration of the programs by the Department of State. (Dudden & Dynes, 1987, as cited in Encyclopedia.com, 2018, p. 1)

Seventy-four years after the signing of the Fulbright-Hays Act into law, the tenets of the program's purpose "[promoting] cultural exchange and engagement with visitors from specific countries or regions of the world" (American Immigration Council, 2016, p. 1) is still a priority and speaks to Mr. Fulbright's statements in 1986 when he told the New York Times (1986) that he felt the exchange program was his greatest achievement in his 30 years in the Senate.

Cultural exchange in 2020 continues to be one way in which state leaders can gather information about the world outside their own borders, according to the Nordic Institute of Stability Studies (Public and Cultural Diplomacy Cultural Exchange, n.d.). "The motivation behind cultural exchanges is to change the perception of the host country among the foreigners, deconstruct the stereotypes, and create purposeful connections" (Public and Cultural Diplomacy Cultural Exchange, n.d.)

Program Sponsor

Program sponsor eligibility required an organization to demonstrate its ability to comply and remain in continual compliance with all provisions of the EVP regulations (22 CFR Part 62) and to meet its financial obligations and responsibilities attendant to successful sponsorship of its exchange program as described in 22 CFR 62.3(b) and 22 CFR 62.5(b) of the regulations (NAFSA.Org, 2015). The EVP for J-1 teachers cannot be successful without the collaborative partnership with the agencies who serve as the go-

between of the federal government, visa-seeking international teachers, and the hosting school districts. As discussed in detail in the Temporary User's Manual, the educator could not be considered for the program if they could not meet the following two prerequisites: previous experience in the field of international exchanges and financial requirements. A sponsoring program must have previous experience in cultural exchange programs, and the sponsors must meet the financial responsibilities outlined in the temporary user's manual.

Host Organizations

The U.S. Department of State administers the EVP via partnerships with the host organizations and sponsors (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2019). As described in the American Immigration Council's (2016) EVP and J-1 visa programming, "a host organization is a school, business, camp, or other entity in the United States that provides the actual internship, training, or education program which the exchange visitor participates" (p. 4). To be identified as a host organization, "the hosts must show they have appropriate facilities, equipment, and personnel to provide the exchange experience" (American Immigration Council, 2016, p. 4).

Research Questions

Though the hiring of J-1 exchange teachers is a temporary fix, the process comes with another level of complexity. The J-1 exchange teachers must persevere through a drastic learning curve. All teachers experience a transition from their student teaching school experience or even the transition into a different culture than their own as an American educator. What is unique about the J-1 exchange teachers is that they must transition not only into a different educational culture but new life experiences while

being expected to establish positive relationships with their American students. The research questions were selected because they allowed me to explore the complexity of the EVP both procedurally and psychologically. The research questions were aligned to the four parts of the CIPP evaluation model to answer the following research questions:

1. What has an impact on the experience of a J-1 teacher transitioning into an American rural school? Context & Input
2. How do J-1 teachers who are transitioning into an American rural school establish student-teacher relationships? Process
3. How effective is the implementation of the EVP as measured by J-1 teachers' perceived reasons for being in the program and the reality of their placement? Product

During this study, I expected to gain insight through the lived experiences of the current J-1 visa teacher originating from various countries. The findings should provide insight into the implementation of the EVP for rural school districts.

Chapter Summary

According to the report “Why Rural Matters,” released in 2017 by the Rural School and Community Trust, more than 9.3 million U.S. students attended a rural school, which was a number more significant than the combined enrollment of the nation's 85 largest school districts (Blad, 2019b). The report also addressed the rural school's lack of resources when compared to the districts in more populous areas and the fact they often get less attention (Blad, 2019b). It is in these rural school districts where they are trying various approaches to solve their teacher shortage. One short-term resolution is the use of J-1 exchange teachers.

One might say the latest edition to the endangered species list is a teacher.

Though this is not a factual statement, it is truly a powerful reminder of the impact our current teacher shortage is having in our rural public schools. Rural school districts are struggling to keep up with demand, and one of the greatest inequities is the fact that rural school districts often lack the funding to offer competitive wages. One alternative is the use of EVPs, which is not a long-term solution. This study will delve into the implementation of the program as both a cultural exchange program and teacher applicant pool.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Problem Statement

The teacher shortage has dramatically impacted the quality of education afforded to students in rural school districts. By implementing the EVP, school districts have utilized international exchange teachers to fill teacher vacancies. This study revealed and interpreted the lived experiences of exchange teachers in a rural school district through their transitions into a new school culture while simultaneously establishing positive relationships with their American students.

Rationale of the Study

In July 2020, President Trump made an unprecedented move in the context of the historical significance of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act under the auspices of COVID-19's impact on job opportunities and signed an executive order to suspend granting certain temporary worker visas through the end of 2020. The executive order included H-1B visas, H-2B visas, H-4 visas, L-1 visas, and some J-1 visas, primarily serving the EVP. The EVP's purpose for over 50 years has been to expand cultural exchange opportunities. This order's magnitude was evident in the governor of Nevada's letter respectfully asking the President to reverse the order.

As Governor of the State of Nevada, I write to express my profound concerns with the suspension of the J-1 visa program for our educators. The suspension of these visas undermines access to talents and skills that have historically enriched and enhanced our State and our nation and will potentially leave thousands of special education students without a teacher. (Blad, 2019a, p. 3)

The governor's request spoke to one of the primary purposes of this study, which

was to reveal and interpret the lived experiences of a purposeful sample of exchange teachers in a rural school district in the context of their teacher shortage issues.

“According to Nevada Governor Sisolak, the order negatively impacts 95 teachers, 88 of which were recruited to fill critical special education vacancies in the state” (Blad, 2019a, p. 2).

Research Site and Participants

I focused on implementing the EVP in a rural school district in a North Carolina school district. This rural school district was a micropolitan school district with a pattern of unequal access, opportunities, and outcomes predicted by race and were most prevalent in the lowest-performing schools. These factors and others are driven by poverty, including inadequate food, shelter, clothing, and medical care. These factors created friction that has caused the drag on the momentum of student growth and achievement, which is what each principal and teacher in the rural school district works hard to increase.

In this rural school district, there were persistent achievement gaps between varying subgroups. There has been significant improvement under new leadership, including but not limited to earning acquiring grants for innovative initiatives. The rural school district developed instructional programs to improve student achievement and increase graduation rates. Additionally, in this rural school district, the Board of Education also sought opportunities to expand their governance knowledge to positively impact student achievement.

The rural school district is comprised of 15 schools, including 10 elementary schools, one traditional middle school, and four innovative schools. I focused on the

current J-1 visa exchange teachers. There were over 5,000 students in the rural district, and there were approximately 900 teachers employed. Of the approximate 900 teachers employed, less than 10% were involved with the EVP. Of the J-1 visa exchange teachers, some were still working within their first 3-year contract, others were working within an extended contract for a fourth or fifth year, and a few had achieved citizenship once exiting the program.

In this rural school district, J-1 visa teachers originated from many countries, including but not limited to the Philippines, Jamaica, and Brazil. The J-1 visa participants participate in the same professional development that is established for the non-J-1 visa teachers.

Methodology

Formative program evaluation was the basis of the program evaluation, and the method used in the study was Stufflebeam's (2003) CIPP model. In the 1960s, Stufflebeam and his associates developed the CIPP model of program evaluation to analyze educational programs in a rural American school district (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). Stufflebeam's CIPP program evaluation model was used to analyze the EVP because it allowed for an organized framework that would benefit the continuity of the program in a rural American school district. I served as the internal evaluator of the study.

CIPP Evaluation Model

Stufflebeam (2003) proposed the CIPP evaluation model in 1983. The CIPP model was used for summative or formative evaluation. This model's significance is that it provides a holistic view of every element by evaluating the CIPP output from various

angles. Using the CIPP model was a systematic approach to evaluation design that fulfilled the general needs of evaluating the EVP. “This model was developed in the late 1960s to help improve and achieve accountability for U.S. school programs, especially those keyed to improving teaching and learning in urban, inner city school districts” (Stufflebeam, 2003, p. 31). According to Stufflebeam (2003), there were four purposes for this evaluation model: guiding decisions; providing records for accountability; informing decisions about installing and/or disseminating developed products, programs, and services; and promoting understanding of the dynamics of the examined phenomena.

The four components of the CIPP model were used to evaluate the EVP. The input evaluation provides information for determining the resources needed to meet the goals of the program. The context evaluation assesses the needs and opportunities of the program. The process evaluation focuses on the running of and the teaching-learning processes of the program. The product evaluation assesses outcomes from producing productive students beyond high school graduation.

Research Questions

The research questions were aligned to the four parts of the CIPP evaluation model. The complexity of the process for becoming an exchange visitor is detailed, and this research sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What has an impact on the experience of a J-1 teacher transitioning into an American rural school? Context & Input
2. How do J-1 teachers who are transitioning into an American rural school establish student-teacher relationships? Process
3. How effective is the implementation of the EVP as measured by J-1 teachers’

perceived reasons for being in the program and the reality of their placement?

Product

Instruments

I collected quantitative and qualitative data for the study, which included responses from the interview, the focus group participants, and the results from the survey administered to J-1 visa teachers. The instrument used for the study was an adaptation of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), the largest international survey asking teachers and school leaders about their working conditions and learning environments. After careful review of the OECD terms and conditions, any adaptation of the instrument required the following disclaimer along with the attribution be added to the research: This is an adaptation of an original work by the OECD. “The opinions expressed and arguments employed in this adaptation are the sole responsibility of the author or authors of the adaptation and should not be reported as representing the official views of the OECD or of its member countries” (OECD, 2018, p. 2).

Validity of the TALIS Questionnaire

Instrument validity can be defined as summarization of how well a test measures what it is supposed to measure, according to The Center on Standards & Assessment Implementation (2018) update. As noted above, this study used the TALIS survey questionnaire with minor adaptations. Though this study did not use specific TALIS data, the instrument validity was taken into consideration. The validity of the questionnaire was measured by survey items that had been created and analyzed extensively by means of previous research. Because the TALIS survey was not a content-specific test to

quantitatively measure substance, it was reasonable to expect that any type of questionnaire in which people are answering items using their own opinions and schema had less stringent validity criteria.

Reliability of the TALIS Questionnaire

According to The Center on Standards & Assessment Implementation (2018) update, instrument reliability refers to the internal consistency by which its items can be summed up to measure a particular idea. This study did not use the results from the TALIS questionnaire; however, the reliability of the instrument was acknowledged in this study as being demonstrated by the reliability of the scaled items in the questionnaire using the most commonly used reliability coefficient. In the case of questionnaires, interviews, and surveys, acceptable coefficient levels for item reliability may differ from tests meant to evaluate the performances of individuals, as these instruments are typically collecting information using items of predetermined validity.

Timeline of Research Activities

My timeline of events began in May 2021 and culminated in June 2021. In May 2021, I interviewed a district human resource director to acquire information on the need for J-1 visa teachers as well as to request applicable data. Survey tools used in the study were researched. Once a survey tool was selected that aligned with the study, I refined the survey tool following proper guidelines for its use in the study. In May 2021, I communicated with district leaders the intent of the program evaluation. CIPP data (if available) were collected from the district from the context aspect of the program evaluation. The context data of the CIPP model, which was used to evaluate the EVP, was collected using the previously developed district Theory of Action, which was the

current foundation for the rural school district's work.

In May 2021, I collected data from the school district regarding the input aspect of the program evaluation, including but not limited to the number of J-1 visas, participant demographics, and program components. As it relates to the program evaluation process, in May 2021, participants completed the survey and I identified focus group participants from the survey participants via email. As it related to the product aspect of the program evaluation, the focus group attendees were invited to a focus group Zoom session conducted in May 2021.

By June 2021, all program evaluation data were collected and documented for reporting purposes. The study results and recommendations were transcribed and then shared with university constituents, district and school leaders, and the broad population of school educators. I culminate all results, findings, and recommendations in Chapters 4 and 5 according to proper protocol and guidelines.

Table 1*Researcher Timeline*

Date	Activity
May 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research survey tools and select tool for survey using TALIS • Finalize selection of survey was administered, and request for permission to use survey was completed. • Communicate with district leaders the intent of the program evaluation. • Data will be collected from the district regarding the program evaluation's context to include the CIPP conducted (if available) to develop the district's Theory of Action currently the foundation of the work in the rural school district. • Data will be gathered from the school district regarding the Input aspect of the program evaluation, including but is not limited to the number of J-1 visas, participant demographics, and program components. • Interview district HR director to acquire information on the need for J-1 visa teachers and the HR Director. • As it relates to the program evaluation process, participants will complete the survey, and then I will identify focus group participants who will be contacted by email. • As it relates to the Product aspect of the program evaluation, the focus group attendee will be invited to a focus group zoom session to be conducted within the last few weeks of May 2021.
June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program evaluation data documented for reporting purposes. • The study results were shared with university constituents, district and school leaders, and the broad population of school educators.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to conduct a program evaluation using the CIPP evaluation model of the EVP. The research focused on 10 J-1 visa international teachers in a rural school district in North Carolina. I sought to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the EVP, the impact on teacher-student relationships, and the impact on teacher perceptions of their experiences. Data were collected through interviews, the use of surveys, and a focus group. Using the CIPP framework, data were analyzed, and results were reported to provide information as to the strengths, weaknesses, and levels of success of the program evaluation.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The primary purpose of this program evaluation was to make connections between the teacher shortage and the federal EVP related to the lived experiences of a purposeful sample of exchange teachers in a rural school district. In addition, this program evaluation study also examined EVP teacher experiences of enduring the emotionally complex transition into their new American school culture while simultaneously establishing positive relationships with their American students in a rural school district. Specifically, this program evaluation was conducted on one of the exchange programs of the Fulbright-Hays Act, which originated following World War II and still impacts our current reality, more explicitly thriving in the arena of teacher shortage in the 21st century.

Within the progression of the titles attached to the United States cultural exchange programs, the core values of the different programs remained relatively the same since its inception in 1949. For example, the teacher category, one of the Fulbright-Hays Act exchange programs purpose was

to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations, and the contributions being made toward a peaceful and more fruitful life for people throughout the world;
to promote international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement;
and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world. (United

States Codes, 1961 p. 1)

In 2013, the acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Private Sector Exchange of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs stated the use of the teacher exchange program to address teacher shortage rather than to facilitate its original purpose raised concerns (Lerner, 2013, p. 25669). The concern was the purpose of the teacher program had shifted from its original purpose, yet teacher recruitment, retention, and recoupment continued to be areas of concern for school districts and was even more acute in the rural school districts. As a result, it was suggested in the 2019-2020 State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina report that the state conduct deeper, more thorough research on the impact a shift in policy or practice would have and to determine the possible root causes of the shifting relationships among teacher recruitment, retention, and recoupment in North Carolina (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2020).

I chose to conduct a program evaluation on the implementation of one strategy used to mitigate the teacher shortage issue, the teacher program of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, within a small rural district. The benefit of using Stufflebeam's CIPP program evaluation model emphasized a comprehensive evaluation within a larger framework of an organization's various activities (Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2003).

Context evaluation assesses needs, assets, and problems within a defined environment (Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2003). The input evaluation identifies competing strategies, work plans, and budgets to investigate other existing programs that could serve as a model for the evaluated program (Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2003). Process evaluation monitors, documents, and assesses the teacher program to inform constituents

of the progress made during the implementation of the program (Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2003). Finally, product evaluation also referred to as “impact evaluation,” assesses the program’s reach in terms of the targeted audience and makes a judgment of the extent to which it addressed the needs of the population it served (Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2003). In this chapter, the results from the qualitative and quantitative analysis are presented. The procedure outlined in Chapter 3 was followed for the quantitative data (survey) and the qualitative data (focus group). The quantitative data were collected via a TALIS survey that was adapted by me. The responses are presented in bar graphs, circle graphs, and tables, with the percentage for each response identified in the figure or table accordingly. The qualitative data are organized by salient themes lifted from the human resource director interviews and focus group participants.

Throughout the chapter, the term respondent is used, followed by a number, to anonymously identify participant responses in the survey. The human resource director is referenced in the findings by their position title. In terms of the focus group, the term respondent followed by a number is used who identify those who volunteered for the focus group. I conducted one focus group virtually. The analysis of the data follows the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design explained in Chapter 3. The quantitative data from the EVP survey describe the experiences of the exchange visitor teachers in terms of background qualifications and preparation. The qualitative data from the focus group give further insight into the quantitative data collected from the EVP survey. More specifically, when the qualitative data were analyzed, five salient themes emerged from the international teacher interviewed: (a) personal motivation, (b) power of relationships, (c) transition after service contract, (d) impact on family, and (e) highly qualified.

This chapter contains reported data collected around the three research questions that coincided with the aspects of the thematic areas of the CIPP model, which formulated from the framework of the research design methodology. The three research questions used for this evaluation were

1. What has an impact on the experience of a J-1 teacher transitioning into an American rural school? Context & Input
2. How do J-1 teachers who are transitioning into an American rural school establish student-teacher relationships? Process
3. How effective is the implementation of the EVP as measured by J-1 teachers' perceived reasons for being in the program and the reality of their placement? Product

Research Question 1–Context and Input

Research Question 1's intended purpose was to determine the impact on the experience of a J-1 teacher transitioning into an American rural school. The context aspect of the CIPP model for the EVP study was evaluated using the previously developed Theory of Action for the rural school district. Principal components included establishing strategic partnerships such as with Modern Learning Environments, Opportunity Culture, and the priority of updating the technology infrastructure. The basis of the Theory of Action was grounded in the rural school district's mission, vision, and the following key actions:

- Provide dynamic, innovative, and personalized learning opportunities inclusive of anytime, anywhere, flexible instructional strategies designed to meet the needs of ALL learners.

- Facilitate opportunities for students to engage with future-focused skills through relevant, rigorous, and supportive learning experiences across a variety of academic and co-curricular settings; and
- Develop and execute a caring, stable, and learner-centered environment focusing on meaningful and productive relationships.

When the three actions were implemented with fidelity and focused on the specifically defined products in the areas of knowledge, skills, and disposition, the following were some of the expected outcomes respectively:

- Demonstrated mastery of the standards,
- application of future-focused skills, and
- owning one's learning.

In terms of impact on the experience of a J-1 teacher transitioning into an American rural school, the six-part journey established in the rural school district, grounded in the district's Theory of Action, included key components that also impacted the J-1 visa teacher experiences. The key components were leadership, modern curriculum, digital ecosystem, instructional models, professional learning, and community.

Participants

The human resource director emailed me a list of the international teachers who were categorized as now permanent citizens who completed the program and those who currently have a foreign sponsor. In terms of participants in the study, there were 27 potential participants; however, there were three potential participants who were not included because they worked under my leadership. In the end, 24 potential participants

were contacted to participate via email. Of the 24 potential participants, 10 participated in the research completion of the EVP survey, and one participated in the focus group. Of the 10 survey respondents, nine females and one male participated. Of the 10 participants, 30% had a bachelor's degree and 70% had a master's degree or professional degree; no participants had a doctoral degree.

Site

I was granted permission to conduct the research study. As a result, I communicated with the human resource director of the rural school district, and they answered six of the eight questions about the exchange teacher program in the small rural school district. In addition, I provided a letter describing the study to the exchange visitor participants via email. As a result, I emailed 35 exchange visitor teachers from the district where the study took place.

Quantitative Phase–Input Evaluation

In terms of the quantitative phase, the findings of the EVP survey addressed the three research questions regarding the input data. The quantitative data were gathered using a section of the TALIS survey which I had permission to adapt. The survey was entitled EVP, and it was used to consider the extent to which exchange visitor teacher perceptions impacted their experience in Research Question 1.

Background Context

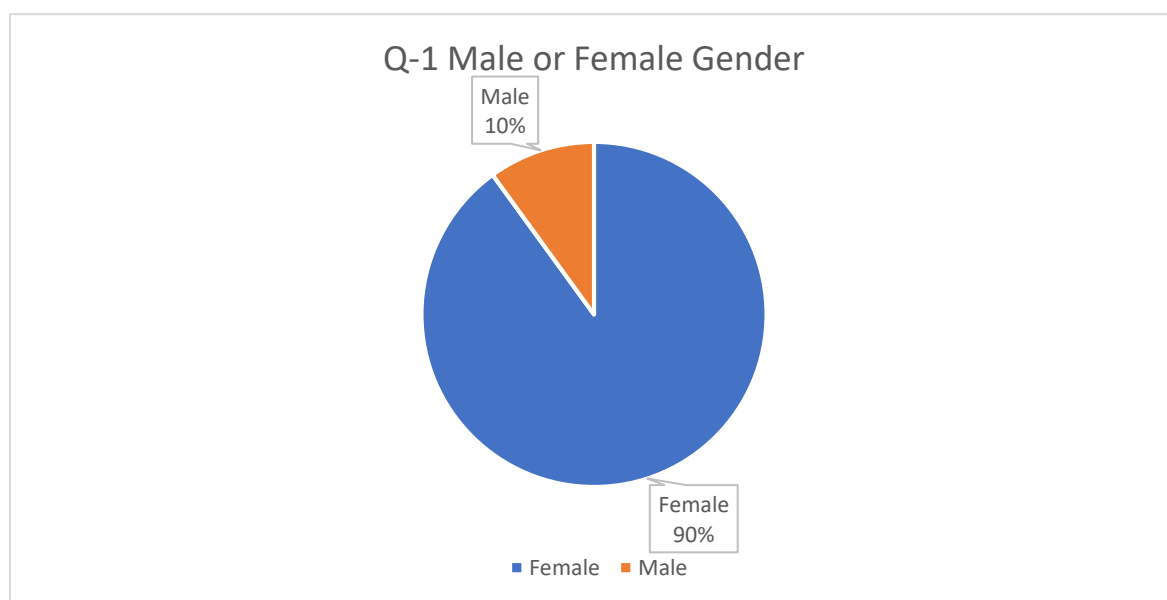
In terms of areas of impact on the exchange visitor participants, there were eight questions from the survey directly related to Research Question 1. The specific questions were 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. The responses from those particular questions on the EVP survey classified some of the critical generic characteristics of the EVP survey

participants, and each question was further described in the background context section of the findings.

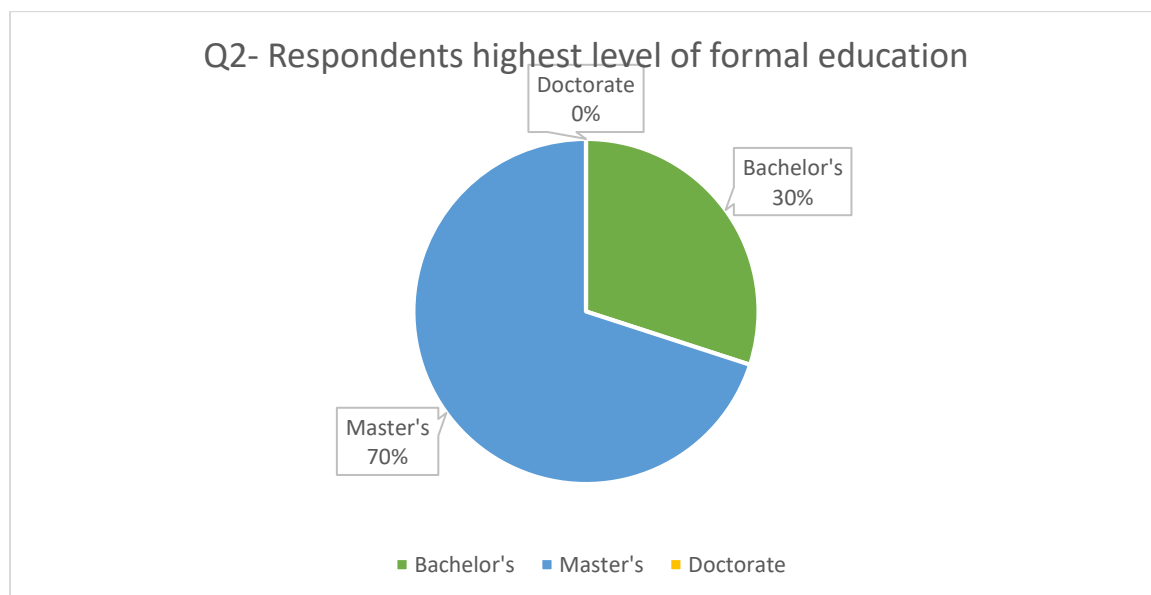
Question 1 of the EVP survey asked the EVP survey participants to identify their gender: female or male. As depicted in Figure 4, 90% of the respondents were female and 10% were male.

Figure 4

Question 1: Gender



Question 2 of the survey, Figure 5, asked the 10 participants to identify the highest degree earned. The question did not specify whether the degree was earned in the United States or the participant's home country. Seventy percent of the respondents had a master's degree, while 30% had a bachelor's degree; no participants had a doctoral degree.

Figure 5*Question 2: Highest Degree Earned***Years of Experience**

Regarding years of experience in the current school district, all respondents had more than 4 years of teaching experience, Respondent 2 had the least number of years of teaching experience at their current school in the United States, and Respondent 9 had the most significant number of years of experience at their current school; therefore, according to these data, 50% of the respondents had 12-20 years of experience and 50% of the respondents had less than 10 years of teaching experience at their current school.

Regarding years of experience in a respondent's home country, all respondents had more than 5 years of teaching experience in their home country, with two respondents (Respondent 4 and Respondent 8) having the least years of experience in their home country. Two respondents had the most significant number of years of teaching experience in their home country: Respondent 5 had 23 years and Respondent 7 had 27 years. The results from the survey indicated the perceived value of education to

the participants by the number of years of teaching experience both here and in their home countries. The participant's total years of service in the rural district were a combined 118 years. There was a combined total of 113 years of teaching experience overall for the participants in their home country. Table 2 depicts responses to Questions 1, 2, 6, and 7 by individual respondents.

Table 2

Questions 1, 2, 6, and 7

Exchange visitor participant	Gender	Highest degree	Years of experience at current school	Years of experience in home country	Total years of experience
Respondent 1	F	Master's	15	7	22
Respondent 2	F	Bachelor's	7	7	14
Respondent 3	F	Master's	8	8	16
Respondent 4	F	Master's	17	6	23
Respondent 5	F	Master's	12	23	35
Respondent 6	F	Master's	8	7	15
Respondent 7	F	Bachelor's	9	27	36
Respondent 8	M	Master's	14	6	20
Respondent 9	F	Master's	20	12	32
Respondent 10	F	Bachelor's	8	10	18

Question 6 asked the participants to identify their years working as a teacher in their current school district (which was the district being studied). In Table 2, years of service by each respondent were organized: Question 6 asked the respondents to identify years working as a teacher in their school district, and Question 7 asked the respondents to identify years working as a teacher in their home country. Included in Table 2, the total years of services by each survey respondent was calculated.

When the years of service in the current school and years teaching in the home country were added together, respondents each had over 10 combined years of service years. Respondent 7 had the greatest number of years of service at 36 years, and

Respondent 5 followed with 32 years. Thus, the total years of service in the rural district being studied were 118 years and a total of 113 years of teaching experience in the participants' home countries. Table 2 summarizes the results of the survey for years of experience in a rural district and in their home country, school, gender, degree level, and total years of experience.

Regarding experience in teaching in the participants' home country, two of the 10 respondents reported working more than 20 years in their home country. Five of the respondents reported working 5 to 10 years within their home country. The participants were asked if they had worked in other school districts in the United States; 20% of the respondents have worked in other districts, whereas 80% have only worked in the rural community being studied. Participant experience included two respondents who have worked in roles other than teaching (e.g., like a university lecture), two respondents did not respond, and two participants responded non-applicable (NA). Also, determining if teaching was the participant's first career choice was included in the survey, and 50% of the respondents indicated teaching was their first career choice and 50% said it was not.

Quantitative Phase–Process Evaluation

The process evaluation aspect of the study aligned to the quantitative phase focused on the results of the EVP survey which asked the exchange visitor to identify which elements were included in their formal education or training in their country. There were eight categories to assess: content of some or all subject(s) I teach, general pedagogy, classroom practice in some or all subjects(s) I teach, teaching in a mixed ability setting, teaching in a multicultural or multilingual setting, use of information and communication technology (ICT) for teaching, student behavior and classroom

management, and monitoring student development and learning. The respondents had to choose either yes or no regarding each element. As demonstrated in Table 3, 50% or more of the respondents selected yes for eight elements. The results from Survey Question 4 as depicted in Table 3 indicated three of the respondents had 100% or all eight of the elements included in the formal education or training.

Table 3

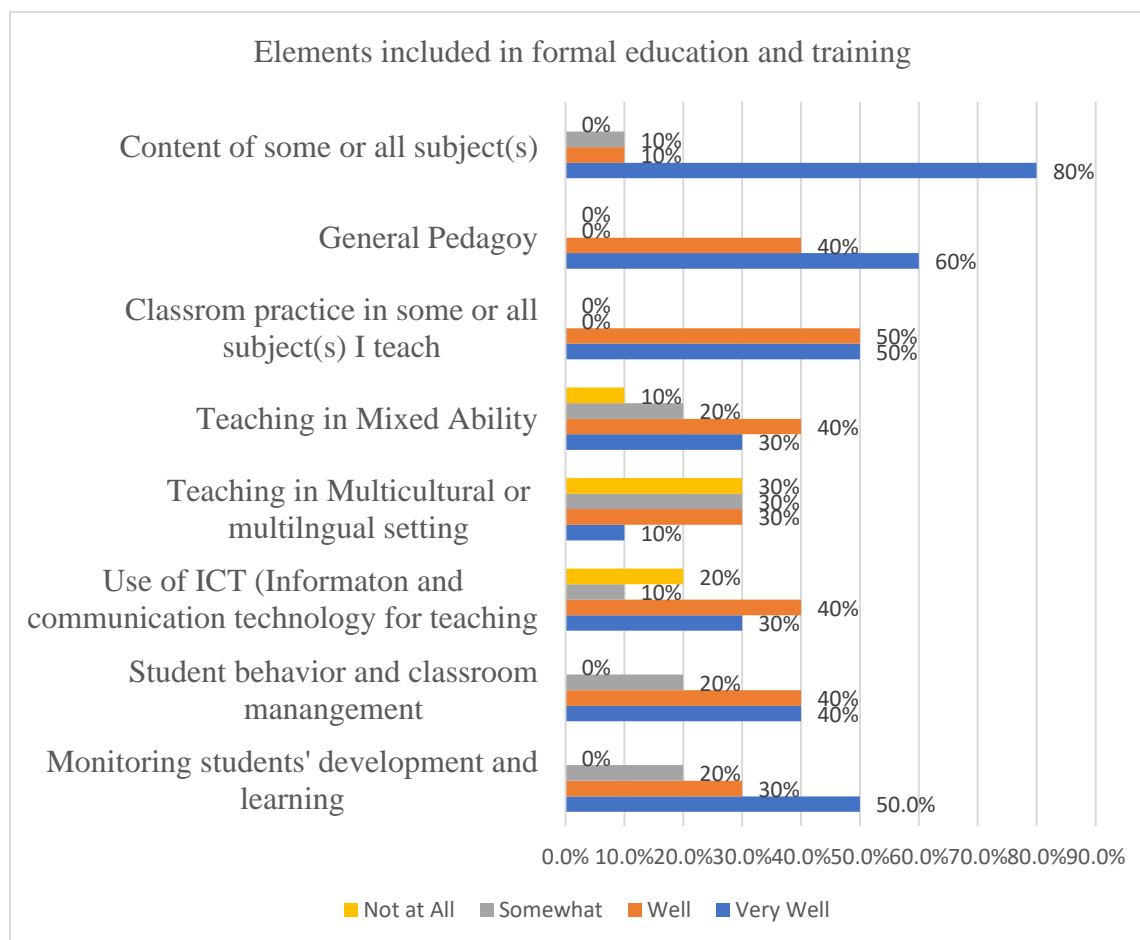
Collective Preparedness of Participants by Element for All Respondents Indicating Areas Included in Formal Education or Training

Cumulative preparedness by element for all respondents	Percent yes	Percent no
Content of some or all subject(s) I teach	90%	10%
General pedagogy	100%	0%
Classroom practice in some or all subject(s) I teach	100%	0%
Teaching in a mixed ability setting	90%	10%
Teaching in a multicultural setting	50%	50%
Use of ICT for teaching	70%	30%
Student behavior and classroom management	90%	10%
Monitoring student development and learning	100%	0%

Figure 6 shows the responses by the individual respondent via the following categories: very well, well, somewhat, and not at all in regard to their preparedness for their J-1 experience. Four of the respondents selected yes for seven of the eight elements included in their formal education or training. Ten percent of the respondents identified six of the eight elements were included in their formal education or training. There was one respondent of the 10 whose education or training was comprised of four of the eight elements identified. When looking at the frequency of the elements being marked as yes per each respondent, 40%, more specifically Respondents 3, 5, 9, and 10, indicated their formal education and training included all eight of the elements.

Figure 6

Question 4: The Percent by the Element of the Frequency of Selection by Respondents Having the Concept Included in Formal Education or Training



Of the 40% who experienced all the elements in their formal education and training, the average years of teaching experience in their current district and their home country were 25 years.

Three of the 10 respondents identified seven of the eight elements as part of their formal education and training. Ten percent of the respondents selected six of the eight elements were in their formal education and training. Ten percent of the respondents identified four of the eight elements included in their formal education or training.

Overall, more than 50% of the respondents' formal education and training included the content of some or all subject(s), general pedagogy, classroom practice in some or all subjects(s), teaching in a multicultural or multilingual setting, use of ICT for teaching, student behavior and classroom management, and monitoring student development and learning. Table 4 organizes the data by the number of elements each respondent identified as being included in their formal education or training. Of the eight elements, use of ICT for teaching had the greatest number of no's, with 30% of the respondents indicating it as not being included in their formal education or training. Fifty percent of the respondents received formal education or training in teaching in a multicultural or multilingual setting.

Table 4

Number of Elements Each Respondent Identified as Being Included in Their Formal Education or Training

Exchange visitor participant survey respondents	Percent yes	Percent no
Respondent 1	50%	50%
Respondent 2	87.5%	12.5%
Respondent 3	100%	0%
Respondent 4	87.5%	12.5%
Respondent 5	100%	0%
Respondent 6	87.5%	12.5%
Respondent 7	87.5%	12.5%
Respondent 8	100%	0%
Respondent 9	100%	0%
Respondent 10	100%	0%

Question 4 on the survey asked the respondents to assess the preparedness to execute the eight elements in their teaching directly correlated to the formal education or training. The four criteria were not at all, somewhat, well, and very well. In terms of content, 80% of the respondents indicated they were very well prepared to teach some or

all the content they are teaching; when looking at results of the other seven elements, teaching in a multicultural or multilingual setting was an element that the greatest number of respondents had the least amount of confidence in their preparedness with 30% responding not at all, and 30% respondent somewhat. The next area with the greatest number of respondents indicating they were not well prepared was for the use of ICT; 20% of the respondents indicated their preparedness was not at all, and 10% indicated their preparedness was somewhat.

Survey Question 11 asked the respondents to mark one response for each statement regarding content, and Table 5 depicts the results. The results indicate the depth of training and preparation the international teachers had upon entering the United States. I could not analyze the responses from the second part of the question because the question was not relevant in that there could have been elementary international participants who did not have an option to express their responses. Question 11 was valuable in defining the depth of knowledge of the survey participants.

Table 5*Question 11: Depth of Training and Preparation Regarding Content*

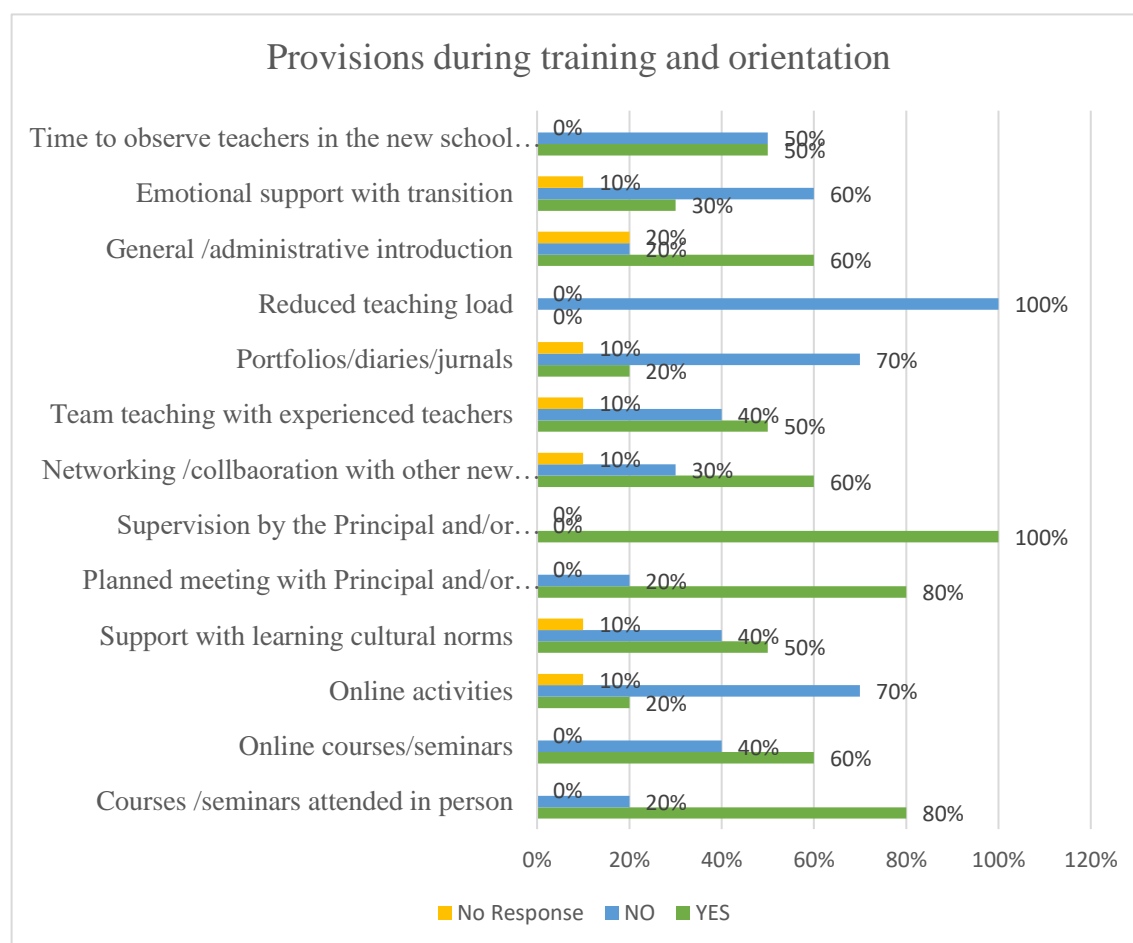
For each statement choose	Included in my formal education or training	I teach it to sixth-, seventh-, and/or eighth-grade students this year	No response
Reading, writing, and literature...	80%	20%	0%
English as a Second Language...	40%	30%	20%
Mathematics...	80%	0%	20%
Science	80%	0%	20%
Social Studies...	80%	0%	20%
Modern foreign languages...	70%	10%	20%
Classical Greek and/or Latin	30%	10%	60%
Technology...	60%	0%	40%
Arts...	90%	0%	10%
Physical and health education...	90%	0%	10%
Religion and/or ethics...	80%	0%	20%
Business studies...	40%	10%	50%
Practical and vocational skills...	70%	0%	30%
Special Education...	50%	10%	30%

Provisions of Induction

It was essential to the study to understand participant perspectives related to the list of varying support strategies during the exchange visitor teacher induction or orientation at their current school. In Figure 7 the results for Question 12 are presented, and international teacher participants indicated reduced teaching load was not a resource offered to teachers during their training and orientation.

Figure 7

Question 12: When You Began Working at Your Current School, Were the Following Provisions Part of Your Induction or Orientation?

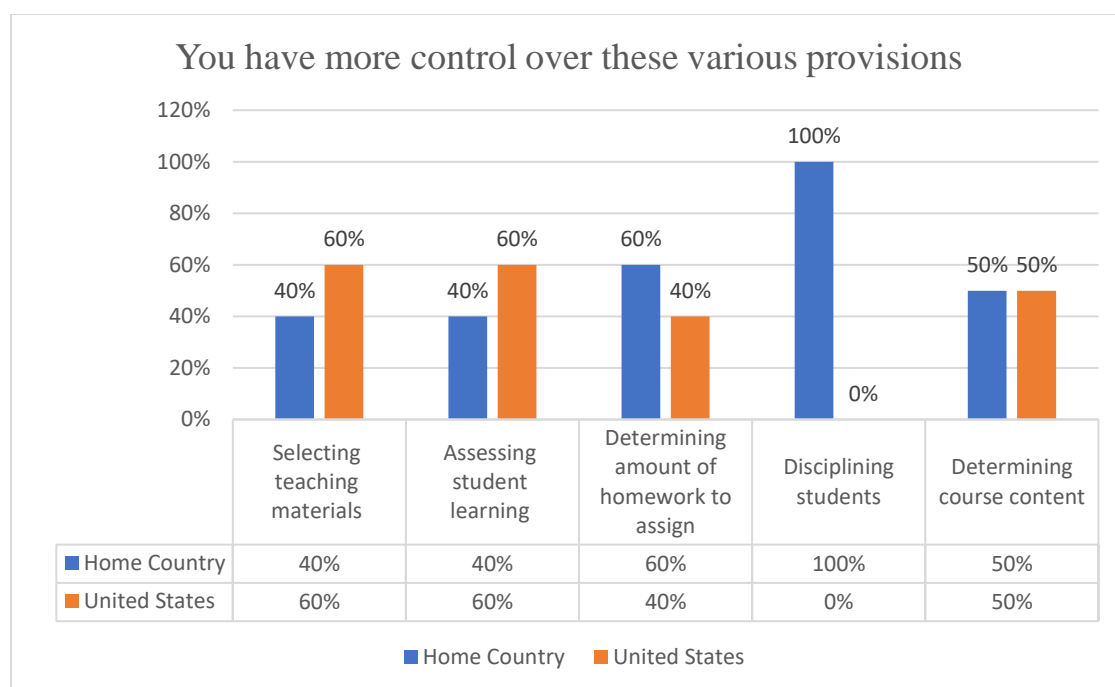


Survey Question 13 depicted in Figure 8 asked the participants to identify which area they had more control over, whether it was in their home country or the United States. The results show that disciplining students was an area in which all respondents indicated they had more control over their home country. In terms of the other elements, the respondents identified determining the amount of homework to assign as the next element rated as having more control in their home country. More respondents identified the United States as the locale with more power for the following aspects: selecting

teaching methods, assessing student learning, determining the amount of homework, and determining course content. Among the elements rated, respondents identified having less control over selecting teaching methods and assessing student learning in their home country. Choosing course content resulted in 50% identifying the United States as the locale in which they had more control, and the other 50% identified their home country. In terms of individual respondents, Figure 8 represents respondent perspectives regarding their control of these aspects of their classroom compared to their home country and the United States.

Figure 8

Question 13: Control Over Provisions



Looking at the results, the teachers felt they had more control over disciplining students here in their home country and zero control in the United States. This should not be mistaken to indicate classroom management was not a concern; it only speaks to the amount of power the teachers perceived they had. The respondents also indicated they

had more control over determining the amount of homework to assign in their home country. However, in the United States, the respondents felt they had more control over and selecting teaching methods and assessing student learning. Still, they did not feel they had any control over disciplining students in the United States.

Summary of Research Question 1–Aligned to Constructivism Theory

In summary, Research Question 1 sought to identify what has impacted the experience of a J-1 visa teacher transitioning into an American rural school. The questions selected were framed to identify impacts on participant knowledge. I was able to use the findings to develop applicable recommendations for improvement related to the exchange visitor teacher experiences. In general, the findings corroborated the rural school district's need for highly qualified teachers in order to execute the district's strategic plan as well as to address the teacher shortage issue. The findings also aligned with the main tenets of the conceptual purpose of the EVPs.

Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory authenticated the notion that identified impacts on a participant's transitional experience directly correlated to the theory in that the learning becomes the process when one builds an accurate internal representation that mirrors external structures within the "real" world, which resonates with the "new" world of the exchange teachers. Every impact experienced by the teachers whether positive or negative is the process of reconstructing external realities through a process of internalization within cognitive constructivism.

Qualitative Phase–Process Evaluation

Research Question 2's purpose was to identify how J-1 teachers transitioning into an American rural school established student-teacher relationships, which addressed the

process aspect of the program evaluation. Dewey (1938) wrote, “all human experience is ultimately social: that it involves contact and communication” (p. 38). Participants of the EVP were tasked with recognizing their perceptions through a blurred lens of reality. They were new to the educational and societal culture in which their students had been raised. Also, the EVP participants had to get past standard dialect and general nuances to establish a student-teacher relationship. The results supported the significance of relationships in that both the human resource director and interviewee were quoted speaking to the power of relationships both from the adult learner and the student learner. The interviewee recognized the need to understand the varying student lifestyles in the rural district. The interviewee's previous work experience afforded the opportunity to work in both affluent and very poor educational environments. The interviewee was quoted as stating, “I went from teaching kids in the high poverty area to teaching kids that would take a flight to England for the weekend or going on a yacht just because” and “Because not everyone understands what these children are going through and just have to have compassion and just be there for them.”

When participants were asked to identify those provisions offered to them during their transition and orientation the results indicated the most frequently experienced provision was in-person courses webinars and planned meetings with the principal and/or experienced teacher with the rate of response at 80% for each provision. The supervision by the principal and/or experienced teachers had the highest rate of response, with 100% of the participants having that level of support during their transition. The three categories align with the power of relationships.

Summary of Research Question 2–Aligned to Constructivism Theory

In terms of the findings for Research Question 2, the relationships were relevant beyond that of just the student and teacher. The findings made evident the power of relationships in terms of teacher adaptation into a new educational culture as well as from the perspective of the participants acclimating socially into new communities both personally and professionally. Last, the findings speak to the power of relationships in terms of the positive impact the relationships have on the family adjustment to the new culture and surroundings. The results for Research Question 2 extended beyond the student-teacher relationship, in terms of the feedback gathered in reference to adult relationships. In terms of the conceptual framework of the research study, the adult-to-adult relationships according to Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the collaborative nature of the learning that has significant relevance for these adult learners, international teachers. When the exchange participants' new experiences in the U. S. were filtered through their prior experiences from their home countries, their "new knowledge" could not be defined as simply the act of assimilating and accommodating to a new normal.

Qualitative Phase–Product Evaluation

Research Question 3's purpose was to determine the effectiveness of the implementation of the EVP as measured by J-1 teacher perceived reasons for being in the program and the reality of their placements. The focus group was conducted to answer Research Question 3. The final data collection aspect of the research study was the focus group. Participation in the focus group was solicited in dual ways: via the survey and email follow-ups. Initially, no respondents were willing to participate in the focus group. As a result of the email that followed up with all participants, five respondents

volunteered. Respondents chose Wednesday, May 15 at 7:30 or Friday, May 17. I anticipated the participants who volunteered would be present on Wednesday night at 7:30 despite no confirmation from participants. The focus group was conducted via Zoom, and only one participant attended the session. I waited a few minutes to provide more respondents time to join; however, to respect the one participant's time, I moved forward with the focus group with the one participant. I changed the identity of the participant and labeled the person as Participant 1. I began the session with an overview of the process and then began to ask Participant 1 the eight questions.

Preliminary emergent themes were then organized and reorganized to find connections and clusters of related themes that represent similar understandings (Smith et al., 2009). Emergent themes with similar, or at times opposing but related, ideas were then grouped together to develop "super-ordinate" themes. Super-ordinate themes are higher-level abstractions that define broad ideas that connect a cluster of themes. These sub-ordinate themes can apply to each participant in a study but are likely to manifest differently across cases (Smith et al., 2009, p. 166). At the completion of this analysis, I developed a table of super-ordinate themes and related themes that described the experiences of each international participant teacher. See Table 6.

Table 6

Representation of the Superordinate and Some Related Ordinate Phrases From Interview and Focus Group Responses

Superordinate	Related ordinate phrases
Personal motivation	Emotional Stamina No, I am. I am afraid to go back for one.
Power of relationships	Achievement in the district has grown in several areas through the implementation of the Exchange Visitor Program. Both elementary and secondary schools have developed unique experiences for students and have seen an increase in achievement and growth. Increases in achievement and growth can be traced back to individual international teachers. Coming to teachers, who are warm and just understand that they're from a whole different place that really helped. That made me feel like I'm with another family, my extended family. I was like this lady is bending over backwards for my family.
Transition after service contract	We don't want to go back. You know that that part (returning home) is definitely not necessarily happening per se. So, in a way I would say, you know, it's not happening on a large scale because teachers that come here, they're staying here. So that's a big hindrance to The Exchange program No, I am. I am afraid to go back for one.
Impact on family	The transition and adjustment period upon first arriving in a rural area Most difficult for teachers to adjust when they arrive in the middle of the school year. My four-year-old he was he already did Pre-K in Jamaica. It was a little bit tricky; because he didn't qualify for Pre-K. The teacher said that he could teach the class, but he wasn't the age where he could get into Kindergarten.
Highly qualified	They come with some extensive interviews and, and just making sure that they've dot every, I crossed all their t's to make sure that they are getting high qualified teachers. And so that is something that is a positive outcome because school districts are also trying to hold on to the teachers that are coming. come to the district with years of experience, content knowledge. Many have graduate degrees obtained from colleges and universities in the United States. After working in the district for one to two years, our international teachers have obtained high growth and high levels of proficiency.

Summary of Research Question 3—Aligned to Constructivism Theory

In terms of Research Question 3, the themes that resonated from the findings validated my presumed connection between the effective implementation of the EVP program and participant perceptions of their experiences. In fact, the focus group participant's recollection of an experience with her superintendent magnified the

implication of effective implementation and the power of relationships. The focus group participant stated she is willing to remain working in a lower-paying rural district because of the positive experiences she has had during her transition, which speaks to effective program implementation. Participant responses during the interview and the focus group also aligned with the constructivist theory, in that the exchange teacher is the student who is reconstructing the pedagogical landscape of their new experiences in the United States based upon previous teaching experience and resulting in new realities.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study was constructed based on the relationships I identified as existing between the main variables in the study. In terms of this study, for students to be educated, they need a teacher; and in order to teach, school districts require teachers. Thus, the EVP has been an added asset in decreasing the teacher shortage. The theoretical framework of this study centered around the learning process of the adult learner and students in terms of constructivism. From participant experiences, the results of the survey indicated that the exchange visitor participants were well educated as noted in the results of the study. Additionally, the survey results imply teacher abilities to learn and adapt from their new experiences; and this assumption is evident in respondent years of service in their host and home countries, their highest degree earned, and the percent of areas in which the teachers identified that they were well prepared for teaching. From the study participant responses, the significance of the EVP program was evident as one solution to the teacher shortage issue, which I presumed would resonate in the data.

The results from the human resource director interview indicated the significance

participant cultural backgrounds had on their ability to establish positive student-teacher relationships in terms of sharing their experiences. The human resource director stated, “The exchange program provided our students with outstanding educators who are motivated to learn as much as possible and to do what is necessary to assist their student’s in being successful.”

Once in the United States, EVP participants begin constructing their knowledge of their new normal. Their background and previous knowledge in their home countries impacted how they were able to learn and consent to their new normal. The focus group results identified how EVP participants became acclimated to their new normal through training, professional development, mentoring, and the new relationships established with new supervisors and colleagues. The human resource director identified a positive correlation to the student achievement in the district since the implementation of the EVP program, which asserts the likeliness of positive student and teacher relationships due to EVP participant abilities to construct new knowledge that results in a positive outcome despite the mental, emotional, and physical attributes of the overall EVP experience. In essence, the EVP effectiveness with students was a direct correlation to their using the constructivist learning theory to help their students understand their previous teaching experience. According to the constructivism theory, this new knowledge acquisition is crucial to understand as an educator because it influences the way all students learn. The results for the focus group identified ways in which participant experiences in their training and professional development supported their transition upon their arrival in the U.S. The EVP participants were exemplars themselves of the construct people learn to learn as they learn, which was supported by the respondent’s description of the training,

mentoring, etc., in the focus group. The human resource director's statement, "International teachers come to the district with years of experience, content knowledge and many have graduate degrees obtained from colleges and universities in the United States," is also evidence of the construct people learn to learn and learning is an active process, which are two of the tenets of constructivism.

In the constructivism theoretical framework for this study, the research findings substantiated the implication that international teachers have a range of experiences that were relevant to their experience as participants in the EVP. The participant's active role in the exchange program was modeled in Figure 1, and their experiences before participating in the program shaped each participant's reality of the overall experience to varying degrees. This was substantiated by a focus group participant who stated, "I've encountered just one that really couldn't deal with the situation and they did 2 months, and they were like I'm out of here." For participants in the EVP, adaption was a relevant aspect of their success. The international teachers took new information into their existing cognitive structure and then accommodated it by establishing new reasoning configurations in a totally new environment, all of which is supported by study findings.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to conduct a program evaluation using the CIPP evaluation model of the EVP. The study focused on 10 J-1 visa international teachers in a rural school district in North Carolina. I sought to evaluate data collected through interviews, surveys, and a focus group. Using the CIPP framework, data were analyzed and results were reported for the purpose of providing information as to the strengths, weaknesses, and levels of success of the program evaluation.

This chapter presented results that addressed the overall effectiveness of the EVP, the impact on teacher-student relationships, and the impact on teacher perceptions of their experience. As the findings suggest, even though each participant experienced the transitional process uniquely, there were commonalities of issues noted in the human resource director interview and the focus group response. Chief among these were personal motivation and emotional stamina to endure the experience, power of relationships, fear about transition after service, appreciation of greater access to a better life in the U.S., context-related challenges in regard to no control over student discipline in the United States, and lack of preparation of in the area of multicultural and multilingual teaching. Additionally, participants noted the EVP's positive impact on student achievement in the rural district, the increased global footprint, and the cultural exchange benefits.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter, a summary of the findings for the three research questions is discussed. This section also includes my interpretation of the study, its limitations, implications, and recommendations for program practices, and further studies about teacher programs, which originated under the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1946.

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was

- to define teacher shortage, to define the federal EVP, and to make known and interpret the lived experiences of a purposeful sample of exchange teachers in a rural school district;
- to examine the EVP teacher experience of enduring the emotionally complex transition into their new American school culture, while simultaneously establishing positive relationships with their American students in a rural school district; and
- to clarify the EVP in more detail from the perspective of the participants and the hosting rural school district.

The literature review provided a foundation of knowledge supporting the theoretical framework based on constructivism and the conceptual framework of the key relationships in the study.

Furthermore, the research review showed an area of divergence in the EVP as it related to the exchange visitors returning to their home country, because returning tends not to occur. Rather than see the lack of return as failing to meet the requirements, that

fact supports the relevance the exchange program is becoming a possible resolution for the teacher shortage that tends to be more prevalent in rural school districts. The study participant responses collected from the human resource director, Exchange Visitor Survey, and the focus group discussion conducted showed several themes:

1. Personal motivation
2. Power of relationships
3. Transition after service contract
4. Impact on family
5. Highly qualified

Research Questions

The research questions were aligned to the four parts of the CIPP evaluation model and were as follows:

1. What has an impact on the experience of a J-1 teacher transitioning into an American rural school? Context & Input
2. How do J-1 teachers who are transitioning into an American rural school establish student-teacher relationships? Process
3. How effective is the implementation of the EVP as measured by J-1 teachers' perceived reasons for being in the program and the reality of their placement? Product

Review of Methodology

I served as the internal evaluator of the study. A qualitative design was used to answer the research questions. The formative program evaluation, CIPP, the method used in the study, was Stufflebeam's (2003) CIPP model. In the 1960s, Stufflebeam and his

associates developed the CIPP model of program evaluation to analyze educational programs in a rural American school district (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). Stufflebeam's CIPP program evaluation model was used to analyze the EVP because it allowed for an organized framework that benefited the study in terms of the continuity of the analysis of the teacher program in a rural American school district.

There were three aspects to the qualitative research design resulting in data collected from the human resource director, EVP participant survey, and the focus group interaction. The data were then analyzed, leading to an overall interpretation of the data. The purpose of the EVP survey instrument was to obtain information about exchange visitor teacher experiences, needs, and support. The components of the EVP survey were presented in the form of bar graphs with the percentage for participant responses, and there were no open-ended responses.

The qualitative data were organized by research questions. The term respondent was followed by a number for each exchange visitor participant who volunteered for the study. The focus group was conducted on two different dates. The interviews were semi-structured to promote organic conversation for the study. The questions for the focus groups were drawn from the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2000-2004, which was an evaluation designed to investigate the overall achievements of the strategy in strengthening families and communities (including any negative impacts and other costs incurred), the factors that contributed to these impacts, and the main learnings for future policy and practice (RMIT University Circle, 2008).

Interpretation of the Findings

Through the course of the study, I found key themes with regard to exchange

visitor participant experiences in a rural North Carolina school district. There were five salient themes from the results of the study:

1. Personal motivation
2. Power of relationships
3. Transition after service contract
4. Impact on family
5. Highly qualified

The results of the study revealed there were different responses regarding personal motivation ranging from “I am afraid to go back” to “This is where I want to be.” The interviewee stated,

It also has to do with you know, your thinking and your ability to adapt and all of that and looking at the bigger picture and looking ahead in terms of what you want to achieve, how are you going to do it.

In addition, the human resource director stated, “The exchange program provides our students with outstanding educators who are motivated to learn as much as possible and do what is necessary to assist their students in being successful.” The statement aligns with the survey responses in that 50% of the participants chose to teach as their first career, which speaks to the mindset of the participants. Additionally, the combined years of service also indicated the personal motivation and emotional stamina required for a participant to be successful in the program.

Furthermore, the interviewee agreed with the idea of the significance of the EVP as defined by the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, yet the interviewee’s personal motivation and mindset regarding returning to their home country

contradicted the exchange purpose of the EVP. The interviewee said, “It's not quite working seeing that people are not going back cause it's an exchange program and that's the only thing. And like I said, I'm very guilty, but that is the only downfall to this program”. Survey results to Question 6 regarding years of service in the hosting district also substantiate the contradiction of returning but support the theme of personal motivation. In reality, there are fewer high school graduates interested in pursuing education majors and fewer college students interested in pursuing teaching careers, according to the National Condition of Educators 2014 Report (ACT, 2014).

These findings are consistent with previous research. In terms of an exchange teacher, upon their arrival in the United States, the collaborative aspect of their learning in a new culture is a primary aspect of their social interactions at this stage of their experience. During this stage of the teacher's exchange experience, the cognitive aspect of their social interaction is the foundation of their experience.

The literature review indicated that “One of the most important factors in raising student achievement is a highly qualified teacher” (U.S. Department of Education, 2006, p. 1) and both the human resource director and the interviewee substantiated the relevance of highly qualified teachers in their responses and were quoted as follows:

Just making sure that they've dot[t] every i and crossed all their t's to make sure that they are getting highly qualified teachers. And so that is something that is a positive outcome because school districts are also trying to retain teachers that are they. So, that's a positive. It's just a preparation, the preparation, and they really make sure that you have what it takes to come into the schools and come here, and they're really able to adapt. They are really prepared mentally and

emotionally. (Respondent 1)

The human resource director also recognized the value of high qualified teachers when they stated the following:

There are many strengths in implementing the EVP in a rural school district. International teachers come to the district with years of experience, content knowledge, and many have graduate degrees obtained from colleges and universities in the United States. After working in the district for one to two years, our international teachers have obtained high growth and high levels of proficiency.

EVP is beneficial for teachers by enhancing their personal learning outcomes as international teachers. Their dedication to the school district for years of service speaks to the likelihood of decreasing teacher shortage and attrition and increasing teacher retention.

Conclusion of Findings

In summary, Mann argued, “the aptness to teach involves the power of perceiving how far a scholar understands the subject matter to be learned and what, in the natural order is the next step to take” (Mann & Cremin, 1957, p. 16). The exchange visitor teacher intuitiveness is what leads their students’ minds to discover and learn, which directly correlates to the learning experiences of the exchange visitor teachers. According to Bartlett (2014), they use the same intuitiveness to support themselves as they navigate through the similarities and understandings about broad structures of schooling and notions of teaching, interaction with content, pedagogy, and contexts because it is highly localized.

Relations between the exchange visitor teacher and their students are not the only prevailing adaption to U.S. schools; such adaptations are also reflective of the expectations of the sponsoring organization, hosting district, and school-level administration. Perhaps adjusting to effective teaching in the U.S. and to the cultural ways of communication and interaction that emanate from working with American students in their classrooms could be tantamount to exchange visitor teachers adjusting to the norms and expectations of the school and community in which the school is located. The purpose of the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1946, more commonly known as the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, remains intact in that there is an increase in the mutual understanding between the people of the U.S. and people of other countries via cultural and educational exchanges, whether or not the participant returns to their home country. Over time, there is an expectation that the exchange teacher will develop knowledge of and take into account student cultural values in order to be successful.

The Significance of the Study

The study of EVP participant experiences in teaching in a rural school district was significant because they confirmed the need for the cultural exchange aspect of the program and the residual outcome of addressing the teacher shortage in a North Carolina rural school district.

Furthermore, the study revealed factors that impacted the exchange program's overall success; one being the participants not returning to their home country. The research study may be used to help exchange visitor teachers and administrators enhance collaboration and seek solutions to promote culturally engaging learning experiences

and/or environments in order to increase teacher effectiveness in terms of student achievement.

Recommendations for Exchange Visitor Teachers, Host District, and District Sponsor

1. School and district leaders should provide exchange teachers with support teaching in multicultural settings to include local, regional norms within the context of the United States cultural image. Using digital materials along with some traditional hard copy resources about multicultural teaching resources might be an appropriate option to help exchange teachers enhance student-teacher relationships.
2. School and district leaders should provide exchange program teachers with professional development on classroom management because the survey data indicate student discipline was an area where the teachers felt they had more control in their home country.
3. The EVP's sponsor, their host district, and school should provide time and capacity for highly experienced exchange teachers and the permanent citizens, former EVPs, to work with the newest EVP participants for additional support to promote continued personal motivation and strengthen student cultural awareness. Schools hosting EVPs should allocate time and networking tailored specifically to address the most common transitional issues facing new EVPs. This allocated time would allow exchange visitor teachers to learn from their American colleagues, share ideas, and strengthen best teaching practices to enhance student learning and prevent teachers from feeling lonely

or isolated.

Recommendation to the Secretary of State in Regard to J-1 Visa

The Secretary of State should include in the Biden immigration reform a component addressing the J-1 visa requirement in regard to exchange teachers returning to their home countries. There has not been a change to the 3-year period of the program duration according to the U.S. Department of State (2013). With the number of exchange visitor not returning to their home allowances in the Visa process should be made such that exchange teachers are able to complete their program requirements without returning.

Summary of the Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to gauge exchange visitor participant perceptions and experiences to help rural districts address teacher shortage issues and ways to provide a support system for them that will lead to an increase in teacher effectiveness, teacher retention, and student achievement. Recommendations have been provided to help with examining the themes that were present in the literature and to probe into the experiences of exchange visitor participants, which arose from the explanatory sequential mixed methods design.

Limitations of the Study

First, one limitation of the study was the biases of me, the host organization, and program participants related to personal experiences. Second, another limitation was the data were not available from the host organization pertaining to retrieving the results of the Teacher Working Condition Survey for EVP participants only. Third, a limitation of the study was that the focus group interview participation included only one respondent,

and perhaps more participants would have attended the focus group interviews if they were facilitated earlier in the school year. Fourth, a limitation of the study was that the focus group interviews took place during the busy month of May when the participants were closing out one of the most complex school years due to COVID-19. Fifth, another limitation to the study was a low response rate for the survey. Sixth, another relevant limitation to the study was that on the EVP survey, Question 11 gave the participants the option to choose “I teach it to 6th, 7th, and/or 8th grade students this year” among the various multiple-choice responses; however, there was no clarity for the participants to specify the relevance of option. A perceived limitation was the possible change in the number of participants eligible to participate as a direct result of the program parameters as it relates to visitation timeframes; however, this was not an actual limitation of the study.

Implications

One implication from the experiences of the participants over time supports consideration of coordination between the federal Department of State and Department of Education in regard to J-1 visa reform supporting rural school recruitment, retention, and student achievement. My study makes a powerful argument for the consideration of aligning student achievement reform with visa reform by targeting the EVP to rural school districts needing highly qualified teachers to execute district plans for success. The visa requirements for this newly proposed aspect of the teacher program, which is one of the 15 exchange programs under the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Program of 1961umbrella, would align with teacher outcomes in the rural school district. This newly proposed aspect of the teacher program would incorporate a timeline for

participants in terms of the citizenship aligned to service in rural communities as well as the elimination of the requirement for participants to return to their home country. This newly proposed aspect of the teacher program would stabilize staffing in rural schools that are not financially able to compete with districts with more financial resources and retain highly qualified teachers. As stated in the literature review, rural school districts serve more than educational needs for students. In some cases, rural districts seeking candidates who want to make a life in rural America discover making a home in rural communities is not an easy task because of the population decline in these areas, school isolation, limited social events, and low pay.

Another implication of the findings is the idea that rural school districts should identify new practices that would more intently capitalize on the collaboration and positive relationships among the exchange teachers and relate to positively impact the overall transition. The depth of support for all teachers, whether they are an international teacher, beginning teacher, or experienced teacher needing support, would have a significant impact based on the success of the exchange teacher program participant who cited the relationships as being one reason for their successful transition.

Future Studies

More research is needed on describing the exchange visitor participant experiences regarding the cultural exchange aspect of the program with a more focused lens on when the participants do not return to the home country. Additionally, further research is needed regarding examining the EVP teacher experience of establishing positive student and teacher relationships while enduring the emotionally complex transition into their new American school culture.

This study revealed several ideas for future research. First, increasing the number of EVP participants beyond one school district to gauge their teaching experiences could continue this study. Second, it would be appropriate for this study to be conducted in several rural school districts to compare and contrast the results from this study in terms of teacher focus group interviews on a grander scale.

Third, a study should be conducted specifically on the theme that emerged in regard to participants not returning to their home country. For example, how can the federal government redefine the program to address teacher shortages and participant desires to remain in the host country. Furthermore, a study on how students in rural school districts respond academically when the EVP is implemented would be another appropriate area of study.

Fourth, this study would be suitable to be conducted to investigate exchange visitor experiences in regard to disciplining students in their host country. Likewise, creating a focus group interview with more EVP participants in several rural school districts may enhance an investigation of participant experiences in terms of discipline. Fifth, this study would be useful in studying how rural school districts and home country educator morale is impacted by the program implementation. Sixth, another study on the impact the EVPs have on school culture when implemented in rural schools would be an appropriate area of study to investigate.

Seventh, this study would be suitable to be conducted to investigate the aspects of the educational dynamics in the United States for residents of color in context to the efforts being made during this same timeframe to diversify the post-war image of America. From the 1940s to the 1960s, there was another image of the United States

which did not amplify the benefit of diversity among its own citizens. This study could analyze correlation or lack thereof in terms of exchange programs in the historical context of the American educational system during the 1940s-1960s timeframe and even beyond.

Finally, it would appear that adapting to U.S. schools is tantamount to adapting to the prevailing host school district and community cultures of the contexts in which the exchange visitor teachers find themselves. For exchange visitor teachers who manage to stay longer, each subsequent year appears easier. A longitudinal study that tracks different exchange visitor teachers in different teaching contexts could provide indications of what the transitional experience is like at different points of an exchange visitor teacher's stay in the U.S. Having such knowledge might be useful in anticipating and mitigating difficulties that crop up during the initial year of an exchange visitor teacher's experience in the U.S. and may decrease the likelihood of the participant returning to their home country. Additionally, the results from such a study would be valuable information that could be used by the Secretary of State to revise J-1 visa timelines and immigration reform. In terms of the Fulbright-Hays Act, the fact that teachers are not returning to their country does not negate the benefit of the exchange experience in that a cultural exchange does occur.

Life after World War II was a changing time for Americans. Fulbright stated, International educational exchange is the most significant current project designed to continue the process of humanizing mankind to the point, we would hope, that men can learn to live in peace-eventually even to cooperate in constructive activities rather than compete in a mindless contest of mutual destruction. We

must try to expand the boundaries of human wisdom, empathy and perception, and there is no way of doing that except through education. (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2019, para. 1)

The sooner revisions are made to the exchange program and visa procedures, the better situated rural school districts will be to address the issue of teacher shortage and to address student learning needs.

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Appendix

Photo of the Signing Into Law of the Revised Fulbright-Hays Act 1961



Note. (L-R) Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas; Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota; Representative E. Ross Adair of Indiana; Representative Clement Zablocki of Wisconsin; Representative Frances Bolton of Ohio; Representative Wayne Hays of Ohio; Representative Edna Kelly of New York; Representative Horace Seely-Brown of Connecticut; Representative John Monagan of Connecticut; Representative Harris McDowell of Delaware; unidentified (in shadow); Senator Karl Mundt of South Dakota; Representative Thomas Morgan of Pennsylvania (partially hidden behind Senator Mundt); Senator George Aiken of Vermont.