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An Investigation of the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching and its Possible Influence on Experienced Teacher Retention: A Companion Dissertation

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An Investigation of the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching and its
Possible Influence on Experienced Teacher Retention: A Companion Dissertation

By
Jennifer Blalock White

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
2015

Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Jennifer Blalock White 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

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The purpose of this companion, qualitative case study was to examine the degree to which the residential professional development model at the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT) possibly influenced the retention of experienced teachers. The researcher sought to discover the ways and to what degree NCCAT had discharged its mission as a program of professional development, as well as understanding what experienced teacher participants' perceptions were on how the NCCAT experience differed from other forms of professional development.

Field study observational data, participant interview data, individual journal entry data, and document analysis informed this study. Themes of adult learning, professional development, NCCAT, and teacher retention were examined.

Findings suggest that NCCAT was a unique program that was discharging its mission as a program of professional development. There appeared, however, to be no direct link between NCCAT participation and teacher retention.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

With the plethora of legislative initiatives, budget reductions, curricular changes, standards-based reform efforts, and educator accountability measures, many teachers are scrambling to find cost-effective professional development opportunities that will enrich their craft and renew their spirits. These changing times require modifications in how teachers operate in the business of school. To meet these new requirements, effective professional development that changes classroom practice is necessary. The traditional professional development model of the 1-day workshop, seminars, lectures, and conference sessions that 90% of teachers report attending is not an effective model of adult learning (Gulamhussein, 2013). According to Smith and Gillespie (2007), teachers often do not implement new strategies attained from traditional professional development models. Rather, they may add a new strategy to existing strategies instead of altering their current instructional practices or implement only a very small percentage of practices learned, unless the training has follow-up coaching or action research practices. Hill (2009) reported that teacher professional development activities neither reinforced existing classroom practices nor had an effect on their teaching skills.

While research shows that specific, high-quality training programs can improve teacher practices and student outcomes, most teachers do not have access to them (Hill, 2009). “These research-proven programs, which are often offered by university faculty or nationally recognized providers, are ‘boutiques’ serving a handful of fortunate teachers while leaving many more to shop at the Wal-Marts of the professional development world” (Hill, 2009, p. 470). Several factors exist to explain concerns with typical professional development offerings.

Quality of the product, capacity of the providers, transfer, and coherence suggest

that we must reexamine our assumption that “ineffective” professional development is benign. While evidence for this point is anecdotal, the existence of “malignant” professional development would help to explain why, in many studies, teacher attendance at professional development has not been associated with gains in student outcomes. (Hill, 2009, p. 472)

Additionally, the majority of teachers participate only in the amount of professional development that is required for certificate renewal or continued employment (Hill, 2009). According to Gulamhussein (2013), for professional development to impact classroom performance, it must be taught, practiced, and coached for 50-80 hours before mastery is attained. With the focus on higher student achievement comes the expectation of higher standards for teachers, and quality professional development is the bridge from school reform changes to improved classroom instruction (Smith & Gillespie, 2007).

Because the most important and controllable factor in determining the quality of a student’s education is the quality and effectiveness of the teacher in the classroom, quality professional development is a requirement (Auguste, Kihn, & Miller, 2010; Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Current research reveals that individual teachers trump student attributes such as aptitude, socioeconomics, and home circumstances in determining student academic achievement (Ganley, Quintanar, & Loop, 2007). The accountability revolution that has occurred over the last several years has led to the creation of measuring tools such as value-added measurements that purport to statistically separate students’ backgrounds and quantify individual teacher effectiveness by focusing on student academic gains and not academic achievement levels (Jacob, 2012). Beyond value-added verification that teachers matter, numerous longitudinal studies in states such as Texas and New Jersey confirm the impact of effective teachers on student achievement

(Jacob, 2012). The Texas study demonstrated that a “one standard deviation increase in teacher quality (measured in terms of prior student achievement gains on state tests) can have a .10 standard deviation impact on student achievement in math and a slightly smaller effect in reading” (Jacob, 2012, p. 3). The New Jersey study had the same conclusions for math, as well as a .10 standard deviation rise in reading test scores (Jacob, 2012). The Gary Income Maintenance Experiment, a 4-year study quantifying the best and worst teachers using Iowa Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary data sets, indicated that the difference in student scores for those with a teacher at the 25th percentile in quality as compared to student scores for a teacher in the 75th percentile in quality is an estimated additional school years’ worth of proficiency (Jacob, 2012).

Because of the effects of the teacher on the success of students, it is necessary to change the structure of professional development. Enlightened educators may reasonably conclude that teacher professional development in the United States is a lucrative business, with 1-6% of district budgets being dedicated to providing continuing education to teachers (Hill, 2009). As indicated by Hargreaves (2007), five flaws exist because of the business model. The first flaw, presentism, exists when professional development’s focus is on short-sighted goals, such as how to improve test scores. The second flaw of authoritarianism exists when “learning is reduced to training, walk-throughs become walkovers, and initiative accompanies integrity through the exit door of professional withdrawal” (Hargreaves, 2007, p. 37). Commercialism is the third flaw and it exists when profit-minded providers “dilute substance and demean readers’ intelligence” (Hargreaves, 2007, p. 37). The fourth flaw of evangelism occurs when the professional development providers ignore critical engagement in lieu of dependency upon their ideas. Finally, narcissism occurs when “style strips substance” (Hargreaves, 2007, p. 38).

Looking at professional development through the lens of a business, supply, demand, information, and efficiency may be examined (Hill, 2009). According to Hill (2009), the supply conundrum is that there is a large supply of providers, due in large part to the demand for locally offered services. A 2005 survey by Hill (2009) found that most instructors lived in the states where they provided professional development. Hill's findings suggest that the quality of instruction may be limited to the expertise of locally available talent (Hill, 2009). A potential solution to this problem is to certify instructors and hold them accountable for teaching content that is "grounded in empirical study" (Hill, 2009, p. 474).

Demand for high-quality professional development is also an issue, as many teachers are only seeking the required number of hours in the quickest manner possible (Hill, 2009). The solution to this issue may be policies surrounding increasing teacher knowledge and performance as measured by student outcomes (Hill, 2009). Currently, there exists little information about the quality of professional development offerings, as there is no way to ensure offerings of high quality; however, employing studies that measure the effectiveness of the offerings or rating the offerings based on specific guidelines can be a solution (Hill, 2009). Finally, efficiency is an issue, as most teachers do not analyze their deficits and their needs; so the solution to this problem is to provide specific professional development opportunities designed to address specific individual weaknesses (Hill, 2009).

For professional development to be effective, it is "purposeful and sustainable" (Hargreaves, 2007, p. 38). In effective professional development scenarios, teachers are critical partners in the process and are engaged in learning from other teachers and their students as they collect formative assessment data rather than relying on summative,

high-stakes test results to drive their instruction (Hargreaves, 2007). Teachers in the United States will take lessons from successful countries such as Finland, the “world’s highest performer in literacy at age 15” (Hargreaves, 2007, p. 38). In Finland and in China, teachers and school districts create and pace their curriculum (Hargreaves, 2007). Additionally, teachers in Finland have excellent working conditions with smaller class sizes, professional respect and admiration, and budgets supported by increased tax dollars (Hargreaves, 2007).

As teachers continue to move through the 21st century and encounter the changing landscape of their profession, effective professional development is going to be increasingly necessary to assist with the honing of the craft. The professional development experience will need to include time for practice and a coaching component (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Research indicates that the professional development experience should have an empirical base and be specifically designed to address individual weaknesses, as opposed to the one-size-fits-all variety of professional development that currently prevails (Hill, 2009).

There exists a residential professional development resource that is unique to North Carolina teachers. The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT), operating its original campus in the mountains of Cullowhee and a second campus along the Outer Banks at Ocracoke Island, offers both beginning and experienced teachers an opportunity to grow professionally and be renewed in their profession (NCCAT, n.d.). NCCAT was created by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1985 to

provide career teachers with opportunities to study advanced topics in the sciences, arts, and humanities and to engage in informed discourse, assisted by

able mentors and outstanding leaders from all walks of life; and otherwise to offer opportunity for teacher to engage in scholarly pursuits, through a center dedicated exclusively to the *advancement of teaching as an art and as a profession*.

(NCCAT, 2014, p. 6)

In 2009, NCCAT's professional development audience was expanded beyond experienced teachers to include beginning teachers through General Statute 115C-296.5 (NCCAT, 2014). The priority changed to provide staff development to those teachers with more than 15 years of experience and also to those new to the profession (NCCAT, 2014).

This change in the priority for NCCAT is consistent with research that shows that age is a teacher-retention characteristic as both younger and older teachers are departing the classroom (Hughes, 2012). Teachers more often reported job dissatisfaction and the desire to seek another field of employment, rather than retirement, as the reason for their departure from the profession (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). While attrition is an issue across age spectrums, approximately 50% of all teachers who enter the profession leave it within the first 5 years; and many of those departing are those with higher academic skill sets (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

Teachers across experience levels are leaving the profession at rates of 13-15% annually (Hughes, 2012). The National Center for Education Statistics reports approximately 20% of new teachers do not finish their first year and approximately 50% leave before completing 5 years in the profession (Bernardo, n.d.). Teacher attrition has many monetary and nonmonetary cost factors associated with it. The monetary costs of teacher turnover are large, as schools and districts must recruit, hire, and train new

teachers (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007).

In addition to costly monetary repercussions, teacher attrition also has a negative impact on classroom instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2003). When examining nonmonetary costs, teacher retention impacts student achievement through several inroads such as inexperienced teachers being less effective and instability causing inconsistent instructional delivery (McLaurin, Smith, & Smillie, 2009). During the 1980s, only 17% of teachers had less than 5 years of teaching experience; however, by 2008, 28% of teachers had taught less than 5 years (Ladd, 2013). As repeated studies have demonstrated, the greatest variable in student academic success is the classroom teacher. Ladd (2013) pointed out that experienced teachers, on average, have higher student achievement, become more effective as they become more experienced, and make the profession stronger by mentoring and strengthening the overall school culture. “Experienced teachers are better teachers; yet schools face a critical challenge in retaining qualified teachers” (Hughes, 2012, p. 245). Additionally, when considering student achievement, to close the achievement gap for minority and high-poverty students, they will need excellent teachers, but the attrition rate is approximately 50% higher in their schools (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005).

Amid recent North Carolina (NC) state public policies eliminating or reducing teacher professional development dollars, the role of professional learning and its contribution to teacher retention and job satisfaction is called into sharp and timely relief. Responding to reduced funding for schools, NC’s public school superintendents have called for a set of guidelines for the improvement of public education (Spencer, 2015). Their third goal surrounds high quality instruction and “the nation’s best teachers” (Spencer, 2015, p. 1). “Goal three is essentially a plea by the superintendents for funding

in the areas of professional development, textbooks, and instructional resources” (Spencer, 2015, p. 1). This is in response to funding that has been almost, if not completely, eliminated over the last few years. Their fifth goal is a call to focus on recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers. Local superintendents are becoming increasingly vocal. For example,

Iredell-Statesville Schools Superintendent Brady Johnson has said in recent weeks that the district and state are essentially facing a teacher shortage, as many positions have stayed open all year with no applicants, making the goal of developing and recruiting teachers all the more important. (Spencer, 2015, p. 1)

The guidelines call for a focus on improvements in recruitment and professional development so that retention improves and teachers can reach their performance potentials (Spencer, 2015).

In addition to public school leaders, policy watchers in NC are also sounding the alarm. Decrying the failure of state-level elected officials to support teacher development with public dollars were education scholars Edward Fiske and Helen Ladd. Fiske and Ladd commented on the elimination from the NC governor’s budget of all professional development for teachers (Ravitch, 2014). In addition to the elimination of professional development monies, the 2013 budget eliminated additional salary compensation for teachers who earned advanced degrees (Manfra, 2014). The Wall Street Journal reported that NC is the first state to eliminate increased pay for advanced degrees (Manfra, 2014). “This policy change contradicts research related to providing incentives for teachers to pursue quality professional development, advance their careers, and remain in the classroom” (Manfra, 2014, p. 1).

National interest in stemming the tide of teachers who prematurely leave the

classroom is also growing (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2012; Ingersoll, 2002). Research suggests that demoralized teachers are among the first to exit (Halstead, 2013). There is no dispute that society needs citizens and workers who demonstrate knowledge and skills, some of which are measured by student standardized tests. A singular focus on improving test scores without addressing the larger problem of teacher retention, however, is ineffective. Aware of the growing crisis posed by the teacher exodus, supporters of improving school as a workplace and the professional life of teachers employed there resonate with a body of literature that suggests that teacher renewal “rebalances professional life” and “encourages the heart” (Brubaker & Coble, 2007, p. vii; Palmer, 2002, p. xvii), conditions fundamental to employee engagement (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

Almost all teachers participate in workshop-based professional development, and this model of professional development is shown to be ineffective as a change agent for teacher retention or student achievement because it does not support teachers during the implementation stage (Gulamhussein, 2013). Scholars of adult learning theory and principles defined andragogy as the “set of assumptions about how adults learn” (“Adult Learning Theory,” 2007). The current workshop-based professional development model does not subscribe to the tenets of andragogy, as this model is typically not differentiated to suit the learners’ needs, is often not initiated by the learner, and does not focus on the learner as an active participant (Gulamhussein, 2013). Effective teachers need to be supported to retain them in the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003). The themes for success that are being implemented in other countries—comprehensiveness, professional learning, and collaboration, along with adherence to the tenets of adult learning theories—create a formula for teacher retention in the United States (“Adult Learning

Theory,” 2007; Wong, 2004). This qualitative study examined the NCCAT as a professional development model that incorporates the themes for success mentioned above while also being grounded in adult learning theory. The study further examined the application of NCCAT seminars upon the retention of experienced teacher alumni.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which the residential professional development model at NCCAT possibly influences the retention of experienced teachers. NCCAT subscribes to Adult Learning Principles of Malcolm Knowles and other theorists by having programs that focus on adults being internally motivated and self-directed, bringing their life experiences to their learning opportunities, being focused on goals, focusing on learning that is relevant and practical, and wanting to be respected (“Adult Learning Theory,” 2007). NCCAT’s residential model is a unique approach to allow teachers the time to collaborate, reflect, and renew themselves. This model allows for the recommended time necessary to practice their new founded skills in a safe learning environment with other teachers as coaches (Gulamhussein, 2013). There is adequate time for skill acquisition, then time for reflection and conversation with other professionals about that skill. According to Darling-Hammond (2003), providing a positive support system to teachers can help retain them in the profession, and NCCAT provides such a system through both the programs offered and the opportunity to network with other teachers across the state.

Through a qualitative research design, the researcher sought to answer the research questions related to NCCAT as a professional development model and its possible influence on teacher retention. The case study methodology was incorporated to analyze how different individuals perceived their experience at NCCAT programs

(Creswell, 2014). The researcher conducted individual interviews and followed those interviews with the examination of individual reflective journals. Additionally, document analysis and an analysis of field study notes of a seminar from its beginning to its completion helped to inform the study.

Definition of Terms

Andragogy. Malcolm Knowles, the premiere authority on the subject of adult education defined andragogy as the “art and science of helping adults learn” (“Adult Learning Theory,” 2007).

Beginning teacher. “The least experienced and are often among the youngest teachers” (Cochran-Smith et al., 2012, p. 846). In this study, a beginning teacher is defined as a teacher with less than 4 completed years of experience.

Burnout.

Burnout is a state of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion resulting from chronic stress. It is characterized by feelings of alienation, indifference and low self-regard, a loss of interest in work, and an inability to perform one’s day to day job duties. (Blazer, 2010, p. 1)

Experienced teacher. Teacher with more than 4 completed years of teaching experience.

NCCAT. A residential professional development center that is funded through the NC General Assembly, which provides renewal seminars for teachers (McPherson & Shapiro, 1993).

Professional development. Professional development for adults should incorporate six principles:

- (a) Create a climate in which participants feel respected;

- (b) Encourage their active participation;
- (c) Build on their experiences;
- (d) Employ collaborative inquiry;
- (e) Guide learning for immediate application; and
- (f) Empower the participants through reflections and action based on their learning. (Gregson & Sturko, 2007, p. 5)

Public school. “A school that gets money from and is controlled by a local government” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2014).

Teacher recruitment. “Including teacher enlistment strategies, preparation programs and licensure” (Business-Higher Education Forum, 2007, p. 4).

Teacher renewal. To encourage teachers to “rediscover and nourish their personal and professional strengths--the passion and the intellect that are their strongest allies in the daily business of teaching” (McPherson, Rinnander, & Rud, 1987, p. 43).

Teacher retention. “Encompassing strategies and programs to keep new teachers in the classroom and retain experienced teachers” (Business-Higher Education Forum, 2007, p. 4).

Research Questions

1. In what ways and to what degree has NCCAT discharged its mission as a program of professional development?
2. What are experienced teacher participants’ perceptions on how the NCCAT experience differs from other forms of professional development?
3. How does participation in an NCCAT experience possibly influence experienced teacher retention rates?

Organization of the Study

This research study reviews the existing literature surrounding adult learning theories, professional development programs, teacher retention, and teacher renewal in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 explores the research questions through a qualitative, case study approach by conducting an analysis of field study notes of a complete seminar, collecting data from individual interviews of NCCAT participants, reviewing journal entries from NCCAT participants, and document analysis. In Chapter 4, research findings are explored. In Chapter 5, the researcher draws conclusions and makes recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of a residential professional development setting on experienced teachers' retention rates in the State of NC. Adult learning theories of Malcolm Knowles, Jack Mezirow, Robert Kegan, and Eleanor Drago-Severson are examined to establish the adult learning principles upon which NCCAT claims to be grounded. Current teacher professional development practices are also examined for their effects on teacher knowledge development and potential retention effects. While scarce, residential professional development sites are compared to NCCAT for their programming, teacher knowledge development, and potential retention effects. Finally, teacher self-renewal and its influence upon teachers remaining in the profession are investigated.

Adult Learning Theories

Malcolm Knowles (1976) is regarded as the American father of andragogy, the study of adult learning. Andragogy, as a theoretical framework, had its beginnings in Europe in the early 1960s and Knowles introduced it in the United States in 1968 (Knowles, 1975). Knowles (1976) explained that andragogy differed from pedagogy, the study of teaching young people, in many ways. He contended that adults are self-directed, develop through collaborative study, are intrinsically motivated, need safe environments within which to learn, need to formulate their own educational needs and goals, need to be actively engaged in self-directed study, and need to be a partner in the evaluation process (Knowles, 1976). Knowles (1975) also emphasized that because the majority of adults are not considered full-time students or learners, convenience in time and place must be factored into their learning opportunities, and entry into and exit from

the opportunities must be easy.

While Knowles did not introduce andragogy in the United States until the mid-20th century, the process of teaching adults dates back to ancient times, with some of history's greatest teachers, such as Confucius, Jesus, Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato being teachers of adults (Knowles, 1977). These teachers of adults realized that the learner had an active role in the inquiry process and that they were simply guides and resources to the inquiry (Knowles, 1977). Teaching and learning changed around the 7th century when European monks discovered that there was a need for young boys to be trained in enough reading and writing skills to serve the purpose of transferring the words of the ancient teachers from decaying scrolls to fresh ones (Knowles, 1977). It was not necessary for these young scribes to understand what they were writing, so their education was very narrow in scope (Knowles, 1977). Around the 12th century, secular schools began being organized in Europe and they followed the model set forth by the monks, known as pedagogy, the art and science of teaching children or teacher-directed learning (Knowles, 1977). The tenets of pedagogy are that the learner is dependent, teaching is subject-centered, and external rewards and punishments are the motivations for learning (Knowles, 1977). This differs from andragogy where the learner is self-directed, teaching is task or problem centered, and the learner is motivated by internal incentives and curiosities (Knowles, 1977). The pedagogical framework is therefore an appropriate one for child learners who are dependent, while the andragogical framework is appropriate for adult learners who are self-directed (Knowles, 1977).

As Knowles (1979) developed his theoretical framework, he defined adult education through three lenses: the process of adults learning, whereby all of the experiences of adults are considered learning; the formal activities of institutions for

specific educational tasks; and the combination of processes and activities into the social system of adult learning. His definition of adult education provided “the theoretical framework for lifelong education” (Knowles, 1975, p. 87). Additionally, he defined lifelong education to include formal and informal learning that occurs at all stages of education that is flexible and diverse (Knowles, 1975). As Knowles (1975) was explaining the need for a new framework, he stated,

Lifelong education requires a new theory that takes into account physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, and occupational development through the life span that explains learning as a process of inquiry and illuminates the competencies necessary to engage in this process, and that provides guidelines for performance of new roles required to facilitate that process. (p. 87)

Within this budding theoretical framework, Knowles (1975) expounded that as adults gain experiences and realize their own need to learn, they become more eager to do so, especially when the learning task has a direct correlation and application. Knowles created a process design for instructing adult learners. It began by establishing a trusting, informal, mutually respectful, and collaborative climate (Knowles, 1977). He also found that adult learners needed to have a voice in the diagnosis of their learning needs, setting of their goals, and planning of their instruction (Knowles, 1977). Further, Knowles (1977) indicated that the adult learning plan should be in the form of projects, experiments, inquiry, and independent study and be sequenced according to the readiness of the adult learner. Finally, the assessment of the adult learner is a mutual assessment of self-collected evidence (Knowles, 1977).

Transformative learning is another theory within adult learning theories and it is defined primarily through the work of Jack Mezirow beginning in 1981 (Erickson, 2007).

At the center of transformational learning is development, or the change that occurs due to time or age (Merriam, 2004). While he did not think all learning was transformative, Mezirow defined learning as the “process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience as a guide to future action” (Erickson, 2007, p. 66). Mezirow (1997) defined transformative learning as “the process of effecting change in a frame of reference” (p. 5). Frames of reference are how adults define their collective bodies of experiences that are created through values, feelings, associations, and responses and are the result of the influence of culture and primary caregivers (Mezirow, 1997). We understand our experiences through the assumptions we have (Erickson, 2007). When there are life experiences that do not fit into previous schema, transformational learning indicates that a new, more developed perspective can be created (Merriam, 2004). Individuals “reinterpret an old experience (or a new one) from a new set of expectations, thus giving a new meaning and perspective to an old experience” (Erickson, 2007, p. 66).

There are two components to formulating the frame of reference: habits of mind and point of view (Erickson, 2007). A habit of mind is defined as the “broad, abstract, orienting, habitual ways of thinking, feeling and acting influenced by assumptions that constitute a set of codes” (Mezirow, 1997, pp. 5-6). The way a habit of mind is expressed, through the combination of attitude, beliefs, and feelings, is the point of view (Mezirow, 1997). Points of view are more likely to change as we develop, solve problems, and reflect upon our lives, while habits of mind are more likely to be stable (Mezirow, 1997). Mezirow (1997) believed that “we transform our frames of reference through critical reflection on the assumptions upon which our interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind or points of view are based” (p. 7). Through transformational learning, we

take our current habits of mind and make them more flexible and reflective to create stronger beliefs and opinions (Erickson, 2007). It is through this reflection that personal change can occur (Mezirow, 1997).

There are four processes of learning in Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning process. The first process is to extend the current point of view through adding additional evidences to support that current point of view. The creation of a different point of view is the second process. The third process of learning occurs when adults transform their point of view. The transformation of habit of mind is the fourth process; and while it occurs less often, it can only occur when our learning challenges our existing frames of reference. "The goal of transformational learning is independent thinking" (Merriam, 2004, p. 61). "Thinking as an autonomous and responsible agent is essential for full citizenship in democracy and for moral decision making in situations of rapid change" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 7). Essential skills within autonomous thinking include gaining, interpreting, and utilizing information and resources, collaborating with others, and comprehending complex issues (Mezirow, 1997). Autonomy refers to "the understanding, skills, and disposition necessary to become critically reflective of one's own assumptions and to engage effectively in discourse to validate one's beliefs through the experiences of others who share universal values" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 9). Critical discourse occurs when individuals examine, assess, and defend their own beliefs and are able to make judgments about those of others to make informed decisions (Grabove, 1997). Discourse and reflection are necessary processes in order for learning to be considered transformative (Merriam, 2004). Discourse allows for moral values to be examined and validated (Mezirow, 1997). To become critically reflective of others, one must also examine one's own frame of reference and thought processes and be willing to

change (Mezirow, 1997). To be able to critically reflect and/or self-reflect, an advanced level of cognition is required (Merriam, 2004).

The foundation of transformative learning is communication, and educators of adults must teach adult learners to be critical of their own assumptions and those of others as well as teach them how to have effective discourse (Mezirow, 1997). Mezirow believed that “the goal of adult education is reflective and transformative learning” (Grabove, 1997, p. 89). Adult educators must establish a learning environment where learners have complete information, have a safe learning environment, can critically examine assumptions, are willing to examine other perspectives, and can synthesize a variety of points of view to guide their thoughts and actions (Mezirow, 1997). The heart of adult education is to guide learners to their own autonomous thought processes so they can formulate their own values and meanings instead of depending on the values and meanings of others (Grabove, 1997). Educators of adults must support critical thinking and the ability to learn and, more importantly, use new information, especially in the 21st century (Grabove, 1997). Adult educators must also use critical reflection and transformative learning for their own learning experiences so they can model this process for their adult learners (Grabove, 1997). The end result is that frames of reference are transformed through critical reflection of assumptions, participating in discourse where differing opinions are considered, and assessing and acting on the reflective insight (Mezirow, 1997).

Robert Kegan, much like Jack Mezirow, looked at the constructive-development framework of adult learning. Mezirow described transformational learning as “a constructivist theory of adult learning” (Erickson, 2007, p. 63). Kegan explained that Mezirow’s frame of reference is a meaning-making system because it allows individuals

a lens through which to actively interpret life (Drago-Severson, 2009). Kegan suggested that “the educational line of thought is transformational learning; the psychological line of thought is constructive developmentalism” (Erickson, 2007, p. 63). Kegan (1980) defined constructive developmental psychology as “the study of the development of our constructing or meaning-making activity” (p. 373). He proposed combining ego and cognitive development for an understanding of how people continually evolve throughout their lives (Erickson, 2007). The constructive developmental theory is largely influenced by the earlier work of noted psychologist Jean Piaget and is often defined as “neo-Piagetian” (Kegan, 1980, p. 374). The “neo” part of the constructive-developmental theory is that

It moves from Piaget’s study of cognition to include the emotions; from his study of children and adolescents to include adulthood; from the study of stages of development to include the processes that bring the stages into being, defend them, and evolve from them; from Piaget’s descriptive, outside-the-person approach to include study of the internal experience of developing; and from a solely individual-focused study of development to include study of the social context and role in development. (Kegan, 1980, p. 374)

Kegan explained the basic principles of constructive-developmental theory. The first principle theorized that as people evolve, it is really their systems of meaning that is changing. Theorists continue that as these systems of meaning change, they shape how people experience their lives and create new ways of knowing. They then explained that our behavior, thinking, and feeling is created by our meaning systems and that even the most unexplainable behavior can be explained by understanding that person’s systems of meaning. Finally, there are sequences of meaning systems that people experience.

Additionally, Kegan added his own philosophies to the existing theory. Kegan suggested that “the deep structure of these meaning-making systems involves the developing person’s distinction between self and other, or, put more philosophically, between subject and object” (p. 374).

Kegan (1980) explained that the subject-object relationship is the “fundamental distinction in the way that we make sense of our experience—a distinction that shapes our thinking, our feeling, our social relating, and our ways of relating to internal aspects of ourselves” (Debold, 2002, p. 146). The objects are things that we do not see as a part of ourselves; they are things about which we can be objective (Debold, 2002). The subjects are the things by which we view subjectively and that we see as parts of ourselves (Debold, 2002). Further, Kegan added that people may experience stress and depression as they develop and change, as the development includes some sense of loss as people change. He stated that development occurs through epistemological or meaning-making systems throughout a lifetime (Erickson, 2007). He identified five epistemologies, three of which apply to adult behavior—interpersonal stage (3), institutional stage (4), and interindividual stage (5) (Eriksen, 2006). They are identified by how the subject, or self, reacts in its environment (Erickson, 2007). As individuals move through the stages, the previous stage’s attributes are not abandoned but rather incorporated into different experiences (Eriksen, 2008).

In the interpersonal, socialized mind (third stage), a person is able to understand points of view that may differ from his/her own (Eriksen, 2006). At this stage, it is possible to think abstractly, have insight, control impulses, and have relationships that not only benefit self (Debold, 2002; Eriksen, 2006). Individuals do struggle to understand other’s values when they differ from their own and they cannot successfully create their

own value system from a variety of beliefs and values (Eriksen, 2006). The fourth stage, the institutional or self-authoring stage, is only realized by 20-30% of adults between the ages of 25 and 50 and is characterized by individuals being controlled, autonomous, committed to the organizations of work and family, and able to balance different responsibilities and environments (Debold, 2002; Eriksen, 2006). As individuals move from the interpersonal stage to the final, self-transforming or inter-individual stage, they begin to seek out contradictions to their opinions to strengthen or change their opinions instead of seeing the contradictions as a challenge to their current thought processes (Eriksen, 2006). As this stage usually is not present prior to age 40 and is only present in a small number of adults, these individuals can admit that they may be wrong in their current belief systems, challenge themselves with opposing opinions or values, and their “identification of self shifts away from the new products of transformation onto the process of transformation itself” (Eriksen, 2006, p. 296).

Due to the fact that only one-half to two-thirds of adults are developed within the self-authoring stage, there are legitimate developmental concerns for some educational leaders; therefore, professional development must be adapted (Helsing, Howell, Kegan, & Lahey, 2008). Unfortunately, much educational professional development is not research-based but rather based upon what is currently popular (Helsing et al., 2008). This results in professional development instructors who do not gather feedback from participants, do not offer coaching of the techniques taught, and do not have mastery of new skills learned by their participants (Helsing et al., 2008). Suggestions made to improve professional development include more alignment with adult learning theories and identifying and overcoming barriers that prevent progress toward professional goal attainment through processes such as examining contradictions between goals and

unconscious beliefs and mental models that create the contradictions (Helsing et al., 2008).

In continuing and expanding upon Kegan's (1980) constructive developmental theory, Drago-Severson (2008) explained the foundational basis of her learning-oriented model by stating that learners make sense of their experiences and the meanings of those experiences grow in complexity over time. Drago-Severson (2009) defined ways of knowing as the "developmental levels that profoundly affect how we as human beings make meaning of experiences and dictates how we make sense of reality" (p. 39). Simply stated, as adults continually develop, the ways they make sense of their experiences change (Drago-Severson, 2008). There are three ways of knowing that are typically associated with adulthood: the instrumental, the socializing, and the self-authoring way (Drago-Severson, 2009). Adults move sequentially through these stages at individual paces, depending upon their experiences, so individuals who are at the same chronological age may be at a different stage of development in their way of knowing (Helsing & Drago-Severson, 2002).

Drago-Severson (2009) identified adults with an instrumental way of knowing as having a "rule-bound self" (p. 43). This way of knowing is very concrete and does not allow adults to fully understand the perspective of others, and other people either help or hinder the individual in meeting their own concrete needs (Drago-Severson, 2009). Instrumental knowers are unable to think abstractly or generalize from one context to another; they believe there are "right" and "wrong" answers and ways to accomplish tasks (Drago-Severson, 2009). They are rule followers and "feel supported when others provide specific advice and explicit procedures so that they can accomplish their goals" (Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 61). These learners can be supported by putting them into

circumstances where they are faced with differing perspectives such as in a team or mentoring situation (Drago-Severson, 2008).

Socializing knowers differ from instrumental knowers in that they can think and reason abstractly and can reflect upon their own actions as well as the actions of others (Drago-Severson, 2009). These individuals can process and consider other people's opinions of them and can participate in a reality that is shared with others (Drago-Severson, 2009). Socializing knowers will put their needs and wants behind those of others and will seek the approval of others (Drago-Severson, 2008). According to Drago-Severson (2009), this way of knowing is also known as the "other-focused self" (p. 45). This knower is very focused on the approval and acceptance of others and often will avoid conflict because it is a risk to a relationship, which is seen as a risk to one's self (Drago-Severson, 2009). To support this knower's growth, leaders should create situations where the knower shares expertise to clarify and solidify his/her own values as opposed to adopting the expertise of others (Drago-Severson, 2008).

Self-authoring knowers can reflect on different perspectives and control their relationships rather than being controlled by them (Drago-Severson, 2009). "These knowers understand themselves as authorities and are therefore able to take responsibility as the maker of their beliefs and emotions" (Helsing & Drago-Severson, 2002, p. 11). Beyond reasoning abstractly, these knowers can define relationships between abstractions (Helsing & Drago-Severson, 2002). The "reflective self" is concerned with being competent, responsible, and successful (Drago-Severson, 2009). They can also manage competing values by employing their own internal value system (Drago-Severson, 2008). The self-authoring knower can be challenged by leaders who encourage the consideration of opposing points of view that can potentially modify his/her own point of view (Drago-

Severson, 2008).

Individuals grow gradually from one way of knowing to the next and from simpler to more complex ways of knowing (Drago-Severson, 2009). This movement is a transformational change, “a qualitative shift in how people understand themselves, their worlds, and the relationship between the two” (Helsing & Drago-Severson, 2002, p. 12). Initially, the current way of knowing is in control; but gradually, the new way takes over and replaces the former way of knowing (Drago-Severson, 2009). This transition between phases typically occurs in greater than 1 year and is dependent upon the person’s relationships within their environment (Drago-Severson, 2009).

Drago-Severson (2008) provided guidance for assisting adult learners in their continued educations. She provided a framework, or four pillars, for professional and personal growth providers to incorporate to assist with diverse ways of knowing that includes teaming, providing leadership roles, collegial inquiry, and mentoring (Drago-Severson, 2008). Teaming allows for adult collaboration, open communication, and decreased isolation. When leadership roles are encouraged, learners share authority and ideas, communities are built, and change occurs. Collegial inquiry encourages shared discourse where beliefs and assumptions are examined and conflicts are resolved to have shared decision making. The final pillar, mentoring, provides an opportunity to expand perspectives, evaluate assumptions, and share knowledge (Drago-Severson, 2008). Additionally, people in groups are at many different developmental levels and an understanding of these differences is important for professional learning and collaboration to be effective (Drago-Severson, 2008).

Teacher Professional Development

Professional development is important to teachers because despite the best

preservice training and college education, teachers will experience changes in the field of education as they traverse through it during the course of their careers. Quality in-service professional development is important so that teachers are able to maintain high standards of classroom instruction and so that a high-quality teaching force is retained (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2009). The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) broadly defined teacher professional development: “Professional development is defined as activities that develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher” (OECD, 2009, p. 49). This definition allows for professional development to occur in a variety of ways including workshops, seminars, observations, collaboration, and coaching (OECD, 2009). When surveyed, over 90% of teachers reported that they participate in workshop-style training sessions annually (Gulamhussein, 2013). A 2007-2008 OECD survey of 23 countries yielded very similar results, with 89% of their teacher respondents indicating their engagement in a professional development activity within the 18 months of the study. This suggests that participation in growth opportunities is the norm for most teachers around many parts of the industrialized world (OECD, 2009). It is also interesting to note that from the OECD study, it was revealed that, on average across countries, more than half of those responding indicated a desire for more professional development than they had received (OECD, 2009).

The majority of teachers who attended workshop-style professional development, the most prevalent professional development in the United States, also indicated that the sessions were not useful in impacting student learning or instructional practices (Gulamhussein, 2013). A 2009 report by the National Staff Development Council and the School Redesign Network at Stanford University identified a link between

professional development that was both effective and sustainable to teacher collaboration and risk taking (McLester, 2012). Sustained professional development can be defined as “primarily occurs several times per week among established teams of teachers, principals, and other instructional staff that engage in a continuous cycle of improvement” (McLester, 2012, p. 37). A primary component of sustainability is the creation of a culture of learning (McLester, 2012). Rick and Becky DuFour’s Professional Learning Communities at Work model, where teacher collaboration occurs at the work site on a regular basis and is focused upon student academic success, is an example of a reform model of sustained professional development (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010). The Professional Learning Community (PLC) is “an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 11). The teams collaborate to achieve common goals linked to all students and team members (DuFour et al., 2010). Collaborative, sustained professional development is more aligned to adult learning theories than the one-stop style of professional development.

“Effective professional development for teachers must be prolonged and sustained, relevant to the daily work of teachers and their subject matter, and focused on student learning” (Manfra, 2014, p. 1). Another example of this level of professional development exists in graduate education programs for teachers, such as Master of Education (M.Ed.) programs. These programs allow teachers to improve, work collaboratively with other teachers, and focus on improving student achievement (Manfra, 2014). Around the world, graduate education for teachers is accepted as a means for educational improvement as teachers are supported as they traverse educational research and implement research-based teaching practices (Manfra, 2014). In

NC, due to policy changes, most graduate candidates report they are now less likely to pursue an advanced degree (Imig & Smith, 2013). The typical graduate candidate is a teacher with 3-4 years of teaching experience and is the demographic of the teacher who districts most need to retain (Manfra, 2014).

A comprehensive analysis of 1,300 studies of professional development programs revealed that only lengthy, intensive programs had an effect on student achievement and instructional practices (Gulamhussein, 2013). Most workshops that comprise the majority of teacher professional development are less than 14 hours in length, and these workshops have no effect on student achievement and most teachers report no changes in their instruction because the challenge is not in the acquisition of knowledge; rather, the challenge is the implementation of new methods into classroom instruction (Gulamhussein, 2013). Teachers need support during the implementation phase of new instructional techniques, even when the attempts to implement are wrought with errors. Studies show that it takes an average of 20 practice attempts before a teacher has mastered a new skill and that number rises as the complexity of the skill rises (Gulamhussein, 2013).

Professional development that works provides teachers with the time and opportunities for collaboration, investigation, experimentation, and reflection (Gregson & Sturko, 2007). The common approach, however, is where outside experts come in and tell teachers how to do their jobs instead of allowing them to be active participants in the refinement of their craft. These experiences create passive and often negative participants in the learning process (Gregson & Sturko, 2007). “NCCAT has become a national model for professional development and a haven for teachers rediscovering why they became teachers in the first place” (Schachter, 2003, p. 34). Since inception in 1986,

NCCAT's mission has been to "advance teaching as an art and a profession" (NCCAT, n.d., "Mission, Vision, and Goals").

Residential Professional Development Programs

Residential professional development programs are a rarity within the professional development opportunities available to teachers but a few do exist and are structured in a variety of ways. The GilChrist public retreat center at the Fetzer Institute in Kalamazoo, Michigan, through the Nancy M. and Douglas M. Yeager Family Foundation, sponsors teacher residencies during summer months for teachers in preschool through fifth grade. There are 10 residencies available for teachers to spend "a quiet week of reflection, writing, reading and planning for the following school year and beyond" (The Fetzer Institute, n.d., "GilChrist"). The residency includes housing, but the applicants are responsible for travel, materials, and meals (The Fetzer Institute, n.d., "GilChrist"). The Fetzer Institute also supports The Courage to Teach® Program, which was inspired by the book *The Courage to Teach* by Palmer (1998). This program is designed to provide vocational training to teachers through a process called "teacher formation" (Jackson & Jackson, 2002). This approach is rooted in the belief that good teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher. The formation process invites educators to reclaim their own wholeness and vocational clarity and makes connections between the renewal of the teacher's spirit and the revitalization of public education (Jackson & Jackson, 2002). Teachers gather four times a year for 3-day stints to create a respectful community of professionals who can help one another on their journey toward intellectual, emotional, and spiritual renewal (Jackson & Jackson, 2002).

The Courage to Lead® for Educators Program is another Courage & Renewal initiative for school leaders so that they too may be sustained and renewed in their school

leadership roles. The benefits of this program include developing a network of other school leaders to counteract the isolation often experienced in those leadership roles, rejuvenating the leadership skills, and increasing the capacity to create positive school cultures (Jackson & Jackson, 2002).

Other residential professional development programs such as the Mapleton Elementary School summer weeklong retreat in Northern Maine, may grow out of a grant written by teachers for the purpose of having uninterrupted time to analyze data and reflect upon that analysis (Chandler, 2000). The teachers would use the morning to analyze data and reflect on previous professional discussions and then schedule time for recreational activities in the afternoon. Often, the professional discussions that started in the morning would resurface in the afternoon activities (Chandler, 2000). Participants reported the following elements as being crucial to the success of the retreats: having choice in the professional activities; discussing data; and having uninterrupted, sustained time together (Chandler, 2000). Benefits that have grown out of the summer retreats include more authentic cross-grade level collaboration; an increase in team-building, leadership opportunities for those who normally did not display leadership qualities; and the opportunity to let past instructional practices help guide future instruction (Chandler, 2000).

Another residential professional development program, and the focus of this study, exists at permanent facilities such as the two sites of NCCAT that are located in Cullowhee, NC and Ocracoke, NC (NCCAT, n.d.). In 1986, NCCAT began offering professional development seminars on space provided by the campus of Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, NC (NCCAT, 2008). They moved into their own facilities adjacent to the University in 1990. On October 20, 2007, NCCAT opened its

second location in a restored U.S. Coast Guard Station, at the cost of \$8.4 million in restoration dollars (NCCAT, 2008). Both facilities combine personal living spaces and communal working and collaborating spaces including classrooms, computer laboratories, dining facilities, and recreational areas. Approximately 5,000 NC public and charter school educators participate annually in residential seminar and professional development programs (NCCAT, n.d.).

NCCAT began as the idea of one teacher, Jean Paul Powell, the NC State Teacher of the Year in 1983-1984. In that same year, Governor James B. Hunt created a Commission on Education for Economic Growth representing 50 business, education, and government leaders along with parents, students, and press representatives. The goal of the Commission was to evaluate the current education system and present recommendations for economic growth and prosperity for the State of NC. At the four public hearings held around the state in 1984, the common theme surrounded the attractiveness, or lack thereof, of education as a career (Rud & Oldendorf, 1992). Speaking to this concern, Ms. Powell addressed the Commission in 1983 with the following segment of her speech:

To attract and retain the best in education, we must find a way to enhance the teacher's sense of self-worth, her pride of accomplishment, and her enthusiasm. We have a governor's school for gifted students. Why not something similar for teachers? (Rud, 1989, p. 43)

NCCAT was established in 1985; and in September of 1986, after two summers of piloted summer programs, full-time programming began (Kirk, 1991). NCCAT is a part of the University of NC System and is governed by a Board of Trustees for the Center that has eight members who are appointed by the Board of Governors of the University of

NC, two members appointed by the lieutenant governor's office and the NC General Assembly, the president of the University of NC, the chancellor of Western Carolina University, and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (Rud & Oldendorf, 1992). NCCAT's primary funding source is the General Assembly of NC. The funding supports center operations, staff, and teacher expenses (Rud & Oldendorf, 1992). Originally, there were no costs to teachers or school districts; but due to budget cuts in 2008, travel expenses ceased; and in 2012, substitute pay was no longer paid for by NCCAT (Ballance, personal communication, 2014).

Self-Renewal

Teaching is a calling, a vocation that requires constant renewal of mind, heart, and spirit. Teachers come to the profession inspired by a passion to help others learn. They are drawn to education by an ethic of service and a mission to make a difference in the world by contributing to succeeding generations of youth. Good teachers care, and keep finding ways to connect with students. They do not check their hearts at the door. (Jackson & Jackson, 2002, p. 2)

The question of why does public education struggle with the retention of good teachers is often answered by the lack of support for teachers, administrators, and other school personnel who work in increasingly challenging, and too often isolated, circumstances every day (Jackson & Jackson, 2002). The level of demands on teachers in terms of time, energy, and other resources is often greater than the level of support, both within the school and the society as a whole, necessary to achieve and sustain professional renewal. As Kushman stated in 1992, "Teachers are likely to give their best to schools that give them something in return" (Dzubay, 2001, p. 1). Teachers strive to do what is best for their students; but job demands, accountability measures, and new standards often drive

teachers to a low self-esteem. In her blog, Strauss (2015) sought to explain why teachers are so worried about being bad. Strauss listed the following as rationale for “bad teacher self-doubt,” as well as possible solutions:

1. “Teacher training is pathetically inadequate.” New teachers need specific training and support depending on their community, the size of their classrooms and the age and proficiency level of their students. Every new teacher should spend a year in the classroom of a master teacher in the community where he or she plans to teach.
2. “Teachers get little or no support.” Teachers throughout their careers need a mentor who can remind them of why they’re teaching in the first place and help them work toward their dream.
3. “Teachers do not have the resources to do a good job.” We need to start by creating conditions in which it’s even possible to do a good job as a teacher.

With the issues mentioned above and the additional stresses of high standards and high expectations, teacher retention is a growing concern.

NCCAT’s purpose is not to reform educators or education; rather, its purpose is to renew the personal and professional spirits of the teachers who attend (McPherson et al., 1987).

“It’s not your cookie-cutter staff development,” says Mary McDuffie, NCCAT’s executive director. “It’s extremely intellectually challenging. But we also nurture the souls and spirits of our teachers while they’re with us, and we send them back to the classroom refreshed, invigorated, and with a renewed sense of commitment to their profession.” (Schachter, 2003, p. 32)

NCCAT attendees are teachers who are full-time employees who are recognized as

outstanding in the field. They come from all over the State of NC in groups of 18 to 20 with the purpose of “personal refreshment, group cohesion, and intellectual stimulation” (McPherson et al., 1987, p. 44). These goals are accomplished through discussion with other professionals from all parts of the state and from all grade spans, K-12. Because teacher participants are also temporary residents, they are provided with unstructured time for personal and professional reflection and recreation (Rud, 1989). NCCAT program planners explicitly seek to honor teacher participants by creating a comfortable, refreshing living experience that promises to renew and retain NC public school educators (Schachter, 2003). As noted by Pressley (1992) in his case study methodology examination of NCCAT, the guiding mission did not cite changes to classroom practices and student achievement as its purpose; rather, the focus was on renewing the teacher. Nevertheless, Pressley hypothesized that teacher renewal through an NCCAT seminar experience would result in changes to school and classroom practice. Pressley interviewed 12 teachers about their NCCAT experience. Thirty NCCAT alumni completed a questionnaire to provide comparative data. Pressley found that three-fourths of interviewed teachers reported changes in practice with a similar percentage of NCCAT alumni also reporting changes in their classroom practices due to an NCCAT experience more than 2 years earlier.

Coward’s (2003) phenomenological study of NCCAT was prompted by growing concern about the numbers of NC teachers who were either physically leaving the profession or who had become disenfranchised and had lost their “spirit” to teach. Building on adult learning theory, Coward found that interviewed participants uniformly reported outcomes supportive of NCCAT’s original mission of teacher renewal. Coward’s study culminated in the design of The Renewal Cycle, focused on NCCAT

experiences and how those experiences in NCCAT affect teachers and their commitment to continue teaching.

Teacher Retention

Multiple polls and surveys unveil the demoralization of teachers due to unfair teacher evaluation systems and programs that teachers feel “belittle their profession” (Strauss, 2015). According to Hughes (2012), teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years at a rate of 20-50%. This number represents those who leave schools and districts as well as those who move from one school or district to a different one (Darling-Hammond, 2003). The financial cost of this attrition is not minimal. In Granville County, NC, a small school district, these costs average \$10,000 per teacher. In a large district such as Chicago Public schools, the average cost per teacher is \$17,872, resulting in annual replacement costs of over \$86 million (Barnes et al., 2007). According to Hughes (2012), the cost to recruit, hire, and train replacement teachers across the nation is estimated to be \$2.2 billion annually. Darling-Hammond (2003) broke that down to approximately \$8,000 per teacher who departs the profession. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2005) reported the cost related to teachers who leave the profession in NC alone is \$84,497,347, which is based on Department of Labor estimates of 30% of the departing employee’s salary. Additionally, the total teacher turnover cost, not including retirement but including departing and transferring teachers, is \$1,888,565,281, just for the State of NC (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005).

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future estimates that after the first 3 years, one-third of all new teachers have left the profession; and within 5 years, that percentage soars to 46% (Kopkowski, 2008, p. 1). “The loss of inexperienced and experienced teachers results in a combined turnover rate of approximately 13 to 15

percent per year” (Hughes, 2012, p. 245). Shortages are not caused by an excess of retirements or a lack of suitable applicants; rather, they are caused by the attrition of teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2004). The number of teachers leaving the profession has been greater than those entering teaching since the last decade of the 1900s, with less than 20% of those leaving doing so in favor of retirement (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Additionally, teacher turnover is highest in high poverty and urban schools (Darling-Hammond, 2003). When the teaching staff is constantly changing, it is hard to implement and sustain policies, meet high standards, and effect positive changes (McLaurin et al., 2009). “It stands to reason that student achievement will suffer when students are continually faced with a parade of inexperienced teachers. In a vicious cycle, teacher turnover lowers student achievement, and lower student achievement leads to teacher turnover” (Barnes et al., 2007, p. 8). Because attrition is higher at high poverty, low-performing schools, these schools cannot close the achievement gap because they cannot close the gap in teacher quality, as they are always rebuilding their staff (Barnes et al., 2007). “Low performing, high minority, and high poverty schools expend scarce resources on teacher turnover” (Barnes et al., 2007, p. 5). Since these schools suffer from high teacher turnover rates, the effects of having to replace teachers are compounded because fiscal resources are already in short supply (Barnes et al., 2007).

“Effective teachers constitute a valuable human resource for schools—one that needs to be treasured and supported” (Darling-Hammond, 2003, p. 7). Student achievement levels are often “significantly worse in the classrooms of first-year teachers before rising in teachers’ second and third years” (Goodwin, 2012, p. 84). Studies indicate that as teachers progress through the early years of their careers, they become more effective in the classroom (Barnes et al., 2007).

In NC, the 2013-2014 Teacher Turnover Report, a Department of Public Instruction report to the General Assembly of teachers who were employed in March of the previous year but not employed in their same Local Education Agency (LEA) in March of the current year, provides information about the transient nature of teachers. These data showed that of the 96,010 teachers employed during the 2013-2014 school year, 13,557 left their LEAs. This number represents a turnover rate for the state of 14.12%, which was a slight decrease from the 2012-2013 turnover rate of 14.33%. Within these statistics, approximately 1% were Visiting International Faculty (VIF), teachers who are only allowed to stay in the United States for up to 3 years; 1% were Teach for America (TFA) teachers, individuals who are high-achieving college students who accept teaching positions in high-needs communities for at least 2 years; and less than 1% were Troops to Teachers faculty, who accept financial aid and agree to teach for at least 3 years (Public Schools of NC [PSNC], 2014). Specifically to Wake County, NC, Public Schools, “As of April 9, 2013, more than 600 teachers have left their jobs since the beginning of the school year on July 1, 2013, an increase of 41% over the same period last year” (Wake County Public School System, 2015). These data show that NC teachers are departing the profession at or above the national average (Hughes, 2012).

A total of 59,764 teachers or approximately 62% of the total workforce in NC schools were classified as career teachers. A career teacher was one that had taught at least 4 years within the same LEA and was afforded certain due process rights in the event of a dismissal. While NC eliminated the attainment of career status effective in the 2013-2014 school year, it is too early to determine the long-term retention effects of this legislation. Career teachers represented approximately 37% of the total percentage of those teachers who did not return to their LEA for the 2014-15 school year (PSNC,

2014). Additionally, of the 15,552 Beginning Teachers across the State of NC, approximately 23% became turnover statistics (PSNC, 2014).

There are many reasons teachers report for leaving the profession. In NC, self-reported reasons teachers gave for leaving the profession were organized into five categories:

1. Teachers who left the LEA but remained in education.
2. Teachers who left the LEA for personal reasons.
3. Teachers who were terminated by the LEA.
4. Teachers who left the LEA for reasons beyond the LEA's control.
5. Teachers who left the LEA for other reasons not listed above (PSNC, 2014).

Thirty percent of the teachers who left, left their LEA but remained in education; 37% left for personal reasons; 8% were terminated by the LEA; 18% left for reasons beyond the LEA's control; and 7% left for reasons not listed above (PSNC, 2014). The top five self-reported reasons for leaving, in order of highest to lowest, were "Resigned to teach in another NC public school system, Retired with full benefits, Resigned-Family relocation, Resigned, Career change, Moved to a non-teaching position in the LEA" (PSNC, 2014, p. 10).

In a longitudinal examination of NC turnover rates for years 2009-2014, data show an increase each year, with the percentages ranging from a low of 11.10% in 2009-2010 to a high of 14.33% in 2012-2013 (PSNC, 2014). The data do not take into consideration teachers who moved schools within their LEA or teachers who are on an approved leave. Additionally, charter school data are not considered in the 2013-2014 Annual Report because charter school teachers are at-will employees and only 50% of the teachers there are required to be licensed (PSNC, 2014). The self-reported reasons for

leaving remain consistent across the 5-year timespan (PSNC, 2014).

Understanding the characteristics of the teacher, organization, and school, along with understanding teacher self-efficacy, helps to provide information on teacher retention and how to impact its effects on the profession (Hughes, 2012). According to Roggeman (2015), teachers leave for several reasons:

1. Opportunities for professional advancement.
2. Recognition and support from administrators/managers.
3. Autonomy or control over own work.
4. Influence over workplace policies and practices. (p. 62)

School leaders can take from this information the need to foster building-level teacher leadership opportunities to help retain teachers in both their buildings and in the profession (Roggeman, 2015).

Age is also a teacher characteristic that relates to retention, with younger and older teachers exiting the profession (Hughes, 2012). Dissatisfaction and childcare top the reasons for younger teacher departures, while older teachers leave due to retirement (Hughes, 2012). Younger teachers also have less of a teaching knowledge base, and a study of new teachers by Watson, Harper, Ratliff, and Singleton (2010) found that high stress was a significant factor to job dissatisfaction. It must be noted that many young teachers who leave the profession also return to it at a later time (Hughes, 2012). “In a longitudinal study of 7,422 Michigan public school teachers, Beaudin (1993) found that 41.2% of beginning teacher left and 29.3% of leavers returned” (Hughes, 2012, p. 246). Interestingly, while the majority of the teaching workforce is female, the males more often remain in teaching (Hughes, 2012). Grade span also has an effect on teacher retention. Elementary teachers are more likely than middle and high school teachers to

remain in the profession. Additionally, with the greater availability of job options open to math and science teachers, they are more likely to see jobs in other fields (Hughes, 2012). Overall, existing literature suggests that middle-aged men who do not hold advanced degrees and had lower scores on standardized teacher entrance exams are the most likely to remain in the profession (Hughes, 2012).

Teachers report that salaries, working conditions, teacher preparation, and a lack of support or mentoring contribute to teacher attrition statistics (Darling-Hammond, 2003). According to Darling-Hammond (2003), the average teacher salary lags approximately 20% behind salaries of other professionals with similar education, and that difference appears to have a greater negative impact in the early years of the career. “Dissatisfaction with salary is often the most cited reason for leaving teaching” (Hughes, 2012). In a recent National Education Association (NEA, n.d.) report, the 2012-2013 National Average Starting Teacher Salary was \$36,141, with NC teachers averaging \$30,778. Low salary is often combined with an increased amount of work responsibilities to exasperate the issue.

Experienced teachers are more concerned with working conditions than salary in their reports of dissatisfaction in the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003). The working conditions of a school are one of the most important indicators of teacher retention (Hughes, 2012). Teacher working conditions include factors such as administrative support, teaching resources, and teacher input decisions (Darling-Hammond, 2003). These factors, once again, tend to be more enhanced in lower wealth, more urbanized schools where poorer resources such as buildings and teaching supplies are combined with larger class sizes and weaker administrative support systems to create higher teacher flight from the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Teachers who are in schools that

enjoy high levels of student success and achievement are also more likely to remain in the profession (Hughes, 2012).

Teacher preparation is also a factor in teacher success and retention in the profession. Student teaching experience has shown to impact teacher retention, with a recent report showing “29 percent of new teachers who had not had any student teaching experience left within five years, compared with only 15 percent of those who had done student teaching” (Darling-Hammond, 2003, p. 10). Further, “49 percent of uncertified entrants left within five years, compared to only 14 percent of certified entrants” (Darling-Hammond, 2003, p. 10). This suggests that the more training teachers have entering the profession, the more likely they are to remain in the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Teachers who depart the field report a lack of support and nonconducive working conditions such as being assigned lower achieving students, receiving little professional support or feedback, and a lack of modeling of best practices for student success most often (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2005),

Studies demonstrate that new teacher turnover rates can be cut in half through comprehensive induction—a combination of high-quality mentoring, professional development and support, scheduled interaction with other teachers in the school and in the larger community, and formal assessments for new teachers during at least their first two years of teaching. (pp. 2-3)

Successful induction is a “comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process” (Wong, 2004, p. 42). This process supports new teachers and creates lifelong learning in the profession (Wong, 2004). A comprehensive induction

program also benefits veteran teachers when they serve as coaches to the new teachers and collaborate with them in lesson planning and teaching strategies (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). A 4-year study of induction programs in Switzerland, Japan, France, Shanghai, and New Zealand revealed three themes for success—comprehensiveness, professional learning, and collaboration—while the contrasting theme in the United States is isolation (Wong, 2004). These themes are not currently incorporated into most school districts within NC but can be accessed via professional development programs at NCCAT. NCCAT’s (2014) philosophies of renewal and retention embody these themes for both beginning and career teachers through a myriad of session topics.

In addition to salaries, working conditions, and teacher preparation, public policies also influence teacher retention. For example, a 2013 survey of 630 public school educators conducted by Imig and Smith found that nearly every respondent thought that the NC legislative changes had a negative effect on teacher morale. Policy decisions made in 2013 that caused that negativity included the “elimination of the NC Teaching Fellows program, the elimination of career status for teachers, increased class sizes, decreases in funding for textbooks and curricular materials, and decreases in funding for professional development” (Manfra, 2014, p. 1). In Imig and Smith’s (2013) survey, two-thirds of respondents thought the changes reduced the quality of teaching and learning in their own school, and three-quarters were less likely to continue working as a teacher/administrator in NC. The researchers concluded that a “tipping point” in retaining a teaching workforce sufficient for NC public schools might have been reached.

Answers do exist to the teacher retention conundrum. The consulting firm of McKinsey & Company released a study of the 25 highest performing school systems

across the globe and discovered that top systems recruit top people to become teachers, spend time developing their craft, and ensure that students receive quality instruction (Balls, Eury, & King, 2011). “The world’s best-performing school systems make great teaching their ‘north star.’ They have strategic and systematic approaches to attract, develop, retain, and ensure the efficacy of the most talented educators” (Auguste et al., 2010, p. 5). The United States has failed to do these things. It is important to note that teachers who have higher test scores on academic testing and who attended more competitive undergraduate colleges and universities are more likely to leave the profession (McLaurin et al., 2009). At best, in the United States, the focus is on improving those already in the profession; but as a nation, there are no systems in place to recruit strong candidates into the profession (Auguste et al., 2010). Countries with the top performing students, Singapore, Finland, and South Korea, have a different philosophy. They recruit their teachers from the top third of students entering college and make admissions to teacher training programs very selective; some pay for college costs, while others pay a salary or stipend while in training (Auguste et al., 2010).

In Singapore, the government monitors the market to ensure that new teachers are paid a competitive wage; then, to keep the teachers in the classrooms, they pay retention bonuses at \$10,000 to \$36,000 every 3-5 years (Auguste et al., 2010). The Singapore teacher attrition rate is 3% yearly, as compared to 14-20% in high poverty areas in the United States (Auguste et al., 2010). Singapore teachers also receive merit-based and performance-based increases that can be 10-30% of the base salary (Auguste et al., 2010). The teaching profession here is very competitive and only accepts one in eight of those who apply. Teachers in Singapore also have collaborative time and 100 hours of professional development growth time that is paid (Auguste et al., 2010).

Finland also has a competitive selection process, where only one in 10 applicants is accepted into its teaching force (Auguste et al., 2010). Candidates come from the top 20% of high school graduates and are required to have a master's degree, which is paid for by the government (Auguste et al., 2010). Additionally, teachers in Finland have latitude on how to implement the national curriculum, and there are no performance evaluations or performances (Auguste et al., 2010). Finally, there is a 2% attrition rate in Finland (Auguste et al., 2010).

South Korea pays its teachers the world's highest teacher salaries, provides vacations and social status, and therefore has its best candidates applying to be teachers (Auguste et al., 2010). Only the top 5% of students are accepted into teacher training programs, and teacher earnings are between \$55,000 and \$155,000 (Auguste et al., 2010). Teacher attrition rates in South Korea are just over 1% a year, and due to the highly competitive selection process, teachers are promised their position for life (Auguste et al., 2010). Additionally, South Korea is exploring teacher evaluations and professional development as it goes forward (Auguste et al., 2010).

In Singapore, Finland, and South Korea, attracting, recruiting, and retaining teachers is a national focus. Salaries are competitive and teachers can advance and grow professionally and socially, and teachers hold prestige in these countries (Auguste et al., 2010). One way NC attempted to address the issue of candidate recruitment was through the Teaching Fellows Program, which existed from 1986 until 2012, when it was dropped from the NC budget. The NC Teaching Fellows program was one of the most aggressive teacher recruitment programs in the nation (NC Teaching Fellows Program, n.d.).

The average profile of a Teaching Fellow includes an SAT score over 1100, a high school GPA of 4.0 or more on a weighted scale, and a rank in the top 10% of

his/her high school graduating class. In keeping with the goal to recruit males and minorities, each year approximately 20% of the program's recipients are minority, while 30% are male. (Berry, 2011, para. 4)

Each year, 500 Teaching Fellows recipients with scholarships totaling \$6,500 per year for 4 years were funded. This cost NC taxpayers an estimated \$13.5 million annually (Berry, 2011, para. 3). The Teaching Fellows program provided these students with not only funds to pay for college tuition but also summer enrichment activities to help strengthen their presence in the classroom. In return, students agreed to teach for 4 years in a NC school (Henry, Bastian, & Smith, 2012). Research conducted in May 2011, by Dr. Gary Henry, found that “over ninety percent of Teaching Fellows returned for a third year of teaching, with seventy-five percent continuing into a fifth year” (Henry et al., 2012, p. 5). These percentages were higher than the retention rates for all other teacher preparation groups (Henry et al., 2012).

After being defunded by the NC General Assembly, the TFA program was lauded as being the replacement model for recruiting teachers into the profession. People who become TFA teachers must have a bachelor's degree, a 2.5 undergraduate grade point average, and proof of United States Citizenship (TFA, n.d.). These teachers are recruited from a diverse group of college students and are then placed in a low-income community for 2 years (TFA, n.d.). The majority of these teachers, 88%, do not have teacher certification nor do they have pedagogy background; rather, they are sent to a 5-week training session at the TFA Institute (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). TFA teachers gain licensure through alternative certificates and some gain their master's degrees while they are working for TFA (TFA, n.d.).

While most TFA teachers complete their 2-year commitments, 60.5% continue in

public education beyond their 2-year commitment, 56.4% leave their initial placement in a low-income setting after 2 years, but 43.6% remain; and by the fifth year, 27.8% were still in teaching, while 14.8% were still in their original assignment (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). TFA teachers are placed in high-poverty schools where teacher attrition is already an issue. The attrition rate at high-poverty schools is 21%, compared to 14% in low-poverty schools (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). Inexperienced teachers assume the vacancies, so students are taught by less-effective teachers; and with the revolving door of teachers, teaching capacity cannot be built (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011).

Mentoring and induction programs are also proving to be an effective method of retaining teachers in the profession, but they have to be intentional and have administrative support. School districts that have intentional programs such as those in Rochester, New York, and several districts in Ohio have seen attrition rates fall by more than two-thirds when qualified mentors, with release time from their regular teaching duties, work with beginning teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003). These beginning teachers not only remain in the profession, but they also grow into effective teachers more quickly (Darling-Hammond, 2003). In a pilot study of five school districts, Barnes et al. (2007) recommended that the implementation of effective retention programs such as “a high quality induction program at a cost of \$6,000 per teacher” could reduce turnover and save money in the long run (p. 5). Quality comprehensive induction programs not only help schools retain teachers, but because the teachers remained, student achievement also increased (Barnes et al., 2007).

Principals who provide opportunities for teacher leadership, show support and have high expectations that are clearly communicated have lower retention rates (Hughes, 2012). In a survey of 782 participants conducted by Hughes (2012), 83.5% plan to

remain in teaching until retirement, 6.9% plan to advance within the teaching profession, 3.5% plan on a career outside of teaching, 3.5% are out to care for family, and 2.4% plan to leave for other reasons. Of those who did not plan to teach until retirement, 13.95% plan on returning to teaching while 29.46% do not plan on returning to teaching. The remaining respondents were not sure of their future plans (Hughes, 2012).

As part of its Teachers and Teaching Initiative (TTI), Wachovia Foundation funded a 3-year cluster evaluation of NCCAT conducted by TCC Group to assess TTI progress (TCC Group, n.d.). Focused on the NCCAT Connections program for beginning teachers, TCC Group evaluators examined data collected about school year 2007-2008 from three participating districts. Data sources included focus groups with program participants and interviews with host district personnel. Evaluators also surveyed program participants including 134 teachers, 91 mentors, and 77 second-year teachers. Findings demonstrated strong evidence of improving teacher retention, participant motivation for professional development, gains in pedagogical knowledge and skills, and large increases in classroom management skills. Among evaluators' recommendations were for NCCAT to continue to push for school support by working with mentors, districts, and principals and encouraging participants to do concrete things to build a support network within their school; and to identify ways of supporting teachers in preparing for a substitute prior to the first meeting, perhaps by engaging mentors or holding a first meeting prior to the start of the school year.

Funded by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, another evaluation of NCCAT Connections for beginning teachers was conducted by ProforMetrics (2012), the second of a 2-year study. Quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus group) data were collected from program participants and their school principals. For the survey, evaluators

employed a retrospective pretest and a traditional posttest to assess possible change on four program outcome indicators: retention, professional development, pedagogical knowledge and skills, and teaching approach and style. As with the TCC Group evaluation, researchers found significant positive change in each of the four outcome indicators. In focus groups, both participating teachers and their principals offered recommendations for program improvement. Among others, teachers suggested more frequent sessions, facilitator visits to schools, and an orientation; principals recommended an NCCAT for administrators, involving principals as participants in some sessions, and presurveying teachers on their learning needs.

Summary

While they have some differing focal points, all adult learning theorists tend to agree that the adult learner cannot be taught in the same fashion as a child learner. The adult learner, to truly grow from the experience, needs to be engaged, have a say in the curriculum and the evaluative process, be self-directed and intrinsically motivated, and be involved in collaborative discourse with other adult learners. Adult learning also changes as people have life experiences and their frames of references are altered. A goal of many adult learning theories is for the learner to become an independent thinker, which is accomplished in large part through critical discourse and collaboration. Unfortunately, the most common models of teacher professional development do not incorporate good adult learning principles. NCCAT is grounded in adult learning theory and allows participants to not only engage in the critical discourse necessary to work toward independent thought processes but also allows for time to collaborate and gives participants choice in their seminar content. For these reasons, the researcher examined the possible links between attendance at NCCAT sessions and the retention of those

participants in the teaching profession. The following chapter explores the qualitative case study methodology that was employed to examine those possible links.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which the residential professional development model at NCCAT influenced experienced teachers, particularly their decisions to continue or discontinue teaching. Through this examination, adult learning theories, professional development models, and teacher renewal were reviewed. This chapter explains how the researcher, through qualitative case study methodology, sought to answer questions about how participation in an NCCAT experience possibly influenced experienced teachers' retention rates. To best understand the influence of the NCCAT experience, the researcher also examined data to formulate an understanding of the degree to which NCCAT discharged its mission as a program of professional development, as well as experienced teacher participants' perceptions about the uniqueness of the NCCAT experience as a program of professional development.

Introduction to Qualitative Research

This study utilized the qualitative research methodology, specifically the case study research design. This methodology was chosen to provide a deeper understanding of the influences of the professional development model at NCCAT on teachers who have participated in seminars (Anyan, 2013). Qualitative data collection requires that the researcher authentically gathers and reports information from participants (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002). Qualitative methodology emphasizes a relationship between the participants and the researcher and is interpretative research (Creswell, 2014). Using a case study design, the researcher observed an NCCAT seminar and examined data from participant-observer field notes, collected data from participant-teacher interviews and participant-teacher journal entries, and examined NCCAT documents for fidelity in executing the four goals of its strategic plan:

1. Developing professional educators;
2. Being a leader in professional Development;
3. Fostering successful educational innovation;
4. Valuing, renewing, and motivating educators (NCCAT, 2014).

The Case Study Research Design

In a case study, the researcher explores a case or multiple cases over a period of time via “detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and case-based themes” (Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales, 2007, p. 245). Case study research has its roots in anthropology and sociology in the early to mid-1900s and has application in the social sciences today (Creswell et al., 2007). This study used multiple data sources, as recommended by best case study practices (Creswell et al., 2007). NCCAT was examined with a focus on its implementation of adult learning theories. The following research questions were examined to investigate the possible influence of NCCAT’s seminars upon experienced teachers:

1. In what ways and to what degree has NCCAT discharged its mission as a program of professional development?
2. What are experienced teacher participants’ perceptions on how the NCCAT experience differs from other forms of professional development?
3. How does participation in an NCCAT experience possibly influence experienced teachers’ retention rates?

Multiple sources of information were gathered during this collective case study. Field study observation data were collected and analyzed, interviews with experienced teachers who are NCCAT alumni were held, individual participant journal entries were examined,

and an analysis of NCCAT documents was conducted (Creswell et al., 2007). Multiple data sources were used as a means of triangulating the data to guard against bias (Bowen, 2009). Through the analysis process, themes were identified that were common throughout, and interpretations and generalizations were reported and documented (Creswell et al., 2007).

A process evaluation was utilized to determine the degree to which NCCAT has discharged its mission as a program of professional development. Patton (2001) suggested that a process evaluation could strengthen the understanding of a program's design and delivery. For this study, field note observation data were collected from a full session of an NCCAT seminar during the 2014-2015 year, interviews of experienced teachers who were NCCAT alumni during the 2014-2015 school year were investigated, journal entries of experienced teachers who were NCCAT alumni were examined, and sample NCCAT documents from the years 2014 through 2015 were examined.

Participants

In line with Kvale (2012), the study consisted of 10 interviews of NCCAT alumni participants who indicated in NCCAT exit surveys their willingness to be contacted in the future or who were participants at the "Catching Up With Your Students: Digital Learning" seminar and agreed to participate in interviews at the end of the seminar. Each participant was an experienced NC teacher with greater than 4 years of successful teaching experience. The researcher attempted to ensure participants represented NCCAT alumni from an equal representation of NC's geographic and population regions. Additionally, the researcher selected participants from a variety of NCCAT seminars from the time frame of the 2014-2015 school year.

Setting

The interviews were conducted at a neutral site determined by the researcher in collaboration with the participants. Following Creswell's (2014) research design, the field study observational data were collected at the site where the experience occurred. This ensured a more authentic experience for the study participants (Creswell, 2014).

Procedures

NCCAT (n.d.) described its professional development framework as being grounded firmly in adult learning theory. Gathering field study observational data, conducting interviews, examining participant journal entries, and analyzing NCCAT's documents provided insight into the perceptions of experienced teachers about their professional development experience while at an NCCAT seminar. Additionally, the possible influence of the NCCAT seminar on experienced teachers and their decisions regarding their career pathway was analyzed. The researcher collected the field study data, conducted the interviews, reviewed the journal entries, and examined the documents, as was recommended by Creswell (2014).

Data Collection Strategies

Data were systematically collected through a document review of NCCAT documents such as program agendas, extant testimonies, and participant surveys. The data were examined and reviewed to gain understanding of NCCAT as a professional development model. Documents provided an historical setting, guided the creation of questions to be asked, added to the researcher's base of knowledge, provided a timeline of change, and provided greater credibility to other findings (Bowen, 2009).

When data collection originally began, the intent was to utilize the focus group format for the interviews. The original email inviting potential participants to join the

study was sent via email on May 28, 2015 (see Appendix A). It was sent to 170 NCCAT alumni. On June 4, 2015, an email was sent to the experienced teacher participants who were attending the “Catching Up With Your Students: Digital Literacy” seminar. On June 8, 2015, a second email was sent to 22 people who responded to the original email that they had a willingness to participate. Additionally, this email included the times and locations of the interviews as well as the participant consent form for research (see Appendix B), demographic survey (see Appendix C), and the journal entry worksheets (see Appendix D). On June 10, 2015, an additional reminder was sent to 10 of the 22 who had not replied to the June 8, 2015 correspondence. On June 17, an email was sent to the six seminar participants who had responded with a willingness to participate with their documents. By mid-June, the number of participants dwindled to 12 so the researcher had to adjust from focus group interviews to individual interviews due to an inability to get at least four participants in the same location at the same time. By the completion of the study, the 12 people reduced again to 10, as one participant never came for the interview and another participant could not be reached for clarification on her experience-level status as there was a discrepancy between her self-reported status for the study and the status she reported to NCCAT.

The individual interview protocol was utilized in this study (see Appendix E). Interviewees were NCCAT alumni who had agreed to participate in further research by agreeing to future contact in an end-of-session survey or they were participants in the “Catching Up With Your Students: Digital Learning” seminar and were willing to participate in interviews at the end of the seminar. A convenience sample of those participants was drawn for this study (Patton, 1990). Kvale (1983) described the purpose of interview as a data collection method “to gather descriptions of the life-world of the

interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena” (p. 174). Interviews are a data collection method that allows participants to share about their experiences (Anyan, 2013). According to Seidman, interviewing allows people to share an understanding of their experiences and put them into context (Dilley, 2004). According to Kvale (2012), the interview allows the researcher to understand participant experiences from their unique viewpoint. “Interviews are particularly suited for studying people’s understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world” (Kvale, 2012, chapter 4, section 3, para. 19).

Observation

According to Creswell (2013), observation is a primary tool within qualitative research. The researcher observed an NCCAT seminar at the Cullowhee campus during the 2014-2015 school year. The role of the researcher was that of an observer, in that the researcher was in the session but was not an active participant in seminar activities (Creswell, 2013).

Prior to the seminar, the researcher alerted seminar participants by letter to the presence of a nonparticipating observer (see Appendix F). Once there, the researcher was introduced by NCCAT staff, and participants were reminded of the inclusion of an observer. The researcher used a two-column note-taking format for both descriptive notes and for reflective notes (Creswell, 2013). At the conclusion of the seminar, the researcher informed seminar participants about the anonymity of their participation, how the data would be utilized, and how to access the study (Creswell, 2013).

Data Sources Linked to Research Questions

This study employed a variety of data for analysis: case study analysis (Stake, 1995), content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980), and the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The tables below display how each data source was collected and analyzed.

Table 1

Data Sources Linked to Research Questions

Research Question	Data Collection Methods	Questions and Prompts
In what ways and to what degree has NCCAT discharged its mission as a program of professional development?	Document Analysis	Tell us how your participation in the NCCAT experience has affected you personally and / or professionally? (Interview)
	Interview	Describe any changes in your teaching practices as a result of your NCCAT experience. (Interview)
	Participant Journals	All other interview questions listed below also help to inform this question. (Interview)
	Observational Field Notes	What was the NCCAT experience like for you? Would you consider the experience unique? Why or why not? (Journal Entry)
What are experienced teacher participants' perceptions of how the NCCAT differs from other forms of professional development?	Document Analysis	How would you describe the NCCAT professional development program to others? (Interview)
	Interview	Describe how a NCCAT professional development experience compares to other forms of professional development you have attended? (Interview)
	Participant Journals	What was the NCCAT experience like for you? Would you consider the experience unique? Why or why not? (Journal Entry)
How does participation in an NCCAT experience possibly influence experienced teachers' retention rates?	Document Analysis	In what ways, if any, has NCCAT affirmed why you decided to enter the field of education? (Interview)
	Interview	Describe how your participation in a NCCAT experience may have affected your long term goals as an educator. (Interview)
	Participant Journals	How do you think your participation in your NCCAT professional development session affected your decision to remain in, or leave, the teaching profession? (Journal Entry)

Table 2

Data Sources by Research Question

	NCCAT program observation field notes	NCCAT anecdotal evidence and testimonials	Participant interviews and journal entries	Seminar agendas and program surveys
In what ways and to what degree has NCCAT discharged its mission as a program of professional development?	X	X	X	X
What are experienced teacher participants' perceptions of how the NCCAT differs from other forms of professional development?		X	X	X
How does participation in an NCCAT experience possibly influence experienced teachers' retention rates?		X	X	

Data Analysis Procedures

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative researchers need a protocol for the interview questions and for the recording of responses and transcriptions of those responses. The questions included an opening question followed by the questioning route which had an introductory question, a transition question, six key questions, and three ending questions (Krueger & Casey, 2014; see Appendix F for full protocol). Responses were recorded and coded to identify themes (Creswell, 2014). The researcher employed Tesch's Eight Steps in the Coding Process:

1. Read all of the transcripts and recorded thoughts. All interviews were recorded and the recordings were transcribed verbatim by an experienced, third-party transcriber.
2. Picked one document and looked for the overall meaning of the document.
3. After reviewing several documents, looked for similar topics.
4. Coded the topics and assigned the codes to the text.
5. Looked for themes within the topics and created a list of condensed categories.
6. Put the codes for the categories into alphabetic order.
7. Analyzed the data within each category.
8. Recoded the data if necessary (Creswell, 2014).

Data were gleaned from a variety of sources: field study observational data, participant interviews, participant journals, and NCCAT document analysis. This provided a means of triangulation for this qualitative study. The field study observations and document analysis helped the researcher to focus the questions for the interviews as well as supplemented the answers provided in the interview sessions (Bowen, 2009). According to Bowen (2009), document analysis combines content and thematic analysis. “The analytic procedure entails finding, selecting, appraising (making sense of), and synthesizing data contained in documents” (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). Content analysis was the categorization of information as it related to the focus of the study. The collected data were then organized and categorized through content analysis (Bowen, 2009). The researcher then segregated relevant information from that which was not relevant to the study (Bowen, 2009). Thematic analysis focused on the themes that emerged for analysis (Bowen, 2009). Selected data were coded and categories emerged (Bowen, 2009). The

themes that emerged from the interviews were compared to the themes that arose in the document analysis.

Creswell (2013) provided a framework for conducting case study analysis. He stated that the researcher must be deliberate in “organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read-through of the database, coding and organizing themes, representing the data, and forming interpretation of them” (Creswell, 2013, chapter 8, section 1, para. 1). This process is necessary for the researcher to adequately analyze, interpret, and report the data collected (Creswell, 2013). The predetermined codes, established prior to the examination of the data, included those that originated from common themes of the adult learning theorists presented in the literature review:

- A safe learning environment,
- Collaborative discourse,
- Time for reflection, and
- Goal setting.
- Learner autonomy.

Codes that evolved from the literature related to NCCAT were residential learning, renewal, and general amenities. Codes that emerged from the literature around professional development were seminar length, presenter expertise, and topic relevance. Finally, codes from the literature surrounding teacher retention included professional respect, support, and resources.

Creswell (2013) recommended several readings of the transcripts prior to working with the data. After the data review, the researcher coded the data. Once coded, the data were then categorized into themes (Creswell, 2013). The researcher then quantified the

data through a frequency count; however, the narrative also included “rich, thick descriptions” that added more substance to the findings than just the frequency count (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). Data were also represented through tables and charts (Creswell, 2013).

Subjectivity Disclosure

As the researcher, objectivity must be maintained and natural biases recognized. The researcher participated in several NCCAT seminars over the span of the last 25 years and must acknowledge that bias. “Whatever the substance of one’s persuasions at a given point, one’s subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed” (Peshkin, 1988, p. 17). As Peshkin (1988) suggested, researchers must consciously seek out their subjectivity and be aware of it during the research and data collection process so it can be tempered. The personal experiences of the researcher cannot cloud the collection and reporting of the data. As an unbiased researcher, all data, including positive and negative conclusions, must be reported (Creswell, 2014).

The study of NCCAT interested the researcher specifically as a teacher and administrator who participated in several NCCAT seminars and encouraged other teachers to take advantage of the professional development offered through this residential venue. Thus, subjectivity was considered (Peshkin, 1988). Experiences of the researcher in the NCCAT seminars included a seminar taken as a classroom teacher under the original NCCAT model of “learning for the joy of learning” where Appalachian Wildflowers were studied. This seminar provided the researcher with a weeklong experiential learning opportunity that renewed the spirit of teaching through learning about a new topic. While this professional development experience did not have direct correlation to the classroom instruction as a high school social studies teacher, it

renewed the love of learning new information and made the researcher more excited to return to the classroom to share that excitement with students.

Additionally, the researcher attended NCCAT with a team from the high school where she was an assistant principal, where the work to be done surrounded the creation of a school safety plan. This session was a precursor to the now established Research and Development sessions offered at NCCAT. The advantage of using the NCCAT facility for that work was that it gave the team an opportunity to be away from the distractions of home, daily work responsibilities, and family to focus specifically on the task at hand. It allowed the team to engage in discourse about topics beyond safety that could help improve the overall climate of the school.

Finally, as a principal, the researcher attended both a seminar on integrating digital literacy with primary resources and a Research and Development seminar with third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers. The session on digital literacy and primary resources allowed the researcher to participate with other teachers from across the state in learning how to integrate primary and digital resources into classroom instruction. As a former history teacher, the primary resource piece was of particular interest; and as an instructional leader who was leading her school into a one-to-one environment, the integration of technology resources was very timely. This session had direct application to the job of the principal, and the information was able to be shared with the school's staff.

In the Research and Development seminar, teachers collaborated, sought out resources, and created LiveBinders and lesson plans with integrated math and literacy resources. In addition to the time spent in collaboration over lesson planning, the researcher and the teachers were able to spend time building trust and relationships

through both work in a safe learning environment and relaxation. The teachers were able to work without distractions and produced a storehouse of resources for planning purposes, thus making their task of lesson planning less arduous throughout the remainder of the school year. Teachers were able to create a digital textbook of resources to off-set the absence of actual textbooks. It allowed them time to seek out, discuss, align, and experiment with the resources. This time was unavailable during the regular course of a school day or even teacher workday due to the other distractions and tasks that were present when they were at the school site. As part of this team, the researcher was able to be an instructional leader by assisting in the collection of resources, engaging in professional discourse about the standards, and problem solving with the teachers. The time for collaboration allowed the teams to become more cohesive and productive.

As an NCCAT alumna from a variety of seminars over a span of 25 years, the researcher saw this professional development model as a valuable resource to the teachers of NC. As a participant, the researcher has experienced both an increase in knowledge and a renewal of spirit through participation in seminars. As a current principal, the researcher saw NCCAT as a venue for professional development that was effective in both program delivery and renewal of teachers. Because of these biases, the researcher acknowledged that not all NCCAT alumni will share the same sentiments. This study examined program fidelity to the mission statement of NCCAT and to its current strategic plan as well as possible differences in NCCAT alumni experiences. While the researcher had positive experiences at NCCAT, she acknowledges that not all participants may have had similar experiences. The researcher is seeking both positive and negative feedback from other participants.

Validity and Reliability

A strength of qualitative research is the validity of the research (Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell (2014), “qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures” (p. 201). Creswell (2014) suggested the following procedures to ensure validity.

1. Triangulate different data sources: In the current study, the researcher used field observation data, individual interviews, individual journal entries, and document analysis to uncover common themes.
2. Member checking: Once the individual interviews were completed, the researcher shared the final report with the participants so that they could provide feedback and check for accuracy of the data collected.
3. Use rich, thick descriptions: The researcher wrote in a manner in which the reader was able to be transported to the event being described.
4. Identify researcher bias: As an NCCAT alumni, the researcher brought particular biases to the study. Appropriate steps were taken to help ensure that the bias was minimal and did not impact the study.
5. Present negative or discrepant information: To increase credibility, information that contradicted the theme was also shared.
6. Time: The researcher observed a full week’s seminar in the setting with the seminar participants. The researcher spent additional time examining survey and agenda data as well as time interviewing participants and reviewing the participant journal entries.
7. Peer debriefing: As a member of a companion dissertation, the companion colleague served as a peer debriefer.

8. External auditor: The researcher relied on dissertation committee members, particularly the committee chair, to audit the results.
9. Reflexivity journal: The researcher kept a journal to notate thoughts, potential biases, and reflections. By doing this throughout the research process, the researcher proactively took steps to reduce the influence of potential bias in the final product.

Qualitative reliability occurred when “the researcher’s approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). This was best done by the researcher documenting the steps to the case study procedures such that they could be followed and duplicated (Creswell, 2014). There were several procedures to help ensure reliability, which included checking transcripts, following Tesch’s coding procedures, and cross-checking codes with another researcher (Creswell, 2014). For the purpose of this study, the researcher worked with the companion colleague for intercoder agreement.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The following limitations were present in this study.

1. A limitation to the study was the small number of research participants, particularly when compared to the numbers of experienced teachers within the state of NC. The small sample limits the number of participants who were able to voice an opinion about NCCAT.
2. The convenience sample of participants limited the span of opinions examined by the researcher. Only experienced teachers who attended an NCCAT session, indicated a willingness to be contacted in their exit surveys, or attended the “Catching Up With Your Students: Digital Learning” seminar

where the researcher was an observer were eligible for interview.

3. The researcher was an NCCAT alumna and came with a personal bias that could taint the study toward positive results.
4. The descriptive analysis of factors that contributed to teacher renewal and possible retention were based on the self-reporting of NCCAT veteran teacher alumni interview participants.
5. The researcher only observed one 1-week NCCAT seminar at the Cullowhee site. This limitation impacted the study since NCCAT offers many 1-week seminars over a variety of topics at two sites.
6. The researcher only collected data from the 2014-2015 school year. This limitation also impacted the study sample size.

The parameters of this study were created by the following delimitations.

1. This study included a program evaluation of the residential professional development aspects of NCCAT during the year 2014-2015.
2. Participants were experienced teachers with more than 4 years of teaching experience.

Reporting the Findings

When reviewing and reporting the findings of this study, the researcher interpreted the data and provided a rich narrative that transparently described the lessons learned (Fossey et al., 2002). According to Fossey et al. (2002), the rigor of the interpretive process begins at data collection, continues during data analysis, and culminates with the qualitative findings being presented in a manner that is both descriptive and interpretive. It was the goal of the researcher to present an unbiased and thorough discussion of the NCCAT experience as it related to experienced teacher

retention in the profession.

Summary

The researcher's focus was to apply the principles of qualitative research methodology, specifically the case study design, to provide an understanding of the possible long-term effects of NCCAT participation on the experienced teacher's desire to remain in or exit the profession. Additionally, the execution of NCCAT's implementation of professional development, grounded in adult learning theory, was examined. Finally, experienced teacher perceptions of NCCAT as a professional development experience were investigated through surveys, journal entries, and interviews. In the following chapter, the researcher explores the data gathered in this qualitative case study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the degree to which the residential professional development model at NCCAT possibly influenced the retention of experienced teachers. The case study methodology was incorporated to analyze how different individuals perceived their experience at NCCAT programs (Creswell, 2014). The case study also examined the ways and the degree to which NCCAT discharged its mission as a program of professional development, grounded in Adult Learning Theory. Finally, this case study sought to inform about experienced teacher perceptions on how the NCCAT experience differed from other forms of professional development. The researcher used field observation data, individual interviews, individual journal entries, and document analysis to uncover common themes to triangulate the data (Creswell, 2014). Table 3 represents the participant demographics of those interviewed and completed journal entries. Pseudonyms were chosen by the participants in order to adhere to confidentiality standards.

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Completed Years of teaching Experience	School Type	Subject Taught	County
Country	Female	Caucasian	36	12	Public/Middle	Eighth Grade Math	Randolph
Sue	Female	Caucasian	45	22	Public/Central office		Alamance
Paige	Female	Other	41	17	Public/elementary	Second Grade	Mecklenburg
Rebel	Female	Caucasian	33	8	Public/High	Math	Richmond
Anne	Female	Caucasian	47	6	Public/High	Media	Davidson
Max	Female	Caucasian	63	13	Public/High	Visual Art	Nash
Sophia	Female	Caucasian	55	17	Public/Elementary	Media	Person
Florina	Female	African American	52	22	Public/Middle	Eighth- Grade Social Studies	Hoke
Madeline	Female	Caucasian	39	17	Public/Middle	Spanish	Union
Cheer	Female	Caucasian	40	16	Public/High	History	Transylvania

The literature revealed several themes that were utilized in the coding process.

The predetermined codes included those that originated from common themes that adult learning theorists presented in the literature review. These themes were (a) a safe learning environment, (b) collaborative discourse, (c) reflection, (d) goal setting, and (e) learner autonomy. Themes that originated around NCCAT were (a) residential learning, (b) renewal, and (c) general amenities. Professional development themes of (a) seminar length, (b) presenter expertise, and (c) topic relevance also emerged. Finally, themes

attributed to teacher retention included (a) professional respect, (b) support, and (c) resources. The coding of the themes of adult learning theory, NCCAT, professional development, and teacher retention was done to provide answers to the three research questions of the study.

1. In what ways and to what degree has NCCAT discharged its mission as a program of professional development?
2. What are experienced teacher participants' perceptions on how the NCCAT experience differs from other forms of professional development?
3. How does participation in an NCCAT experience possibly influence experienced teachers' retention rates?

Examination of Data for Research Question 1

“In what ways and to what degree has NCCAT discharged its mission as a program of professional development?” The researcher examined several data sources to provide information about this question. Individual interview and journal entry data, data from the document analysis of agendas and surveys, and field study observational data were utilized to address this question. In answering the first research question, the researcher examined NCCAT documents and other data sources for fidelity in executing the four goals of its current strategic plan:

1. Developing Professional Educators.
2. Being a Leader in Professional Development.
3. Fostering Successful Educational Innovation.
4. Valuing, Renewing, and Motivating Educators (NCCAT, 2014).

To be able to examine the fidelity of the execution of the strategic plan goals, the researcher chose to use the codes found in the literature of adult learning theory,

professional development, NCCAT, and retention. The goals of the strategic plan were examined through the lenses of the codes from the literature to strengthen the validity of the findings as they were separate and apart from coding that could have originated from NCCAT. This allowed the researcher to take a less biased view of the execution of NCCAT's strategic plan.

Individual Interviews and Journal Entry Data

Participant interviews and journal entries assisted in providing answers to the first research question, "In what ways and to what degree does NCCAT discharge its mission as a program of professional development?" Initially, 12 participants volunteered to be interviewed and complete journal entries for the study. During the data collection, one participant failed to come to the interview despite repeated attempts to reschedule. One other participant had to be removed from the experienced teacher study due to an inability to reach her to confirm her number of completed years, as there was a discrepancy on her reported years to NCCAT and her reported years to the researcher. Table 3 represents the participant demographics of those interviewed and who completed journal entries.

While the demographics show a large percentage of Caucasian female participants, the percentage of African-American participants is close to the national average of African Americans in the population at 13.2% but below the average of 22% of NC's population that is African American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Additionally, the demographics do show a variety of counties represented and a variety of public school types.

The participants completed two independent journal entries and participated in individual interviews about their NCCAT experience. The journal entries were read

holistically by the researcher on the initial reading and were then reread and coded with themes from the literature on adult learning theory, professional development, NCCAT, and teacher retention. The researcher then had the codes peer-checked by the companion dissertation colleague to ensure increased validity and reliability (Creswell, 2014). As depicted in Table 4, 13 main themes emerged from the literature, the interviews, and the participant journal entries. During the coding process, one tally mark was awarded for each theme for each question posed in either the interview or the journal.

Table 4

Code Frequency of Distribution by Participant Interviews and Journal Entries for Research Question 1

Code	Frequency
Safe Learning Environment	2
Collaborative Discourse	29
Reflection	4
Goal Setting	9
Learner Autonomy	9
Seminar Length	3
Presenter Expertise	16
Topic Relevance	43
Professional Respect	2
Resources	9
Residential	13
Renewal	36
Amenities	13

The three main themes that emerged from the participant interviews and journal entries were (a) collaborative discourse, (b) topic relevance, and (c) renewal. An example of collaborative discourse was provided by Country who shared, “We were able to learn from our seminar leaders as well as from each other. It is fun, relaxing, and positive interaction with colleagues.” The second theme of topic relevance is demonstrated by Sophia’s response, “NCCAT offers a chance to meet with other media coordinators and plan lessons unique to the library.” Finally, the theme of renewal emerged in Florina’s journal: “After each seminar, I leave feeling refreshed and invigorated with what I have been taught.”

Participants explained that the adult learning theme of collaborative discourse existed in a variety of seminars. Madeline shared, “I liked the fact that we also had the opportunity to not just collaborate with people that were there, but also to use the things that we were learning.” Country explained in her journal, “We were able to learn from our seminar leaders as well as from each other. Each participant brings their unique experiences with them. It is fun, relaxing, and positive interaction with colleagues I would have otherwise not even met.” Anne added, “We had the opportunity to learn and share with our peers. We had the opportunity to learn about events, practices, and procedures in other parts of the state.”

Topic relevance was the tenet of professional development that was prevalent in the participant interviews and journals. Participants shared across seminars that the information learned could be applied in their classrooms. Sophia wrote that “NCCAT offers a chance to meet with other media coordinators and plan lessons unique to the library.” Cheer echoed with, “I received a wealth of information and resources that I use in my classroom on a regular basis.” Paige added,

Well, my decision to participate in this NCCAT, this particular one, was my interest in technology. I realize that it is the way of the world, and I wanted my students to be able to have an opportunity to use technology, and I needed to know how to incorporate technology into my plans, to make it intention, you know, not just throw on a video here and there, but to really sit down and plan.

Rebel stated, “I’m just learning more ways to keep them [students] interactive and learning and focused through NCCAT.”

The NCCAT theme of renewal was the third most common theme that arose through participant interviews and journal entries in response to the first research question. Sue explained,

I would say it’s probably the most fun professional development I’ve ever done. It’s hard to put it in a nutshell, because it is rigorous. You learn a lot, but it’s also rejuvenating. You feel better about yourself. You’re treated as a professional, and while it’s rigorous and rejuvenating, it’s also really relaxing, too. I just put it on my list of things you must do.

Paige added, “It has reaffirmed the fact that I like to teach, and I want to teach, and now I have something new that I can offer.” Anne recommended,

I’ve already spoken to one of my teachers, and I told her, I said, “You need to go. You need to start researching this now. You would benefit greatly by it.” Especially she’s on the verge of burnout, and she’s only a third year teacher, and she like needs something to rejuvenate her, and I think NCCAT would rejuvenate her, because she’s an awesome teacher, and she just needs a little boost to get her back in the groove.

Max shared, “So for me, it’s a retreat that challenges my brain.” Country wrote, “I was

honestly thinking of leaving teaching when I attended. NCCAT has a way of renewing your love for what you do. It lights a fire that, for me, once burned strong for the teaching profession.” Sophia echoed with, “Teachers often operate in relative isolation (i.e., in each school) so NCCAT is a fantastic opportunity to meet with others to refresh their professional coffers.”

Document Analysis: Survey Data

Survey data were also utilized to address to the question, “In what ways and to what degree does NCCAT discharge its mission as a program of professional development?” Since survey data were not disaggregated in any way to show the experience level of the anonymous respondents, survey data had to be matched against participant data to ensure that the surveys used in this study were authentically matched to only experienced teachers. Most surveys were from seminars that had a mix of beginning and experienced teachers. Of the 54 surveys available for the 2014-2015 school year, only 10%, or six, surveys were applicable. A total of 94 respondents completed the six surveys. Table 5 shows the code frequency of distribution by survey number.

Table 5

Code Frequency of Distribution by Survey for Research Question 1

	Survey Number					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Safe Learning Environment	9	4	5	10	6	10
Collaborative Discourse	23	13	12	26	13	28
Reflection	2	5	1	28	5	10
Goal Setting	2	7	4	11	8	9
Learner Autonomy	1	2	0	13	1	10
Seminar Length	2	1	1	0	2	1
Presenter Expertise	28	16	13	33	20	9
Topic Relevance	51	23	31	52	23	36
Professional Respect	3	2	1	2	0	3
Support	1	4	4	22	5	1
Resources	5	12	1	2	5	1
Residential	4	1	1	1	8	9
Renewal	3	4	1	1	3	7
Amenities	7	2	3	3	4	2

The top three themes that emerged based upon survey data were (a) collaborative discourse, (b) presenter expertise, and (c) topic relevance. As with observation data, participant interview data, and participant journal data, collaborative discourse and topic relevance were top themes. In reference to collaborative discourse, survey four respondents shared, “Being able to work with others/collaborate made the learning

experience more fun and informative because we were able to learn from each other.” Another comment was, “I had many opportunities to share and gain ideas and opinions.” Additionally, a respondent said, “I learned about a couple of very valuable programs from colleagues.” Multiple respondents across all six surveys commented on the ability to share and collaborate. The six surveys represented six different seminars and six different presenters; therefore, information from each survey is shared.

Respondents in survey one discussed the theme of topic relevance in similar fashion to those participants who were interviewed. They responded with comments like “So many hands on activities allowed me to create my own tool box of activities to take back into my classroom”; “I incorporated many hands on activities”; and “I will be using ideas in my classroom, as well as share with co-workers throughout the school.” Survey three respondents had similar things to share: “Each presenter gave techniques and strategies I can use with my students.” “Integrating music, visual art, theater into literacy for more engaging opportunities for students to learn through varied opportunities.” “I also liked the direct application to the standards and the discussions about how we could use what we learned at our respective schools.”

A new theme of presenter expertise arose when the survey data were examined. Respondents had many remarks related to the NCCAT presenters across a variety of seminars. Survey one respondents shared, “The opportunity to hear a variety of presenters was powerful as well as learning about all of the organizations that promote protecting our environment.” “The speakers were extremely knowledgeable and I was able to expand my content knowledge as well.” “The entire faculty and staff were respectful and helpful throughout the seminar.” Similar sentiments were shared by respondents from survey two. This respondent shared,

I really enjoyed [presenter name]. He was so thorough and gave us so many free resources! His activities were interactive and varied. He used strategies that we could use with our own students. He also shared personal stories from his life, which connected with us.

Another respondent added, “[Presenter name] is an intelligent, happy, helpful, and adorable man. I totally enjoyed learning from him. He is the perfect person for this seminar.” Additionally, a respondent said, “Teaching strategies modeled the best practices being taught.”

Survey three respondents had similar sentiments about their presenters: “All of the faculty members were willing to engage in conversations during and after the lessons if we had questions. They also provided resources.” “The presenters modeled strategies and had participants practice strategies.” “The instructors were interesting and there was a good mix of information giving and activity. I like that I got lots of concrete ideas.” Respondents from survey four echoed with these comments about presenter expertise: “[Presenter name] is very knowledgeable. He knows how to deliver the knowledge regardless of diverse levels. He provided multiple resources and hands on opportunities.” “I was practically intimidated to do this technology seminar since technology is not one of my strong suits. The facilitator was very patient and was able to reach me where I entered.” Presenter expertise was also discussed by respondents from survey five: “I enjoyed the presenters. They helped me to understand the area.” “The leader, speakers, presenters, and attendees all made the experience unforgettable.” “At the center of this seminar’s effectiveness, lies the cast of presenters; each presenter delivered a captivating, unforgettable presentation.” Respondents from survey six added the following related to presenter expertise: “From the beginning, the faculty made us all feel welcome and

appreciated for being here.” “The faculty did an excellent job with presenting effective teaching strategies that I will be able to use in my classroom.” “Teaching strategies were models of effective teaching.” These comments were consistent across a variety of seminars.

Document Analysis: Agenda Data

An additional data source that was considered to provide answers to Research Question 1 was an analysis of agendas for themes. Descriptive agendas were randomly selected at a rate of 10%, which was consistent with the survey rate. Newer NCCAT agendas no longer provide descriptions of the events that participants will experience. Table 6 reflects the themes of adult learning, professional development, NCCAT, and teacher retention as exhibited in the descriptive seminar agendas. The agendas revealed the top three themes to be (a) collaborative discourse, (b) reflection, and (c) autonomy. Agenda examples of collaborative discourse included “We will spend some time getting to know each other and discussing our group and individual goals for the week”; “We will begin sharing our lessons and activities based on the ideas, resources, or new knowledge you have experienced so far in the seminar”; “We will review and discuss the series of articles by Scholastic aimed at supporting ELLs throughout the process of learning English”; “We will spend some time sharing what we have learned and how we plan to use it in our classrooms”; “We begin our time together by debriefing your reactions to the seminar up to this point. What questions have come up for you? What has stood out most vividly so far?”

Agendas also highlighted reflection as a deliberate activity in the seminars. They exhibited this in the following examples: “Read and Reflect: Given everything you’ve learned so far, what assessments do you wish to create or revise during your planning

time? What changes do you think would benefit you and your students most?” “In addition to several more activities, we will take time to consider how to integrate the lessons learned this week with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.”

“Reflection: How has participating in an NCCAT renewal seminar helped you attain some of your impossible challenges?” “Independent Reading, Writing, Planning, and Self-Reflection: Take this time to read, write or discuss with your colleagues the literacy sources you have explored so far.” This deliberate use of time supported adult learning theorists.

Finally, agendas revealed the theme of autonomy. Agenda examples include “Participants will work together in appropriate groups to assemble their own lessons based on the model introduced in our first session process”; “Participants will use the first of several informational writing techniques to surface their goals for the week and their concerns about literacy instruction”; “Teams will create audio dramas and upload to Edmodo”; “While exploring the seminar’s primary text, participants will also learn several means of capturing observation data.” Participants had the freedom to select from taught methods the method he/she decided was most relevant for his/her work. These examples showed the importance NCCAT organizers placed on allowing participants the freedom to customize their learning.

Table 6

Code Frequency of Distribution by Agenda for Research Question 1

	Agenda Number					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Safe Learning Environment	3	0	1	3	3	2
Collaborative Discourse	9	5	6	13	5	7
Reflection	8	4	6	7	10	4
Goal Setting	10	4	5	6	3	3
Learner Autonomy	12	3	8	10	7	7
Seminar Length	0	0	0	0	0	0
Presenter Expertise	0	0	0	0	1	0
Topic Relevance	1	4	1	1	0	0
Professional Respect	0	0	0	0	0	0
Support	0	1	0	0	0	0
Resources	0	0	0	1	0	0
Residential	1	0	0	0	0	0
Renewal	0	0	0	0	0	0
Amenities	4	0	0	1	0	0

Field Study Observational Data

To provide additional triangulation of the data, the researcher became an observer for the “Catching Up With Your Students: Digital Literacy” seminar in the summer of 2015 to assist in answering the research question, “In what ways and to what degree does

NCCAT discharge its mission as a program of professional development.” This seminar was a 5-day event that began on Monday afternoon with participants quietly arriving and not engaging with one another. There were 23 participants: two males and 21 females. The demographics of the group were eight African-American women, 13 Caucasian women, and two Caucasian men. Of these participants, only one had less than 4 years of experience. The presenter, a Caucasian male and 6-year veteran NCCAT facilitator, was introduced as were the researcher/observers.

On the first day, the presenter introduced an overview of the seminar and facilitated introductions of the participants using Web 2.0 tools. The exercise demonstrated a variety of skill levels of the participants and allowed them to begin to work collaboratively. The presenter modeled the tools that he was using. He also asked participants to share with one another their levels of competency with technology tools. Through this discourse, participants appeared to discover the variety of skill levels within the participant group and then capitalized on the varying degrees of competency while working on their projects throughout the week.

At the beginning of the second day, the presenter focused the group on the events of the day. The presenter spent time explaining the Technology Smack Down event that would occur later in the week. The Technology Smack Down allowed for teacher autonomy, as participants were instructed to choose what technology tool they would share. Throughout the day’s events, participants were introduced to a variety of Web 2.0 tools and they were allowed to work together to create and share a variety of products using those tools. There was time built into the day for participants to reflect or work on their products with their partners.

As the third day of observation began, the researcher noted participants were

engaged in conversations. Questions were often asked and participants, as well as the presenter, were sharing their expertise. During the overview of the day, the presenter reminded participants that the reflection/project time was created for them to process and use the tools that had been introduced during the day.

An emerging theme of active learning occurred on day 3, as the presenter had created folders with QR codes and photograph exemplars of the photographs participants were to take on their scavenger hunt. Participants were given a map to the NCCAT campus and they had to use the map to find folders with the QR codes and photographic exemplars. Once they discovered the folders, they had to then follow the guidelines and take their own pictures. The participants worked in teams to accomplish this task. Presenter expertise, as a theme of professional development, was noted by the researcher. In addition to his sharing of technology skills related to photography, the presenter modeled best teaching strategies. He provided for many learning modalities through the use of QR codes that gave written descriptions of the photography skill to be used, such as the use of backlighting or lines. Additionally, he provided photographic exemplars for the visual learners. Finally, he allowed participants to work collaboratively to determine the best way to accomplish the photography tasks. Participants shared that they were able to work together and learn from other participants who had better photography skills. After taking their photographs, the presenter taught photo editing and screen casting skills.

As with the previous days, the facilitator began day 4 with an overview. He stated that the main foci of the day were on the collaborative creation of podcasts and the presentation of the Technology Smack Down. The participants were allowed to choose their podcast topic and their Smack Down topic to share. Participants created podcasts

that could be used in their classrooms and they further shared tools that they used with their students.

The themes of collaborative discourse, autonomy, reflection, topic relevance, renewal, and presenter expertise were the most prevalent themes in the interview, journal, survey data, and agenda data. The observational data further support the implementation of those themes as well as several other themes. The researcher, through the lens of the precoded themes of adult learning theory, professional development, NCCAT, and retention, noted the presence of additional themes.

When examining the research question, “In what ways and to what degree does NCCAT discharge its mission as a program of professional development,” adult learning themes were considered during the seminar observation. The safe learning environment was established during the opening meeting. Max shared, “When I’m talking to teachers who have never been before, I describe it to them as professional development activities with no stress.” Anne confirmed, “It was a stress free environment.” The opportunity to learn in a stress free environment may also support collaborative discourse.

Collaborative discourse was noted by the researcher during the seminar observation. Participants quickly began talking and working with each other as opportunities for collaboration were purposely created by the presenter. Sophia shared,

I would say it is a good way for teachers to expand and deepen their professional knowledge, to interact with other teachers from other counties so you get you know a variety of ideas to see what’s going on in other counties, not just in your own county or a lot of times even in your own school. I think collaboration with others as well as the instruction is really nice.

Florina echoed,

I know this is where I can come and relax and collaborate with others in the same profession. We don't get to have those dialogues during the day, and we're working with people from other parts of the state, pulling things from them, and just being able to share.

Collaborative discourse was observed by the second day of the seminar as participants engaged with one another on seminar projects and about the teaching profession. For example, when participants were working in groups on the creation of their podcasts, the group in closest proximity to the researcher was discussing not only the topic of their podcast, *The Magic Treehouse*, but also struggles they were having within their different school systems, especially surrounding the lack of funding for different items such as professional development to support the implementation of one-to-one devices within their schools. Another topic that arose within that particular group was how each represented school system was meeting the needs of struggling readers, especially those in third grade affected by the Read to Achieve legislation. Participants were able to share how different schools and systems were working to meet those demands.

Time for reflection is another tenet of adult learning theory, and the observation data showed that the seminar had time built into the schedule for this activity. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday each had a 2-hour block after lunch scheduled for participants to use to either work collaboratively on a project or use the time for individual reflection. Additionally, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons had a 90-minute time period entitled "Project Time," where the expectation was that participants would work on their technology presentations. The researcher observed teachers working in groups of three to five people. One teacher would type into the laptop computer to create the podcast while other group members would provide input into the creation of the podcast. Many

participants were observed in collaborative discourse during these times. The conversations that were overheard were about the projects but also about the teaching profession as participants were sharing their stories of struggles and successes with each other. In one group of two, the participants were working on the piano in the commons area. The female participant was at the piano keyboard and was instructing her male partner on how to play a scale. He was recording her performance on an iPad for part of their project. They worked together to discover how to use the iPad for the recording. During the time together, they also discussed their jobs. He shared with her how he became a teacher and how that differed from his time in the military. She shared how she entered into education and how she was struggling with some of her administrator's recent directives. He commiserated that he also had some concerns about some of his administrator's requirements for working on reading skills with students who were not students in his class.

Autonomy was the final theme of adult learning that arose in the literature and was also noted in the observations. First, participants were able to choose the particular seminar they wanted to attend. Participants also had the freedom to choose the subject of their projects and how they wanted to present them. For example, participants were asked to create a podcast. They were then allowed to create that podcast in whatever manner they chose. One group created a podcast about a *The Magic Treehouse* book; another created theirs about the wolf's perspective from the *Three Little Pigs*; while another group created their podcast about the use and care of the iPad at their one-to-one school. Participants were also able to be autonomous in their presentation for their "Technology Smackdown." They were asked to present to the whole group a technology tool that they used at their site or for their personal use.

From the perspective of the precoded professional development themes of seminar length, presenter expertise, and topic relevance, the researcher noted those themes in the observation of the seminar. The 5-day length of the seminar appeared to provide time to learn material, work with the material, and present completed products to other group members. There was scheduled time daily for participants to reflect and to work independently or with group members on the technology tools that were presented that morning. The presenter appeared to have time to present information and allow for in-class time for participant collaboration about the topic presented. Sophia, a seminar participant, later explained seminar length:

NCCAT is much more in depth, much more because it lasts longer, it gives you a lot of opportunity to cover more topics, but not just catch on them, but to really explore topics during this length of time. Other ones, you go in and get maybe 15 minutes of instruction, and then we go off and do it, and maybe the instructor has a couple of minutes to explain it to us further, then we go back to our schools and nobody is there for us still.

As for presenter expertise, the presenter appeared knowledgeable in both his content area of technology and in leading adult learners. He modeled his lessons and included personal stories of how he had used the tools he was demonstrating. For example, when he presented podcasts, he first played a podcast he had created for his grandchildren about his time at Ocracoke. He modeled how to tell the story on the podcast as well as how to add background audio effects such as thunder and rain for his story about a storm on the island. He then walked the participants through each of the steps of creating their own podcasts. He had the process on the SmartBoard and provided verbal information to supplement the visual processes.

When working with the participants, the presenter addressed multiple learning modalities throughout his lessons. For example, he had written instructions such as those found within the QR codes for the scavenger hunt and visual photographic examples. The presenter had many technology tools for participants to explore and use during the seminar and had them well organized in a Symbaloo for ease of use. Participants could sign into the Symbaloo and find all of the technology resources in one physical space. Additionally, he brought auxiliary technology items such as selfie-sticks, speakers, and chargers for participants to examine. Anne reported, “Our facilitator really had it together and I’m impressed by his knowledge and ability to convey his information.”

When examining topic relevance, participants reported that the information provided could be used within their classrooms. Paige noted, “I love change, and I like the fact that I’ve had this conference. I’ve attended this conference and now I can do something different in my classroom.” Rebel added, “I’ve done in-house training, and I’ve done like one-day conferences, but this has been more hands-on, more individualized, and more relevant than any of the others.” As an observer, it was common to hear participants make comments about how they could use the tools and resources taught within their classrooms. Anne explained,

I’m going to take back all we’ve done this week, and take it back to my teachers, and the media coordinators, and I kept having ideas and I kept sending ideas email messages to my teachers, and I’m like, “Oh, why don’t you do this?” or “Why don’t you do this?” So I expect it will really gel with my teachers, and I can step into the classrooms and help them do things. The podcast we did today, I’ve got a teacher who does journal entries. The kids have to read a journal and then they have to get out and present it. And, I’m like why can’t they do a

podcast, and everybody respond to the podcast to not take as much class time with presentations.

Participants were able to create products, such as the podcast, that they could immediately take back to their schools and use in their classrooms.

With respect to NCCAT themes, amenities and residential learning were frequently noticed by the researcher. Seminar room amenities included iPads that could be checked out, SmartBoard technologies, and a variety of technology tools that the presenter brought to share with participants. Additionally, participants could use the computer lab, copiers, and other supplies for their needs. The theme of residential learning was observed during shared meal times as participants engaged in collaborative discourse about a variety of topics: the seminar, teaching strategies, and concerns that they face in their schools and classrooms. The opportunity to engage in discourse over meals and after class is a characteristic of a residential learning center, as the nature of remaining in the residential learning environment after the official seminar is over provides an unique opportunity for participants to exchange ideas.

In terms of the principles of teacher retention, resources were provided to participants. All participants received a flash drive with a plethora of technology tools already loaded on it. Additionally, participants were given access to the Symbaloo for future easy access to the technology resources utilized during the seminar.

In summary, when addressing Research Question 1, “In what ways and to what degree has NCCAT discharged its mission as a program of professional development,” the researcher noted the prevalence of the themes of collaborative discourse, autonomy, reflection, topic relevance, renewal, and presenter expertise across the data sources of interviews, journal entries, survey data, and agenda data. Additionally, these themes

were further triangulated through observational field note data.

Examination of Data for Research Question 2

“What are experienced teacher participants’ perceptions on how the NCCAT experience differs from other forms of professional development?” Several data sources, participant interviews, and journal entries, as well as document analysis data of surveys, were gathered to help ascertain experienced teachers’ perceptions on how the NCCAT model of professional development differed from other forms of professional development they had experienced.

Participant Interview Data

Participant interviews were examined to provide information around this question. Specifically, two interview questions sought to find answers to Research Question 2.

1. How would you describe the NCCAT professional development program to others?
2. Describe how a NCCAT professional development experience compares to other forms of professional development you have attended.

Respondents to these two questions listed several principles of professional development, adult learning theories, and NCCAT as explanations for the uniqueness of NCCAT as a professional development model. Collaborative discourse, residential learning, renewal, and relevancy were named by interviewees as the most prevalent principles that were unique to NCCAT. Table 7 below shows how interviewees responded to the two questions regarding the unique status of NCCAT as related to the tenets of professional development, adult learning theories, and NCCAT.

Table 7

Code Frequency Distribution for Interview Questions for Research Question 2

Codes	Frequency
Renewal	5
Relevance	8
Residential Learning	6
Collaborative Discourse	5
Presenter Expertise	4
Resources	4
Professional	1
Safe Learning Environment	1
Goal Setting	1
Seminar Length	1

In response to Research Question 2, Country shared,

It is not boring. I think the information is more useful. It's not that run-of-the-mill workshop which you thought you have to go to. And the setting is more. You're involved in the session. It's not just somebody standing there lecturing you or showing you how to do something. They are asking your opinions. They are wanting you to talk about your experiences. They want you to share with each other, and not just . . . they're not just showing you how to use something in the classroom and then not letting you try it.

Sue commented on how NCCAT compared to other forms of professional development:

You are away from school. You are away from home. And you're there to learn all day long, and it happens in the center, but it also happens at meals, and it happens at night in the commons areas. It happens when you go on field trips together. So you're really learning content, and it's exciting, it's hands-on the

way that you're learning it, but you're also developing a group of friendships that you can do some things with.

Paige described the program as,

I think it's very informative and it's a balance. It's not too much information, and it's not too lax. You know, and the fact that we are able, we got something like a teaching model, you know, he taught, he let us apply, and then you know, he did it with us, and then we applied it.

Rebel added, "I've done in-house training, and I've done one-day conferences, but this has been more hands-on, more individualized, and more relevant than any of the others."

Cheer gave perspective by saying, "They didn't have anything like this in Georgia, so I've been very pleased because they have a wide array of offerings."

Participant Journal Entry Data

To help ascertain how NCCAT differs from other forms of professional development, participants were asked to respond to the following journal entry:

"What was the NCCAT experience like for you? Would you consider the experience unique? Why or why not?" Table 8 shows how participants responded to the journal entry about the uniqueness of NCCAT.

Table 8

Code Frequency Distribution for Journal Entry Questions for Research Question 2

Code	Frequency
Presenter Expertise	3
Collaborative Discourse	7
Renewal	4
Residential Learning	4
Topic Relevance	5
Reflection	3
Autonomy	3
Safe Learning Environment	1
Amenities	2
Seminar Length	1
Resources	1

The most prevalent themes in the journal entries around the uniqueness of NCCAT were the same themes reported in their personal interviews. Journal entries were written independent of the researcher's influence and were submitted to the researcher prior to the face-to-face interviews. In response to this question, Madeline wrote,

The experience at NCCAT was nothing like other workshops I have been to. Besides the fact that it took place over the course of a workweek, I also worked with the same people, had plenty of time to practice with what we had learned (while we were still there), had amazing food and received free room and board, as well as a free workshop. I learned so much from the hands-on approach to the workshop, and the fact that we had the same professor throughout the entire week. We utilized what we learned and worked with each other to navigate the goods and bads of everything provided to us.

Max added to the journal, "The NCCAT experiences I have had are always inspiring

from me from the content to the collaborative environment with peers.” Anne stated,

I really enjoyed my experience. I believe that learning is important for everyone and that we should never stop learning. I think I gained a lot of information that I can share with my faculty. I believe that it was a unique experience. We had the opportunity to learn and share with our peers. We had the opportunity to learn about events, practices and procedures from other parts of the stat. It was a stress free environment. It was also unique because it was free and in addition to being a great learning experience, we had great food and lodging in a lovely setting.

Florina echoed, “After each seminar I leave feeling refreshed and invigorated with what I have been taught. We are also able to share our best practices with each other.” As is displayed in Tables 7 and 8, the participants mentioned many of the tenets of adult learning, NCCAT, and professional development in both their interviews and journal entries to explain the unique nature of NCCAT as a professional development model.

Document Analysis: Survey Data

Survey data provided additional information from respondents about experienced teacher participants’ perceptions on how the NCCAT experience differs from other forms of professional development. They particularly highlighted themes that arose from adult learning, professional development, and NCCAT tenets. While there was not a survey question that specifically asked about the uniqueness of NCCAT, respondents were asked to share feelings, revelations, questions, concerns, or other information that were not addressed in other survey questions. Respondents shared how NCCAT was different from other forms of professional development they had experienced. Table 9 explains how the themes were noted in the surveys.

Table 9

Themes from Survey Data for Research Question 2

Theme	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4	Survey 5	Survey 6
Amenities	X					
Renewal	X	X	X		X	X
Collaborative Discourse	X	X	X			X
Topic Relevance	X	X	X	X		X
Presenter Expertise		X	X	X		
Reflection Time			X			
Safe Learning Environment				X		

The following sentiment was recorded from survey one,

NCCAT is such a wonderful place and the experience provided is one I will never forget. I am so appreciative of the opportunity to be able to lean and renew in such a beautiful place with fabulous people. The faculty and staff were all top-notch. The food was fabulous and the facility was pristine. I feel like I can conquer the world (of kindergarten) with new ideas and revitalized energy!

A second respondent from survey one said,

I appreciate the opportunity provided to me to come to NCCAT this week. I used a week of my summer vacation but I feel what I am taking back to my classroom is immeasurable. I love science and it was nice to be with others who enjoy it as well. I was given opportunities to do and experience things such as the kayaking, exploring the estuary and shoreline forest that I would not have done on my own. I am excited to head back to school and get my students as well as my co-workers excited about incorporating science across the curriculum.

A third survey one respondent shared, “I love NCCAT. I always feel renewed when I

come to the workshops and I learn so much that I hope I can return again!” Within these statements, themes of renewal, collaborative discourse, NCCAT amenities, and topic relevance emerged.

Survey two respondents shared the following: “I have a renewed passion for teaching. [Presenter name] was the best presenter I have ever had for professional development. He made the experience amazing.” “I am very happy to be able to participate in opportunities like these to grow, learn, rejuvenate, and restore my passion for teaching.” “I love the way NCCAT is organized and the way it is presented to the participants. Trainings and seminars like NCCAT are rare and valuable.” Another respondent offered,

This was the best experience I can honestly say in my professional career. I learned so much that I could bring back to my school and share with my colleagues. It was a relaxing workshop and I think [Presenter name] was so great. He is a sweet man that packed us with a lot of useful information.

Renewal, presenter expertise, and topic relevance were the primary themes from the respondents of the second survey.

The respondents in survey three provided the following information: “The workshop was informative and the presenters shared information in a fun and collaborative manner.” “My experience at this NCCAT session was invaluable and rejuvenated me and my professional beliefs. NCCAT is a complete need for the entire state of teaching professionals.” Another respondent added,

I would like to express that I feel this was the most powerful and meaningful week I have experienced during my 27 years of teaching. I learned so many wonderful creative lessons to share with my team, parent, and children. I hope

that all teachers have the opportunity in attending NCCAT. A special thank you to [Presenter name] for making our four days at NCCAT fabulous!

The themes of renewal, topic relevance, presenter expertise, and collaborative discourse also arise again in this survey.

Survey three also addressed reflection time, a theme of adult learning. This survey included a few negative comments around reflection time, in that it was not experienced by participants at this particular seminar. Respondents shared, “I do miss the mid-day reflection period. There is a lot of information to digest in one nightly reflection period.” “It would be nice to have some time in the afternoons for reflection/exercise (hiking), etc. Getting to be outside in nature helps creative juices flow more sometimes.” “More time to get outside during the day and walk or sit and reflect would have been nice.” An additional response was,

I would have been nice to have some time in the afternoon to enjoy the area-the hiking trail, etc. I would have rather had a little free time in the afternoon and had a session/workshop after dinner instead of vice versa.

A final respondent shared this concern,

The only change I would like to see would be some time given in the late afternoon to process/move around and explore independently. In the past seminars I took there was time built in during the day, and a seminar scheduled after dinner-that worked so much better! My only regret this time is that I haven’t been able to be outside in this beautiful place. And, as always, the food was so amazingly wonderful. Thanks for making us feel like valued professionals.

During this particular seminar, reflection time was not included in the schedule of the day, and participants noted its absence. As a tenet of adult learning, the presence of

reflection time appeared to be an important component of the seminar.

In survey four, one respondent shared,

Seminar was the best tech workshop I've ever attended; the instructor was patient, prepared and available. I really appreciate the fact that this seminar was a learning time for me. I knew very little about tech and the availability of it. Even I was able to create more than a few documents and such. I am amazed!

Another respondent added, "I have learned more this week (and had a chance to practice it) than I ever have before. Because I will have 1 to 1 iPads this year with my students, this workshop came at the perfect time." A final response expressed the following,

I am grateful for this opportunity to enhance my knowledge of how to use technology in the classroom. I was intimidated to even come to this seminar because of limited prior knowledge of the subject. I am so glad that I stepped out of my comfort zone and gave all I had to this seminar. I am a better teacher for having done so. Thanks for offering this class and thanks for NCCAT.

The themes of topic relevance, presenter expertise, and safe learning environment arose in survey four.

Respondents to survey five shared the following information about the uniqueness of professional development offered at NCCAT by stating, "These past few days at NCCAT have reignited a spark in me. I am leaving her feeling invigorated and excited about teaching!" "I want to thank you for this one-of-a-kind experience. It has been very enlightening and inspiring. I would like to be back." Finally, a respondent said the following,

John Donne once wrote, "No man is an island, entire unto itself." Too often, it can feel as though the volatile waves of this profession leave teachers feeling as if

they are isolated, adrift and even island-like in their classrooms. However, during this NCCAT seminar on the island of Ocracoke, I was reminded that I am part of a network of talented teachers who share many of my same passions and struggles as an educator in this state.

Renewal is the main theme that arose from the comments in survey five.

The final survey added the themes of renewal, topic relevance, and collaborative discourse to the ways that NCCAT provides unique professional development programs. Respondents wrote, “I have greatly enjoyed this training! I have learned a lot of valuable and useful information that I am excited to use in my classroom.” “I am excited to try these new strategies with my students! Being able to hear what other teachers do in their classes has lifted me up in the profession.” “I felt very important and teachers are dumped on so much, this week was a great break from reality. It gave me a chance to learn skills to help better serve my students.”

In summary, in response to Research Question 2, “What are experienced teacher participants’ perceptions on how the NCCAT experience differs from other forms of professional development,” collaborative discourse, residential learning, renewal, and relevancy are themes that arose across all data sources. Several other themes emerged in the survey data such as amenities, presenter expertise, reflection time, and safe learning environment that also support the uniqueness of NCCAT as a professional development model.

Examination of Data for Research Question 3

“How does participation in an NCCAT experience possibly influence experienced teachers’ retention rates?” This research question was the most difficult to directly correlate to the NCCAT experience, as so many factors contribute to this

decision, as noted in the literature review. Answers to this question were explored in two interview questions and a journal entry question.

Participant Interview Data

Two interview questions posed to participants sought to explore whether or not their participation in an NCCAT seminar had any influence on their decision to remain in the teaching profession. The two questions were

1. In what ways, if any, has NCCAT affirmed why you decided to enter the field of education?
2. Describe how your participation in an NCCAT experience may have affected your long-term goals as an educator.

Throughout the interviews, participants shared many positive attributes of their NCCAT experiences. The most common theme to the questions around retention was the sense of renewal experience related to attending a NCCAT seminar. Cheer said, “It renews your commitment.” Max shared,

The best thing about NCCAT is it shows you how many really talented, motivated, inspired teachers there are in North Carolina. Despite the low pay and other problems that we face, I’m always just in awe of the people that are here. So, I think it’s reassuring to know that the profession is still as good as we think it is, and it just kind of reaffirms my faith that in spite of everything that’s going on, that the profession is still alive and well. It probably hasn’t changing my long-term goals. I find it an enhancement. I find it as a reward for hard work. It gives me personal time that’s just “me” time, but my goals have been pretty much set for 20 years, and NCCAT has just been a luxury.

Anne reported that attending NCCAT affirmed her decision to teach: “It’s made

me feel better about teaching.” Additionally, it had affected her long-term goals: “I want to be a facilitator, and maybe not at NCCAT, but I can see being at [NC Plan Conference] next year.” Florina remarked,

It keeps me grounded. When you just feel like you’re burned out, and you have no more gas left in you, and then you come and you’re with like-minded individuals and you’re trying to reach that goal, and trying to figure out what else can I do?

Madeline echoed with, “The NCCAT thing was good to kind of refresh me, and get me excited about things that we could do in class.” She also added, specific to remaining in education,

My long-term goal would move me into another field that would have me helping people that don’t really know English, and not where I am currently. Plus, I have an ESL background, so technology wise, there are great things that you can do there, but I feel that that’s better as more of a face-to-face to help the kids with their learning for ESL, so I don’t know long-term goal-wise, unfortunately, I don’t think it will, but it’s not because of the program. It’s just because of me personally.

Paige explained that the NCCAT experience affected her long-term goals in the following way:

It has affected in a positive way, because I want to be in education. I might not want to be in a classroom per se, but it just affirms that I do want to go the technology route, and you know probably go back to school to get something in you know the green technology or educational technology or so forth.

Finally, Sue shared,

My long-term goals have always been to be a teacher. I've not ever been one that has wanted to be an administrator or anything like that. I want to continue to be a teacher. I've tried different things for a while, but I always come back to teaching, and you know, going to NCCAT sort of reminds me, hey, this is why I love what I do.

These participants, while sharing that they were renewed by the experience, do not share that attending NCCAT, in and of itself, made them decide to remain in the profession.

One participant, Country, shared that her NCCAT experience did make her remain in the profession. She stated, in response to the question about her long-term goals, "I'll go back!"

Participant Journal Entry Data

Participants were asked to respond to the following journal entry question:

"How do you think your participation in your NCCAT professional development session affected your decision to remain in, or leave, the teaching profession?" While most do not draw a connection between the experience and their career decision, the theme of renewal appeared in the journals, as it did in the individual interviews. Florina wrote,

This particular session has given me a great big insight into our ever changing world of technology. My students come with a wealth of knowledge about technology and now I feel more empowered to use many of the new apps and devices.

Sophia said, "As I am a little over halfway through my career, I have a lot invested in my career and retirement. I will probably stay the course." However, she did go on to add, "If I was just starting out as a teacher, I would have grave doubts about remaining in a profession neither respected nor rewarded." Max echoed a similar sentiment: "I

encourage all new teachers on our faculty to apply for the opportunity. Especially those in the four-to-five year block who are debating what this profession has to offer for them other than a paycheck.” Anne followed with, “I think struggling teachers would benefit from this program and it would help them find their place.” Sue also stated, “Whenever I start to feel “burn out”, I peruse the NCCAT offerings to see what might re-fill my tanks.”

In the journal entries, two participants shared how the NCCAT experience helped make their decision to remain in teaching. County echoed her sentiment from her interview by writing,

I was honestly thinking of leaving teaching when I attended. NCCAT has a way of renewing your love for what you do. It lights the fire that, for me, once burned strong for the profession. I decided to stay and use what I learned and see if it would make a difference in my classroom.

Rebel wrote,

I admit, I have been wavering on leaving the teaching profession. But this semester has helped me a lot to not leave. This professional development is also helping me to organize and stay ahead of the game for next fall. I just have to make myself work on my lesson plans daily for the summer to be prepared to use all that I have learned this week. NCCAT has definitely made me feel appreciated as a teacher in this state. The accommodations and facilities available to us have been outstanding. [Presenter name] definitely knows what he is doing and I am definitely looking forward to keeping in touch with him for the future. I also feel that I have built some relationships here that I would not have been able to do in any other way. I am grateful for the connections and learning I have

received this week.

While in her interview she did not share the same sentiment about leaving the profession, there may have been factors at play that made her not comfortable sharing that in a one-to-one setting.

While the data do not provide conclusive evidence to answer Research Question 3, “How does participation in an NCCAT experience possibly influence experienced teachers’ retention rates,” they do indicate that the NCCAT experience provided a sense of renewal.

Summary

The data showed the presence of many themes of adult learning, professional development, and NCCAT in response to Research Questions 1 and 2 which focused on NCCAT discharging its mission and being a unique form of professional development. Observational data, participant interviews and journals, surveys, and agenda revealed definite characteristics of the aforementioned themes which were aligned to NCCAT’s mission as a program of professional development focused on creating professional educators while also valuing and renewing them. Participant interviews, journal entries, surveys, and agendas also showed that there were unique characteristics present in the NCCAT model of professional development. While participant interviews and journal entries indicated a sense of renewal from attending NCCAT seminars, answers to question three did not yield conclusive evidence that NCCAT had an influence on teacher retention. In the following chapter, the researcher offers concluding remarks and discusses the implications for further study.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This study examined NCCAT and how it subscribed to Adult Learning Principles of Malcolm Knowles and other theorists. NCCAT accomplished this by offering programs focused on adults being internally motivated and self-directed and by allowing participants to bring their life experiences to their learning opportunities. NCCAT further subscribed to Adult Learning Principles through allowing participants to be goal-oriented and focused on relevant and practical learning opportunities (“Adult Learning Theory,” 2007). NCCAT’s residential model is a unique approach purporting to allow teachers the time to collaborate, reflect, and renew themselves. The NCCAT model claimed to allow for the recommended time necessary to practice in a safe learning environment with other teachers as coaches their new founded skills as was suggested by research reported by Gulamhussein (2013). The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine several aspects of NCCAT: In what ways and to what degree has NCCAT discharged its mission as a program of professional development; how do experienced teachers perceive how the NCCAT experience differs from other forms of professional development; and the degree to which the residential professional development model at NCCAT possibly influenced the retention of experienced teachers.

Conclusions

Research Question 1: “In what ways and to what degree has NCCAT discharged its mission as a program of professional development?” The data revealed the prevalence of several themes of adult learning, professional development, and NCCAT that originated in the literature, such as (a) collaborative discourse, (b) reflection, (c) relevance, (d) learner autonomy, (e) presenter expertise, and (f) renewal

that were also present in NCCAT seminars. The researcher examined the data sources for fidelity in executing the four goals of its current strategic plan.

1. Developing Professional Educators.
2. Being a Leader in Professional Development.
3. Fostering Successful Educational Innovation.
4. Valuing, Renewing, and Motivating Educators (NCCAT, 2014).

Seminars were developed through adherence to all points of the strategic plan. These tenets addressed all four goals by specifically and purposely addressing the needs of the adult learner. The opportunities to have experienced these principles of adult learning were pronounced in the words from NCCAT participants. The researcher notes that while data supported themes of adult learning, professional development, and NCCAT, themes of retention such as professional respect, support, and resources that occurred in the literature were not found in the data related to NCCAT as a program of professional development. Similarly, when the strategic plan was examined, there was no goal specific to retention of teachers listed in the plan.

The researcher concludes that NCCAT is fulfilling its mission as a program of professional development, is adhering to the visionary statement of providing for the “advancement of teaching as an art and as a profession” (NCCAT, 2014, p. 6), and is being true to the goals of its current strategic plan. This is further in agreement with research conducted by Gregson and Sturko (2007) that suggested that professional development is effective when teachers are provided with the time and opportunities for collaboration, investigation, experimentation, and reflection. Schachter (2003) also noted, “NCCAT has become a national model for professional development and a haven for teachers rediscovering why they became teachers in the first place” (p. 34).

Research Question 2: “What are experienced teacher participants’ perceptions on how the NCCAT experience differs from other forms of professional development?” “Professional development is defined as activities that develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher” (OECD, 2009, p. 49). This definition allowed for the professional development to occur in a variety of ways including workshops, seminars, observations, collaboration, and coaching (OECD, 2009). When surveyed, over 90% of teachers reported that they participated in workshop-style training sessions annually (Gulamhussein, 2013). The themes attributed to NCCAT within the literature of residential setting, amenities, and renewal are the themes from the data that arose as being unique to this form of professional development. Given the unique nature of the residential model, NCCAT stood with only a few other residential programs, such as the Mapleton Elementary School summer grant program and the The GilChrist public retreat center at the Fetzer Institute in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Participants remarked in their surveys and interviews that the residential nature and amenities of NCCAT were important factors. Because teacher participants were also temporary residents, they were provided with unstructured time for personal and professional reflection and recreation (Rud, 1989). NCCAT program planners explicitly sought to honor teacher participants by creating a comfortable, refreshing living experience that promised to renew and retain NC public school educators (Schachter, 2003).

In addition to the residential setting and the amenities associated with it, the sense of renewal sets the NCCAT professional development model apart. Many survey respondents and interview participants noted their sense of renewal. According to Jackson and Jackson (2002), teaching is a vocation that requires renewal. As was noted

by Pressley (1992) in his case study methodology examination of NCCAT, the guiding mission did not cite changes to classroom practices and student achievement as its purpose; rather, the focus was on renewing the teacher. Coward's (2003) phenomenological study of NCCAT was prompted by a growing concern about the numbers of NC teachers who were either physically leaving the profession or who had become disenfranchised and had lost their "spirit" to teach. She also discovered the sense of renewal experienced by teachers attending NCCAT seminars. This researcher joins Pressley and Coward in concurring that the unique goal of the residential program of NCCAT to renew the teacher participant is still being achieved.

Research Question 3: "How does participation in an NCCAT experience possibly influence experienced teachers' retention rates?" Teachers are leaving the profession at alarming rates. According to Hughes (2012), teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years at a rate of 20-50%. Roggeman (2015) stated that teachers leave for several reasons:

1. Opportunities for professional advancement.
2. Recognition and support from administrators/managers.
3. Autonomy or control over own work.
4. Influence over workplace policies and practices. (p. 62)

Additionally, Jackson and Jackson (2002) explored the question of why does education struggles with the retention of good teachers; and they discovered that the answer was often due the lack of support for teachers, administrators, and other school personnel who work in increasingly challenging and, too often, isolated circumstances every day.

The question for the researcher then became, "can NCCAT be a treatment for the problem of experienced teacher retention?" The data revealed that while the vast

majority of interviewed participants reported being renewed by the professional development offered by NCCAT, it had no real impact on their decision to remain in or leave the profession. Only one participant, Country, shared in the interview that her decision to remain in teaching was motivated by the NCCAT experience. One other participant, Rebel, indicated in her journal entry that NCCAT was a factor in her decision to remain in teaching but that it was not the sole factor. Teacher attrition is a complex issue with many attributing factors; and while NCCAT offers renewal through a residential professional development model that is grounded in adult learning theory, that may not be enough to make someone stay.

Limitations

There were several limitations in this study. The number of research participants was small by comparison to the number of experienced teachers within the State of NC. Additionally, the convenience sample only included experienced teachers who had attended an NCCAT session, indicated a willingness to be contacted in their exit surveys, or attended the “Catching Up With Your Students: Digital Learning” seminar where the researcher was an observer to be eligible for interview; and only a small sample of those eligible actually participated. This limited the study to participants who may have only had a positive experience with NCCAT and wanted to advocate for it. Also, the descriptive analysis of factors that contributed to teacher renewal were based on the self-reporting of NCCAT veteran teacher alumni interview participants who had been selected from the pool of completed surveys who indicated on their exit survey a willingness to be interviewed or were participants at the “Catching Up With Your Students: Digital Learning” seminar where the researcher was an observer. This limitation may have included a variety of participant biases and could possibly have been an overexaggerated

or understated description of the renewal process. The study was further limited by the researcher only observing one, 1-week NCCAT seminar at the Cullowhee site, as NCCAT offers many 1-week seminars at both the Ocracoke and Cullowhee sites. Additionally, only examining 1 year, 2014-2015, was a limitation. Finally, the researcher was an NCCAT alumna and had a personal bias that may have tainted the search for negative information.

Delimitations

This study included a program evaluation of the residential professional development aspects of NCCAT during the years 2014-2015. The study participants were experienced teachers with more than 4 years of teaching experience.

Recommendations

The issues of effective teacher professional development, teacher retention, and the future of NCCAT will continue to be topics of interest and research in the years to come; therefore, additional research will need to be conducted in these areas, particularly as they relate to effective professional learning programming. When considering further research, this researcher suggests a larger sample size of experienced teachers. Many more teachers were participants during the 2014-2015 school year, and the researcher recommends not limiting it to those who indicate a willingness to discuss NCCAT in the future, as opening future studies to all participants may yield a greater variety of responses. Including the entire cohort would perhaps make the sample size larger and additionally include participants who may not share the sentiments recorded in this study. It may also behoove future researchers to study more than 1 year's worth of data. This study focused only on the 2014-2015 school year, and that was a limitation to the study that could be corrected with the inclusion of multiple years.

Additionally, the researcher thought conducting the interviews in the summer when teachers were not working would yield higher participant rates. It may be better for future researchers to plan to conduct interviews during the school year when teachers are less likely to be on vacation. Finally, future researchers may want to consider offering some kind of tangible token for participation.

This study was done as a companion dissertation. The companion researcher, Anna Shook, was also a doctoral candidate at Gardner-Webb University and in the same cohort as the researcher. She examined the study from the beginning teacher perspective, while the researcher examined it through the eyes of the experienced teacher. This allowed the study to be larger in scope and richer in content. As companion researchers, they were able to provide additional measures of accountability and support to the research process. Additionally, when choosing a companion with whom to do research work, it is important that both parties are independent researchers but are also willing to work collaboratively with their companion researcher.

Several recommendations for NCCAT planners arose through this study. The first recommendation would be to include in the survey data demographic information about the experience level of the participants to better inform NCCAT planners as to the degree to which they are meeting the needs of teachers at varying levels of experience. Since the surveys are anonymous and currently have no demographics, it is difficult for NCCAT planners to know whose needs are being met or not met. Another recommendation for NCCAT planners would be to return to the descriptive agendas. Having the descriptions not only helps to inform future researchers of the work of NCCAT but it also helps focus the adult learner participants. A need of adult learners is to understand the why and the how of the learning task, and the descriptive agendas aid in

that process.

A recommendation to providers or individuals who are in the business of providing professional development would be to consider adult learning theories and their tenets when planning professional development offerings. The tenets of safe learning environment, collaborative discourse, reflection, goal setting, and autonomy do not have to be unique to the NCCAT model. They can be achieved through deliberate planning and attention to the needs of the adult learner. Findings revealed the importance of these themes throughout all research questions which suggest that participants of professional development have a need for these qualities to be present when they are learning.

A recommendation can be made to policymakers regarding the support and funding of professional development programming for teachers. According to Gulamhussein (2013), while the majority of teachers attend workshop-style professional development of less than 14 hours in length, neither instructional practices nor student achievement are positively impacted. A comprehensive analysis of 1,300 studies of professional development programs revealed that only lengthy, intensive programs had an effect on student achievement and instructional practices (Gulamhussein, 2013). The NCCAT model allows for the lengthy programming that is recommended in the Gulamhussein research; and while professional development funding has been cut in recent years, continuing to financially support NCCAT has research-based benefits for teachers. Many participants reported relevancy to their classroom instruction as a positive attribute of their NCCAT experience, as they had the time to practice skills learned at the seminar while on site and with the support of experienced presenters. They further reported their intentions to implement skills learned at NCCAT upon their return

to their classrooms.

Given the opportunity for interviewed teachers to comment freely about how NCCAT may have influenced their career trajectory, ostensibly including comments about leaving or remaining in the teaching profession, example comments were almost and surprisingly nonexistent. Therefore, the researcher recommends that future investigators deliberately design and deploy methodology that might empirically connect the NCCAT experience with teacher retention. This recommendation may become increasingly important if teacher attrition trends continue.

Final Conclusions

To summarize this qualitative case study, NCCAT is adhering to its strategic plan as a model of professional development. Additionally, it has created a unique program by the nature of being residential and through its adherence to its original mission as stated by founder Jean Powell,

To attract and retain the best in education, we must find a way to enhance the teacher's sense of self-worth, her pride of accomplishment, and her enthusiasm.

We have a governor's school for gifted students. Why not something similar for teachers? (Rud, 1989, p. 43).

While this qualitative case study found evidence of teacher renewal, it did not find definitive evidence that experienced teachers remain in the profession because of having experienced an NCCAT seminar.

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Appendix A

Letter to Potential Participants

Dear Educator:

During the summer of 2015, I will be conducting research focusing on the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching. The title of my study is "An Investigation of the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching and its Possible Influence on Experienced Teacher Retention: A Companion Dissertation." My research will be guided by the following three questions: (1) In what ways and to what degree has NCCAT discharged its mission as a program of professional development? (2) What are experienced teacher participants' perceptions of how the NCCAT experience differs from other forms of professional development? (3) How does participation in an NCCAT experience possibly influence experienced teachers' retention rates?

This study is part of a companion dissertation. While I will be focusing on experienced teacher NCCAT participants, my colleague will be focusing on beginning teacher NCCAT participants. Please consider participating in my component of this unique study if you meet the following criteria:

- o You participated in an NCCAT seminar during the 2014-2015 school year.
- o At the time of your participation in a NCCAT seminar, you had four or more years of teaching experience.
- o You are willing to complete a demographics survey.
- o You are willing to complete two journal entries.
- o You are willing to participate in a focus group interview. The focus group interview will take approximately one and a half to two hours. The data gleaned from your participation will help to inform this study.

Participation will be completely voluntary. Furthermore, participants have the right to withdraw from this study at any time. A pseudonym will be used in place of participant names for the purpose of anonymity. All participants will be treated with respect and professionalism

There are two opportunities to participate in a focus group. The first is on June 24, 2015 at 10:00 am and the second on June 29, 2015 at 2:00 pm. Both locations will be determined by participant convenience and choice

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Jenny White, by e-mail at jwhite18@gardner-webb.edu. Furthermore, if you have any questions about Gardner-Webb University's research requirements, you may contact my dissertation chair at cbingham@gardner-webb.edu. If you are interested in participating in this study, please send a response within 5 days of receiving this email. Upon the indication of your interest, I will provide you with additional information and a consent form. Thank you in advance for your assistance in this study.

Sincerely,
Jenny White
Doctoral Candidate, Gardner-Webb University

_____ I am interested in participating in this study. Please send me additional information.

_____ I am NOT interested in participating in this study.

Name: _____

Appendix B

Participant Consent Form for Research

Consent Form for Research

By signing this consent form:

1. I voluntarily agree to participate in the study entitled “An Investigation of the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching and its Possible Influence on Experienced Teacher Retention: A Companion Dissertation.”
2. I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time without consequence.
3. I understand that the interview will be transcribed and recorded for documentation purposes; the minutes and records from this study will remain confidential. I acknowledge that in the researcher’s final document, a pseudonym will be used in place of my name to maintain confidentiality.
4. I agree to complete two assigned journal entries. The length of each journal entry is to be determined by me, the participant. I will mail the completed journal entries back to the researcher by (insert date). The journal entry forms as well as a return envelope with postage will be mailed to me.
5. I agree to participate in an individual interview. The individual interview will last approximately half an hour.
6. I agree to report to the **note location here** at **insert time** on **insert day and date**.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact Jenny White by phone (XXXXXXX) or by e-mail (XXXXXX). You may also Dr. Bingham, my dissertation chair, by e-mail (XXXXXXXXXXXXX).

Printed Participant Name

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher Signature

Date

Note: A copy of this consent form will be returned to you.

Appendix C
Demographic Survey

Demographic Survey

Name: _____

1. Gender:
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
2. Ethnicity:
 - ☐ African American
 - ☐ American Indian
 - ☐ Asian / Pacific Islander
 - ☐ Caucasian
 - ☐ Hispanic or Latino
 - ☐ Native American
 - ☐ Other
3. Age: _____
4. Number of (school calendar) years you have taught as a classroom teacher: _____
5. County where you taught during the 2014 – 2015 school year: _____
6. Type of school (please check all that apply):
 - ☐ Public School
 - ☐ Charter School
 - ☐ Elementary School
 - ☐ Middle School
 - ☐ High School
7. Description of the NCCAT seminar(s) you attended during the 2014 – 2015 school year:

8. Do you plan to continue teaching during the 2015 – 2016 school year:
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Undecided
9. If you have decided not to teach during the 2015-2016 school year, or if you are undecided at this point in time, please briefly describe why:

Appendix D

Journal Entry Worksheets

Journal Entry 1

Name:

Question: What was the NCCAT experience like for you? Would you consider the experience unique? Why or why not?

Journal Entry 2

Name:

Question: How do you think your participation in your NCCAT professional development session affected your decision to remain in, or leave, the teaching profession?

Appendix E
Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Instructions:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview about the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT) as a professional development model. I am Jenny White, a doctoral candidate with Gardner-Webb University, and I will be investigating the possible influence of NCCAT on experienced teacher retention. An audio recording will also be used for accuracy purposes. I anticipate that this interview will take approximately 30 minutes of your time. During the course of this interview, you will be asked to respond to a series of questions about your experience at an NCCAT seminar. Please respond to the questions completely and honestly to provide as accurate a description of your experience and its effects upon you as possible. If, at any point, you desire to withdraw from the interview, you may do so by simply not responding. When this study is published, pseudonyms will be used in place of your names to maintain confidentiality.

Opening Question:

1. Please tell me your name, what you teach, and why you decided to become a teacher.

Questioning Route:

Introductory Question:

3. Describe your decision to participate in a NCCAT seminar.

Transition Question:

4. Think back to when you first attended a NCCAT seminar. What were your first impressions?

Key Questions:

5. How would you describe the NCCAT professional development program to others?
6. Describe how a NCCAT professional development experience compares to other forms of professional development you have attended?
7. Did your participation in the NCCAT experience affect you personally and/or professionally? Tell me how that occurred.
8. Describe any changes you may have made in your teaching practices as a result of your NCCAT experience.
9. In what ways, if any, has NCCAT affirmed why you decided to enter the field of education?
10. Describe how your participation in a NCCAT experience may have affected your long-term goals as an educator.

Ending Questions:

11. If you had a chance to give advice to the director of this program, what advice would you give?
12. *(At this point in the interview, the researcher will provide a brief oral summary of this discussion and give the participants an opportunity to verify or amend the summation.)* How well does this capture what was said here? If you were asked to summarize the conversation, what would you change?

13. We want you to help us evaluate this program. We want to know if this program makes a difference to teachers in their decisions to remain in the teaching profession. What did I miss? Is there anything we should have discussed but did not?

Note: The interviewer may ask interviewees to elaborate upon or clarify their responses, if necessary. Furthermore, if interviewees veer away from the focus of the question, the interviewer will use prompts as a refocusing tool.

Thank you:

Thank you for your time and participation in this research project. Your responses shall remain anonymous and are valuable as we explore the influence of the NCCAT professional development model.

Appendix F

NCCAT Observation Letter

Dear NCCAT Participants,

Our names are Anna Shook and Jenny White and we are NCCAT alumni. After attending NCCAT learning opportunities ourselves, we became interested in learning more about the experience NCCAT has to offer its participants. Because of this, we have embarked on a companion dissertation study. The title of our study is “An Investigation of the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching and its Influence on Beginning and Experienced Teacher Retention: A Companion Dissertation.” Anna is studying the Center’s influence on beginning teachers while Jenny is studying the Center’s influence on experienced teachers. The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. In what ways and to what degree has NCCAT discharged its mission as a program of professional development?
2. What are beginning and experienced teacher participants’ perceptions on how the NCCAT experience differs from other forms of professional development?
3. How does participation in an NCCAT experience possibly influence beginning and experienced teacher retention rates?

During this research study, we will be gathering data from a variety of sources. One of ways data will be garnered will be through the direct observation of NCCAT professional development. Because of this, we will be non-participant observers in: *Catching Up with Your Students: Digital Learning*, June 15-19, 2015. As *you* are learning, *we* will be taking descriptive field notes. Please be assured that we will not disclose the names of any participants and that we will protect your anonymity. Furthermore, we will not be participating in the program activities. We will simply observe, take notes, reflect, and interpret the gathered data.

It is our hope that our findings will be useful to NCCAT and to other similar professional development programs. We would like to thank you in advance for contributions towards this endeavor. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact our dissertation chair, Dr. Steven Bingham (XXXXXXXXXX). Also, if you would like to obtain a copy of our completed dissertations, you should be able to obtain them through the ProQuest database by December, 2015. Simply type “An Investigation of the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching and its Influence on Beginning Teacher Retention: A Companion Dissertation” and / or “An Investigation of the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching and its Influence on Experienced Teacher Retention: A Companion Dissertation” into the database’s search box.

Thank you once again!

Sincerely,

Anna Shook and Jenny White