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Teacher Attrition: The Job Choices of Ex-Teachers

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

TEACHER ATTRITION: THE JOB CHOICES OF EX-TEACHERS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN THE CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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ABSTRACT

Teacher attrition is a phenomenon occurring in education systems throughout the world. As education policies alter and add to the demands of teachers, one solution for teachers is to leave the profession all together. While not all teachers have the option to find alternative employment and explore new careers, some regions boast plenty of employment opportunities. This research project focuses on the job choices of ex-teachers in the southeast region of Saskatchewan, Canada. The oil industry has made jobs plentiful throughout the province. By conducting in-depth interviews, this study seeks to further understand the factors impacting decisions to leave teaching and presents findings that indicate that teacher attrition is affecting schools in Saskatchewan. Further research should be conducted on causes and prevention strategies. Considerations about the value of good teachers are also made.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Improving schools in order to align better with changing global economics has brought much change to the jobs and expectations of teachers. Anderson (2008) argues that a shift occurring in the 1970s from focusing on individual teacher successes to collective outcomes of schools is evidenced in policy aimed at school performance and accountability and has been an international trend for the past thirty years in education policy. Former US assistant secretary of education, Diane Ravitch, agrees that the policies of education accountability and performativity have been detrimental to public education in the United States (2010).

Background

Global economics and globalization have impacted education policy. Analyzing globalization through the framework of neoliberalism sheds light on the importance of human capital for individual nations to maintain, or improve, their economic standing in the global economy (Mundy & Farrell, 2008). In terms of school reform, economic restructuring has created a trend in which nations, companies, industries and even individuals are encouraged to be more competitive. One impact of this restructuring is that teachers are on the front lines of dealing with this shift. They see the human consequences and attempt to do their jobs despite having outside forces placing huge demands on both them as teacher as well as the performance of their students. Also

compounded with this demand is a climate where teaching resources have become scarce and the overall image of the teaching profession has declined (Scott, Stone, & Dinham, 2001). Scott, Stone and Dinham (2001) write, “outside forces interfere with jobs of teachers” (p. 13). Through an investigation of these forces, a clearer picture of why teachers leave teaching emerges. Undeniably, controlling the process of teaching is necessary in order to benefit a nation’s overall assessment level but is to the detriment of the teaching profession (Scott, Stone, & Dinham, 2001).

Neoliberalism brings new principles for governing that permeate education discourse. Ball (2012) argues that neoliberal discourse “does us” on a daily basis through actions and communication. In order to fulfill the requirements of a neoliberal global society, nations must compete and perform to the highest of standards. What this means for teachers is that they must be able to prove, in a manner that is measurable and comparable, that their students are continually growing and demonstrating sufficient results for this growth: “Results are prioritized over processes, numbers over experiences, procedures over ideas, productivity over creativity” (Ball and Olmedo, 2013, p. 91). This has caused an alteration to what it means to be a teacher and the satisfaction that goes along with being a teacher. A moral understanding of what it means to be a teacher has been shifted; neoliberalism requires a different kind of teacher (Ball, 2012, p. 29).

Neoliberalism has brought new ways of structuring and governing the public sector. The public sector has experienced changes that are leaving it looking much like its private counterparts. Ball (2012) refers to this as “metagovernance” (p. 30). A key

aspect of metagovernance that has direct implications for teachers and education is the notion of “performativity” (p. 30). It is through the use of performativity that states are able to regulate teacher and student behaviors, and ultimately govern citizens (Ball, 2003).

The neoliberal obsession with competition has turned education into a commodity, which can be sold for a profit. The learning process has been simplified and is comparable to chemical processes used by McDonald’s in producing and selling cheap fast-food (Ball, 2012). Powerful agents, such as the World Bank and OECD, have spread global education reform. As a result, privatization and commodification of education have led to a significant change in the world of education: “Global education reform does not simply change what people as educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes who they are” (Ball, 2003, p. 215). There has been an increasing presence of business and corporate philanthropy in addressing education policy concerns (Ball, 2012, p. 93). No longer is the nation-state given the main responsibility for education and regulation of knowledge production, but multilateral agencies, NGOs, and transnational businesses are all stakeholders in education.

Statement of the Problem

Global governance has taken the forefront for influencing and guiding education policy. In a discussion of the literature on global governance, Robertson (2012) demonstrates a shift in symbolic control over teachers due to the introduction of new global actors influencing education policy. Global actors such as the OECD, the World Bank, and various philanthropic organizations have the ability to exercise power and control to inform policy and ultimately alter pedagogical discourse. Policy documents

created by global actors such as the World Bank and OECD direct education towards meeting the needs of a knowledge economy (Robertson, 2005). As the labor market has altered the demands of employees to be “life-long learners”, there have been new demands placed on citizens and education systems, as a result (Robertson, 2005, p. 161). Arguably, these changes have impacted teachers. While teacher turnover is not a new phenomenon, teacher attrition as a negative outcome of neoliberal economic policy generates new challenges to education policymakers (Robertson, 2012).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research project is to investigate critically the factors that impact a teacher’s decision to leave the teaching profession and whether or not a new career choice sheds light on reasons why teachers leave the profession. I want to understand how changes in the teaching profession (increased demands, accountability, performativity) have impacted teacher attrition. Specifically, I want to know what it is that teachers are choosing to leave the field of education for, and why. I would like to understand why teachers make the decision to leave the field of teaching and what it is they chose to do instead. I hope to gain an understanding of what has changed in the field of teaching and explain these changes using a critical framework of neoliberalism. This study seeks to determine if there is a connection between teachers leaving the profession and the shift to a knowledge economy that current literature deems requires a new kind of teacher. What this new kind of teacher is, and is not, will also be explored.

Research Questions

I want to know what it is that teachers are choosing to leave the field of education for, and why. I would like to understand why teachers make the decision to leave the

field of teaching and what it is they chose to do instead. The specific research question that this project seeks to answer is: “What job choices appear to be influenced by the factors teachers faced before leaving the teaching profession?” The methodology for conducting this research will be done using a qualitative study design. Specifically, this study will be phenomenological.

Significance of the Study

This topic is valid and important as national systems of education have felt the pressure of change brought on by globalization and changing economic and political structures (Hargreaves, 2013). To examine how global education policy agendas have impacted, and altered, the teaching profession is eminent, but not necessarily happening in the same way around the globe. The geographical location and alternative economic opportunities that are available can also have an impact on how teachers are receiving and reacting to global education policy. This study has been conducted in Canada in the oil-booming province of Saskatchewan. It is important to look critically at the shift that the teaching profession has experienced, and analyze to what extent that the teaching profession has become a form of global governance.

Educational governance at the global level can be positive. Mundy (2007) states that with the emergence of multilateralism during the second half of the twentieth century, mass systems of education became key to national economic development. Intergovernmental cooperation along with the work of organizations such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and development (OECD) supported this. Education standards were also spread as a result (Mundy, 2007). While global governance includes the partnership of public and private organizations, education plays

a significant role. In researching what types of jobs teachers are choosing to leave teaching for, more research can be done on how to make changes in order to retain teachers.

Potential Limitations

Limitations for this project include time, location, and sample. Research for this project was conducted throughout the summer in a rural Canadian region. Due to the very short summer season in this region and tendency for residents to take summer holidays, this made it challenging to make contact with participants and conduct interviews. Also, anyone working in the oil industry may be difficult to contact at this time. Following road bans in the spring, due to the ground thawing, oil-field activity is greatly increased and workdays are extended to make up for lost time. This again made it difficult to arrange for interviews with potential participants.

Having access to participants from three school divisions within one region provides data that is relevant only to the region. The targeted region is one in which the oil and gas industry is very prominent, so this offers many opportunities for employment outside of teaching. Using snowball sampling also creates limitations to a research study and risks leaving groups unrepresented. In attempting to access ex-teachers via current teachers, there is the risk that only those teachers who see the validity in researching why teachers leave, and perhaps are experiencing frustrations themselves, may pass along the research information. Also, teachers who leave teaching with a more traumatic situation will be more likely to participate in such a study, and this can create limitations in terms of validity.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Teacher shortages, turnover, and attrition are all very complex phenomena. Current literature continues to demonstrate that many factors are related to teacher attrition. Research studies have focused on personal and individual characteristics of teachers, organizational factors, student stressors, and administrative support. Teacher turnover has received much attention in current academic scholarship. It has been noted that some teacher turnover is good. Having new teachers entering the field allows new ideas to circulate and prevents stagnation (Ingersoll, 2001). Teacher turnover becomes a problem when there are teacher shortages. Schools that are understaffed cause great stress for students and impede progress, and also place extra stress on other teachers in the school (Ingersoll, 2001). Teacher attrition rates are linked to teacher shortages.

The literature review will address three areas related to teacher attrition. The first section will address research related to defining teacher attrition and the implications teacher attrition has to education systems. The second section will focus on research studies about the factors that cause teachers to leave and the fall out from deciding to leave. The third section will discuss research related to what can be done to predict or prevent attrition. In conclusion, comments about the need for research into the jobs of ex-teachers will be made.

Body of the Review

Teacher Attrition Defined

Borman and Dowling conducted an extensive review of research literature in 2008 regarding teacher attrition. Teacher attrition is defined as the process of leaving the teaching profession for other career endeavors. Borman and Dowling (2008) found four key issues related to teacher attrition: good teachers were leaving the profession; many factors, which teachers generally weighed the costs and benefits of, are considered before teachers leave the profession; deciding to leave teaching is more influenced by the work being expected of teachers than had been previously focused on in literature; policy initiatives can address teacher attrition (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Much research on teacher attrition focuses on factors causing teachers to leave, or prevention and intervention strategies. Borman and Dowling (2008) highlight the lack of in-depth study on the characteristics influencing teachers to leave the profession. They found through their analysis of literature that longitudinal data on the career paths of teachers to be a much needed area of further research as well as theories related to attrition in order to adequately address policy initiatives.

Teacher attrition is not exclusive to one country or school type. Consequently, teacher attrition is costly to national school systems (Darling-Hammond, 2003). In a more recent study, DeAngelis and Presley (2011) found that general attrition among teachers has not increased, with younger teachers being more faithful to the field than older teachers who began teaching in the 1970s. Rather, attrition in specific types of schools has increased and poses the immediate threats to the profession and education system as a whole. Teacher attrition is not only a national problem that is specific to the

public schools in the United States. Mancuso, Roberts and White (2010) found that attrition in international schools in southeast Asia is also a problem, but their study showed that mid-career mobility is more common in international schools than beginning and end career mobility, which tends to be the case in American schools.

Teacher attrition is not only a problem in low-performing and minority schools. Studies have shown that teacher attrition is more specific to certain time periods and certain types of schools in the United States. Teacher attrition is greater during the high-stakes era, characterized by high levels of testing and accountability, as well as at charter schools and in low-performing schools (Sass, Flores, Claeys, & Perez, 2012).

Addressing Teacher Shortages

Policy initiatives to address teacher turnover and teacher attrition have been very limited. Ingersoll (2001) reported that the initial response to teacher turnover in the United States was to try recruiting people into teaching positions, even if only for a limited time period. Teach for America (TFA) is an example of one such recruitment strategy that aims to attract university graduates, from any field, to teach in low-performing schools for a minimum of two years. Another response to teacher turnover was to offer financial incentives to teach in certain schools and locations (Ingersoll, 2001). The flaw with these policy initiatives is that neither sought to understand what organizational problems could be contributing to teacher turnover.

Teach for America is a program in the United States that sends highly educated graduates who attend a very short training session on how to teach into low-income and/or low-performing schools to teach for a minimum of 2 years. There is a very high turnover rate for these teachers, however, and it is very costly to continually hire, train,

and repeat the process (Heilig & Jez, 2010). Research shows that relying on programs such as TFA is not a long-term solution to education disparities in the US and having untrained and unqualified teachers serves as a hindrance to the educational needs of low-performing schools (Heilig & Jez, 2010). Originally TFA teachers were used in districts experiencing teacher shortages, but Heilig and Jez (2010) report that laying off experienced teachers and replacing them with TFA teachers has become a new tactic in an effort to meet budget parameters in all types of schools (p. 4). Research shows mixed results regarding the overall effectiveness for TFA teachers and the impact on student achievement; however, Heilig and Jez (2010) found that TFA teachers make up a very small percentage of the teachers in the US and that the approach is actually making a very small impact on the nation's education system (p. 12).

Factors Affecting Teacher Attrition

Several studies have focused on understanding the factors contributing to teacher attrition. Three major themes influencing teacher attrition in current literature include: intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation related to teaching; student stressors; administrative support.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation plays a significant role in determining why teachers enter the field and whether or not they remain in the field. Ashiedu and Scott-Ladd (2012) reported that teachers in their study claimed to be attracted to teaching because of the complex and unique characteristics of being a teacher and that intrinsic motivation was very integral to becoming a teacher. Further findings from this study, which was conducted in Australia, found that teachers who leave the teaching profession were more likely to have entered the profession for extrinsic reasons. These extrinsic

reasons include perceived shorter workdays, having summers off, salary, and benefits. Similarly, Fischman, DiBara, and Gardner (2006) found that teachers claim intrinsic motivation and meeting the needs of students to be key drivers for teachers. Their study highlighted the fear that teachers have about being able to sustain the level of responsibility felt towards their students throughout an entire career as a teacher. Student and job demands on top of intrinsic drive to be involved and connected with students effectively can lead to a lot of pressure being placed on teachers (Fischman, DiBara, & Gardner, 2006).

Student stressors and the level of support received from administration are also contributing factors to whether or not teachers stay or leave the profession. In a study that investigated ways to prevent teacher stress and burnout, Sass, Seal, and Martin (2011) found that student stressors and support from superiors were both very strong predictors for teacher job dissatisfaction. Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loed and Wychoff (2011) also studied the influence that school administration played on teacher retention. Their study found that regardless of other factors contributing to teacher attrition and retention, such as school contextual factors and student body factors, school administration was the sole factor that could predict whether teachers remain in a school, and the field, or leave.

Leaving the Teaching Profession

Making the decision to leave a teaching position or the field all together is a life-changing decision. Buchanan (2009) conducted a study of ex-teachers to inquire as to whether their decision had a positive or negative impact on their lives. The findings of

this study show that the majority of teachers who left the teaching profession did not regret their decision to leave the field, even if it meant being in a new job with lower pay.

Student performance creates much pressure for teachers and school personnel. High-stakes test preparation is a huge responsibility for teachers, and it also limits autonomy of teachers to conduct their classrooms and daily lessons as they see fit (Anderson, 2008). It can be argued that teachers end up merely teaching to the test and not exercising themselves as professionals with a trained and specialized skill set for educating (Anderson, 2008). Studies about teacher attrition shed light on teacher retention. Understanding why teachers are leaving presents an avenue for prevention.

Prediction, Intervention, and Retention

Attempting to understand why teachers leave the profession can pose useful in predicting those teachers who will leave and those who will stay. In conducting a logistic regression analysis of secondary English teacher attrition in the United States, Hancock and Scherff (2010) came up with three predictors of teacher attrition: being a minority teacher, years of teaching experience, and teacher apathy. By being able to predict the types of teachers who will leave the profession, strategies for intervention and prevention of teacher attrition can be put in motion.

Research shows that the investments that teachers make and the outcomes they contribute to, may they be in the form of human or social capital in their students, make teachers' work invaluable and difficult to categorize and measure. What is referred to as "professional capital" by Hargreaves (2013) presents a new formula for contextualizing the job that teachers do (p. 292). Although not empirically researched, the notion of using professional capital as a starting point for understanding where, how, and why the

teaching profession is at such a critical juncture can allow for further understanding of the topic and provide insight on how to approach research for further improvements (Hargreaves, 2013).

It is undeniable that having good teachers is integral for successful school systems. Yet, with different drivers influencing education policy, very different expectations for what it means to be a good teacher have emerged globally. One way to conceive of the shift, change, or jolt to the teaching profession is to look at what is driving national education policy strategies. Two forms of capital drive education policy and education systems: business capital and professional capital. This results in national education systems co-existing in a global market and emerging with very different educational objectives, reflecting national economic agendas (Hargreaves, 2013). While this approach is quickly expanding in Europe, the UK, and the US, it is not used by nations with education systems that are strong and excelling, such as in Finland and Singapore, where teachers are seen with the highest regard (Hargreaves, 2013, p. 294).

Jobs of Ex-Teachers

There is much literature on teacher retention and attrition factors. There is, however, much less literature that focuses on what teachers who leave the profession do and the impact to the teaching profession. As Buchanan (2009b) points out, ex-teachers take much of their skills with them. Buchanan focused his study on the particular skills that teachers acquire during their teacher training that inevitably follow them to subsequent careers once they make the decision to leave teaching. It appears that teachers are becoming more skilled while trends of “de-skilling” the teaching profession have occurred. Such trends include commercially produced textbooks and curricula

(Buchanan, 2009b, p. 39). The fall out of this is that other professions are better at acknowledging the skills that teachers possess than the teaching profession does and are welcoming highly skilled teachers into new professions outside of teaching. Teachers are able to successfully transfer skills they have acquired. Very little literature exists, however, on the types of jobs that ex-teachers tend to seek out. Assuming that teachers have similar skill sets, researching the jobs that ex-teachers choose can be very useful in understanding why they are leaving the teaching profession and what it is that is lacking professionally from being a teacher.

Education systems are losing skilled teachers. Research demonstrates that ex-teachers found that their new careers were much less demanding than teaching, yet most jobs paid more than teaching (Buchanan, 2009b). The findings also show that teachers do not regret their decision to leave teaching. Teacher attrition results in a loss of skills that schools need but are being honed and developed and then lost to other professions. Buchanan (2009b) makes mention of a few teachers who became doctors or lawyers in his study but very little data exists on where ex-teachers go for the next stage of their careers. Good teaching is not easy and asks much of teachers (Hargreaves, 2013). Accessing the people who have chosen to leave the teaching profession can be very telling of how policies affect the people in the classroom.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This qualitative phenomenological study describes the job choices of ex-teachers and factors affecting their decision to leave teaching. The reasons an ex-teacher gives for switching careers, despite being educated and certified as a teacher, and job expectations are the main variables being studied in an attempt to further understand teacher attrition and the impact of changing global economic policies on the teaching profession. Qualitative research methodology, specifically phenomenology, was used in this project because exploration of whether the topic of teacher attrition is a concern in this region is the focus of this research project. The narrative data were transcribed, coded, and categorized into four themes related to the research question.

Setting

This study took place in one prairie province in Canada, Saskatchewan. Participants were recruited from one region – the southeast region of Saskatchewan. While always a region with much activity in oil and gas sector, this region is currently experiencing a significant boom in oil and gas productivity making jobs plentiful and salaries very high. With a population of 1, 122, 588 the province of Saskatchewan has recently hit its lowest unemployment rate of 3.3%. (Bureau of Statistics: Government of Saskatchewan, 2014).

Estevan, which is one of the largest cities in the southeast region with a population of 13,000, has been ranked the fastest growing city in Saskatchewan and has proportionally the highest number of jobs in Saskatchewan (“Doing Business”, 2014). Estevan peaked as the most expensive city to live in Canada in 2014 (Simes, 2014). While an oil boom is never constant or long term, it provides many employment opportunities.

The largest school division in this region is Southeast Cornerstone Public School Division. In 2011, changes to assessment and reporting policies in the procedures manual indicated that teachers were not to grant a zero to students despite the level of work completed, or not completed. Rather, teachers were to “use alternatives to zeros, such as reassessing to determine real achievement” (Southeast Cornerstone School Division, 2011, p. 3). In essence, in the case where students do not complete an assignment, teachers must implement other assessment strategies. This policy change created more work for teachers when students were doing less, or none at all.

Teachers working in publically funded schools in Saskatchewan are represented by the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation (STF). This professional organization acts as a voice for teachers and is also responsible for the regulation of the profession throughout the province. This includes areas such as credentials, accreditation, and participating in provincial collective bargaining. The STF released a document in 2013 titled “Strengthening Regulation” in response to growing public concern regarding professional misconduct and teacher incompetence. A review of the regulation process in the province lead to recommendations for immediate administrative improvements by strengthening the regulatory framework: “Maintaining the accountability of teachers is a

collective responsibility of the Federation, school divisions, and the Ministry of Education” (STF, 2013, p. 1). An increase in teacher regulation ensures student success, but it also hinders options and opportunities for teachers.

Participants were located via email through the three local school divisions. The researcher contact information was provided to those interested in participating. Arrangements for interviews were made via email or text message. Four of the interviews were held at the Estevan Public Library in a meeting room available for public use. Two interviews were conducted over the telephone due to travel and work commitments of participants.

Participants

Nonrandom sampling was used to recruit participants even though there are limitations with the techniques being used. Specifically, snowball sampling was used to recruit participants. This technique does not allow for the opportunity to generalize from the sample to the population, or make comparisons between schools, divisions, regions, countries, etc., but findings can be presented as a pilot study on how career choices can influence further research on teacher attrition and retention.

The population from which participants were recruited for this study includes ex-teachers who have received formal training as a teacher. Ex-teachers were recruited using snowball sampling by forwarding an email about the research project to current teachers and enlisting their help with recruitment. Age, gender, ethnic background was not a factor. Subjects must have met the following criteria: hold a four-year Bachelor of Education degree, have taught for 3 years, and currently work in a job outside of classroom teaching in a public system. In effect, there are two public systems in

Saskatchewan: one is non-denominational and referred to as “public” and the other is a publically funded Catholic system.

Excluded from this study were ex-teachers who left teaching to pursue administrative positions or other positions within the field of education. Included in this study were ex-teachers who left classroom teaching for another position permanently or returned to teaching in a different form or capacity outside of a public system.

Descriptive information that was collected from the sample includes their education/training, their position held as a teacher, where they taught, the length of time they spent teaching, what their current job is, and why they left classroom teaching.

Participants in this study had a connection to the region, whether they had taught there and moved away or taught in another region and moved to the region. This study consisted of six participants: 3 males and 3 females. All participants held a 4-year Bachelor of Education and were certified to teach in Saskatchewan. Public school classroom experience among participants ranged from 3.5 to 12 years (see Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Participants

Participants	Adam	Betty	Carol	David	Erin	Fred*
Sex	Male	Female	Female	Male	Female	Male
Number of years teaching	12	10	3.5	5	11	3.75

Note. *Names have all been changed to protect the privacy of participants

Instruments

The main instrument used to collect data in this study was semi-structured interviews. Interview protocol was adapted from the interview questions used by Buchanan (2009). The questions were open-ended and focused on the current jobs of the

participants, how the job is similar or different from teaching, how long they taught before deciding to leave and finally leaving teaching, at what moment they decided to leave teaching, and what type of training or updating was required for their new jobs. Specific questions include: What view of teaching did you have before you entered the profession? As you look back on that transition time, when you were deciding to leave, how did you feel? (See Appendix A). The validity and reliability of this interview protocol was established by Buchanan (2009).

Pilot interviews were first conducted on colleagues in order to test the reliability using the chosen interview protocol chosen to gather data. The questions are very exploratory in nature, which is why they were chosen. The development of the interview questions by Buchanan (2009) was intended to gain knowledge about how the skills of teachers were being used in subsequent jobs. This is very relevant to this study as skill set is detrimental to the choices one makes for a change in careers. Using the process of content-related evidence, the content validity of the interview questions was determined. Content validation is used to ensure that the items included in the in-depth interview process represent what it is that is being measured, and nothing else. Using the interview questions developed by Buchanan (2009), in which research was conducted and reliable data was gathered and published, enabled the researcher to be aware of researcher bias and ensure that the interview questions were not leading participants to answer in a way that reflected the researcher's bias. The questions also allow for exploration into the phenomenon being studied.

Procedure

In order to recruit participants, the directors of three public school divisions in southeast Saskatchewan were contacted via email: Southeast Regional College, Holy Family Roman Catholic School Division, and Southeast Cornerstone Public School Division. This process began with an email to the three school division directors requesting their assistance with an email blast. This initial request was to provide all the teachers in the region via email with knowledge about the project and to pass along the project and researcher contact information to any known ex-teachers who might be interested in participating.

The process of gaining approval to participate took 5 weeks. One school division did not approve of participating and doing an email blast to their teachers due to the nature of the content of the research study. Two school divisions approved assisting with the recruitment of participants and sent an email blast to their staff: 550 teachers at one and 92 staff members and instructors at the other.

Immediately following the email blasts sent by two school divisions, interested participants began contacting the researcher for further information and to set up interviews. The data collection process took place over a 4-week period. 30 minutes to 1 hour were allotted for each interview. Ideally interviews were to be conducted in person so that they can be recorded and transcribed for analysis. In effect, 4 interviews were conducted in person at the Estevan Public Library and two were conducted over the phone. Participants were provided with a consent form prior to the interview and information about the nature of the research, but they did not receive the interview

protocol prior to the interview. Interviews were scheduled around the work schedule and summer holidays of both the researcher and participants.

During the interviews, the researcher asked questions as per the interview protocol and clarifying questions and follow-up questions as need be. All interviews were recorded on a password-protected iPhone and consent forms were collected prior to the interviews. A numbering system was used to refer to interviews. Interviews were numbered and referred to as "ex-teacher #1, #2, etc.". These do not correspond in any way to consent forms.

Data collected from the interviews and the consent forms were stored separately both in locked locations. There was only one researcher in this project who had access to the data. Once the research had been completed, audio taped data was deleted. As per field standards, and according to the American Educational Research Association, data that is collected and transcribed will be kept for 5 years. This data is stored in a locked location that only the researcher has access to.

Participants were not compensated for their participation in the research project. Participants were asked whether they could be contacted to confirm validity of analysis, with all participants very eager to help and willing to read the findings and analysis.

Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis was continually alternated throughout this qualitative study. This is known as interim analysis. As the purpose of this study is exploration, a cyclical process of data collection and analysis is necessary. Analysis was inductive and comparative, as is common for phenomenological studies as new ideas can lead to new questions and avenues to explore (Merriam, 2009). Data collected through

interviews were transcribed, segmented and coded. It was necessary to group data using a category system. Upon the completion of 6 interviews, data collection was deemed sufficient as responses from interviews #4, #5, and #6 were showing similar responses to #1, #2 and #6. A process of meaning coding, meaning condensation, and meaning interpretation was used to analyze this data (Roulston, 2014).

In order to classify data into workable categories, a coding frame was created. This is an inductive strategy for making sense of all the data that was collected while conducting qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2014). The initial phase of coding was content-driven based on the interview questions. Categories included: number of years teaching, why teach, current (subsequent) job(s), why leave teaching, feelings when transitioning, further training, current view of teaching. The final categories that the data was segmented into came from the actual data itself and major themes that arose during the interviews.

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, a priori codes, or pre-existing codes were not used to analyze data. An attempt to identify relationships between categories of data was conducted as well. Two specific strategies for phenomenological analysis were used to achieve this: epoche and imaginative variation. In terms of the former, the researcher made clear attempts to be mindful of personal prejudices regarding the subject, including her own. Imaginative variation means seeking information from a variety of perspectives (Merriam, 2009). Interviewing participants with a different teaching background than she allowed for the researcher to use this method of analysis.

The final categories emerged when writing the narrative for the data as a result of patterns between the participants' responses and include: life-long learning, teacher

expectations, organizational structure, and professional autonomy. A definition of each category can further explain the analysis process. First of all, life-long learning refers to the process of seeking out new opportunities for professional growth. For example, Fred commented that while he enjoyed teaching, he could not see himself doing it for another 27 years and was extremely eager to have a new job offer in an entirely new field.

Teacher expectations include all of the aspects and job requirements of being a teacher. This includes expectations from students, parents, administrators, governments, and the public. An example includes completing curriculum requirements while simultaneously meeting the expectations of parents and students who may have a different opinion on their needs. The third theme is organizational structure. This category encompasses all data collected that is a direct result of how education is structured and the role teachers have within the structure. For example, adhering to government policies that reflect particular philosophies about teaching and learning. Last of all, professional autonomy means the freedom teachers have individually to exercise their professional judgment. Examples of this include choosing classes they are most suited to teach and during a given timetable that is best for them and their students.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

Findings to this phenomenological qualitative study were inductively derived from interview data. Four major themes emerged from the data in reference to the research question: “What job choices appear to be influenced by the factors teachers faced before leaving the teaching profession?” The major themes that arose from this study include life-long learning, teacher expectations, organizational structure, and professional autonomy.

Findings: Major Themes and Patterns

Life-Long Learning

All participants in this study self-identified as having left teaching when agreeing to participate, yet subsequent and current jobs show that teaching, training, and/or management was still very much a part of each of their current careers. In terms of this research study, to leave teaching meant to leave teaching in a public K-12 classroom system. As presented in Table 2, the current jobs of ex-teachers who participated in this study include: professional photographer and photography workshop facilitator, yoga instructor and on-line teacher, student services advisor, business communications instructor for a post-secondary technical training institute, part-time English as Another Language Instructor, installation training manager and safety manager for pipeline company. Not all participants, however, left teaching for the position they hold currently.

Scaling down to substitute teaching along with another job occurred for three participants while the other three participants took a radical change to a different profession once leaving teaching. One participant commented with a laugh: “It has been a long journey to where I am!” (Carol). Table 2 demonstrates the job(s) that each participant had following teaching that lead to their current job.

Table 2. Job Choices of Ex-Teachers

Participants	Adam	Betty	Carol	David	Erin	Fred
Subsequent Jobs after leaving Teaching	Substitute teacher Stay-at-home dad	Substitute teacher	Employment Counselor Work experience program development officer	Mortgage advisor at bank Credit manager for livestock company	Substitute teacher Program coordinator at public library	Service technician for pipeline company
Current Job	Professional photographer Workshop leader on photography	Yoga teacher On-line teacher	Student services advisor	Business communications instructor for post-secondary technical education institute	EAL instructor Mom	Installation training manager and safety manager for pipeline company

When asked about why they chose teaching for a major in university and ultimately as a career, there was some consensus in the responses among participants. To consider oneself a natural teacher was a common response as well as having a passion for learning and having had a good experience in school and with teachers as a child. David commented, “I grew up doing a lot of teaching, so it was a natural progression despite some other interests.” When asked about why she chose teaching, Erin very vehemently stated, “I just think it’s natural. It’s my whole being.” One participant was an exception to this and claimed to have hated school. Adam decided to become a teacher in order to

try to provide something different to students that he did not receive as a student: “You don’t go into teaching to make money... even though it can be dangerous, you can make a difference.” Helping others, liking kids, and enjoying teaching were all cited more than once for reasons to become a teacher. Erin expressed a love for learning and commented “teaching keeps you stimulated.”

The data shows a varying degree of skill adaptation and further training needed in order to transition to another job/career. Most participants were able to use their existing teaching skills to find new employment. Fred cited his education background as the reason he was able to advance so quickly in his new field into a training and management position. David explained that by gaining a certificate in financial planning, he was able to eventually get a job that merged his two interests: teaching and business. Erin recently completed a rigorous course that allows her to not only teach English as Another Language courses, but to also train other instructors. Betty completed her yoga certification before officially leaving classroom teaching. Adam claimed to have always been a skilled photographer and did not need any supplemental training, yet he wishes he had some business training. Carol explored a range of roles in government where her teaching skills would be most adaptable. She did not take any training to get into her current position, but she is currently working on a Masters program in Educational Psychology.

There was great variance in the feelings experienced by participants when transitioning out of teaching to another job. A range from fear and uncertainty to excitement for future challenges was reported. In terms of fear, two participants explained that they saw leaving teaching as being a failure and having wasted a degree.

This caused for much contemplation and grief over making the decision to pursue other interests or passions. One participant explained that it was a weird feeling during the transition phase to not be teaching formally yet contemplating whether he could still call himself a teacher when people asked what he did for work. Two participants stated that they knew early on in their teaching careers, even while in university, that they might not be a teacher for their entire careers, and once a new opportunity presented itself they were each very excited and motivated to enter a new phase in their lives of challenges and experiences.

Teacher Expectations

A common factor among participants that impacted the decision to leave teaching was the numerous expectations placed on teachers. In terms of students, a lack of respect by students was reported as well as pressure caused by high-needs students. A loss of authority and respect as a professional by parents was experienced as well. A heavy work load while continually being asked to do more, such as giving more time and adapting to curriculum changes, with a comparatively lower salary was reported. Erin explained that with the expectations placed on teachers by the school division, teaching is like having two full-time jobs:

I find that the school division jumps on every bandwagon that comes around. Everything is always new. We don't even get a chance to truly get to know a program before it's changed. And it's always something new! Always something new! And if you don't start hopping on the bandwagon, then you're almost outcast as the teacher that only gives so much. Aren't I giving enough?

Teachers are not always respected in their role as an authority figure trained in a professional capacity. Betty commented that a lack of respect comes from students and parents, and teachers are constantly questioned for what they do. Fred also mentioned

frustration about constantly explaining situations with parents when he was questioned about his actions. Adam experienced a situation where he was moved from an inner-city school with high-needs and high-risk students to a small affluent rural community school: “It would be once a month I would need to be calling 9-1-1 to get the police over to the school.” He was brought in to the new rural school “to deal with ‘troubled kids’, but their version of ‘troubled kids’ was kids who didn’t listen.” Despite his background and experience, he was not supported in addressing behavior issues of these students because of who their families were in the community and to prevent friction between the school and community. Betty felt similar pressure and lack of respect also working in an affluent community. She does not believe that education is valued there anymore as high-paying jobs can be attained with very minimal education. Betty also believes that the government also reflects a lack of respect for education with their negative comments about teachers in the media regarding contract negotiations. David also stated that he believes society respects teachers less.

Teacher workload is another expectation teachers are forced to manage. Fred, Erin, and Adam commented on the amount of work and time put in by teachers to be much more than that found in other jobs. Adam deemed a teaching workload to be “insane” with having so many different types of roles to play and that it can lead to burn-out. Betty noted that the balance is off between prep time and classroom time depending on the school and grades a teacher teaches. Both Betty and Erin commented that this creates little job satisfaction and success for teachers. David stated that the frustrations related to workload that teachers experience creates a very unhappy work environment and culture of work in schools.

Teachers have many roles to fill within a day. Adam commented that teachers are expected to teach, complete paper work, and be a social worker in a variety of different situations that can be very difficult at times. Fred reported that working in a “transient” school meant that some of his students did not have stable home lives or parents available to support and encourage them. This left the teacher to pick up the missing parenting role. David commented that teachers being placed in subjects that they may not be properly trained for, in particular math, adds much to the workload of a teacher while having a negative impact on the students not being academically challenged or prepared for higher grade levels. With all the tasks teachers are expected to manage, students, according to Adam, seem to work less than in the past and are expected to produce less.

Organizational Structure

Several participants commented on the nature of teaching positions. Five out of 6 participants expressed frustration with continually working on contracts and not being able to find a permanent full-time or tenured position as a teacher. Betty was able to take advantage of this by doing some other training in between two contracts: “I had a brief period between contracts where I was able to go and do my yoga training in Massachusetts.” She also noted that having a husband who supported her professional decisions as well as some of their shared financial needs has helped her. Erin, however, found it very difficult as a single woman to find stable employment as a teacher in order to support herself. She made reference to the teaching field being flooded with too many teachers, including retired teachers in the sub pool, which made it difficult to find

substitute opportunities let alone full-time employment. This was one of the reasons that alternatives to teaching were sought out. David made the comment that with so many trained teachers looking for full-time work, there should not be any problem with teacher attrition in the province of Saskatchewan. Both Erin and Fred expressed an unsettling and pervasive feeling of “wasting their degree” by not having a satisfying position as a full-time teacher.

All of the participants had commonalities in the grade levels that they taught but not in the subject areas. Upper elementary and middle years were the common category of teaching for these participants. Five participants taught from grade K-8 for most of their teaching careers, and one participant taught mostly grade 3-8. Two participants were core French teachers. This means they taught French only to all the grades in the school and did not have a homeroom or any other core classes to teach. Four participants taught broad subjects to a variety of grades over their time spent teaching within the grade range outlined. There were some other grades and subject areas outside of these presented, but these were the most common.

In terms of leaving teaching, all participants cited several factors that impacted the decision. The range of factors including personal and family issues to issues related to students, staff, administration, and curriculum. Adam explained that when he got married and moved, his wife was an administrator and that posed a challenge for him as a teacher that made it easier to move into another field. Betty realized that she had other interests that she wanted to pursue, and the decision to do so was made easier when her entire French curriculum was changed one year with no support offered. Carol cited a need for constant full-time employment and a permanent contract as necessities

compounded with challenging classroom management as main reasons for seeking out other employment options. David had other interests to pursue and did not agree with changes being made in schools and where the elementary education system was going. Erin experienced conflict with students and teachers in terms of authority and teaching philosophy as well as difficulty with finding steady, full-time employment. Fred grew tired of the repetitive nature of teaching and the constant change to objectives and expectations by school boards.

Specific provincial policies also impacted the expectations placed on teachers that were interviewed. Four participants mentioned the introduction of a “no fail” policy to have been a pivotal moment in their teaching careers. This policy was problematic for Adam in that he experienced a confrontation with an administrator over the division and provincial policy that every kid should pass. Ethically, Adam did not agree with this when it came to students who did not even attend classes: “I can not sign off on this kid because I didn’t know if he exists!” Frustration over this policy has lead Adam to believe that “Education is going downhill... I don’t think we are bettering the kids anymore.” Betty also explained that this policy has brought much more work for teachers with less expectations, consequences, and accountability for students: “I clocked 40 hours for one set of report cards. Ridiculous. And they can’t fail! And the parents didn’t appreciate the new reporting system... Why am I putting in five times as much work when no one is using this for anything?” David also spoke about a lack of accountability for students: “Another major problem was that I found a complete lack of accountability for the students... students don’t have a respect based out of fear and to me, there needs to be a bit of fear of failure.... Fear of disappointing. That’s no longer there.” These demands

and expectations are on teachers without adequate support, appreciation, or even recognition.

Professional Autonomy

A lack of control of so many daily aspects in teaching was reported in the data. Scheduling and being restricted to physically being in a classroom with students for certain times of the day was challenging for some participants when they were teaching. Teachers are not often given the opportunity to choose what they teach. David found it very frustrating to not be able to teach the subjects that he was both passionate and experienced with: “If I had a grade 9 or 10 math, I would have considered staying teaching... I don’t think a generalist should teach math from grade 3 or 4 on. That’s something that would have been difficult to leave.” Carol stated that in her current position as a student services advisor, she has more flexibility in structuring her daily schedule than when she was teaching and had to be in the classroom from 9:00-3:30, for the most part. She and Fred also reported that as introverts, it could be very long days constantly chasing kids and talking with parents about every situation that occurs. Fred even referred to feeling like he was “babysitting kids” at times. An inability to control the changing structures of school boards and divisions causing school closures and positions to be eliminated was another things that Carol mentioned.

In terms of feelings when deciding to change careers, there was a very mixed and personal account presented in the data. A range of excitement for the future to uncertainty and bewilderment to failure was reported. Adam reported a very weird feeling to not be responding to a bell anymore and whether he could still say that he was a teacher when people asked what he did for work. Carol did not feel that she was being

an effective teacher and felt the change was good. David was excited for new challenges in his career but claimed that he was “naïve about how long it would take to find something else.” Fred did not hesitate or second-guess his decision once he had another job offer. He left his position in the middle of the school year and refused an offer of just taking a leave from his position as opposed to resigning. Betty claimed it was the hardest decision she has ever made to resign from her full-time position. Ultimately, she had to ask herself, “Is it worth staying?” And her decision was that no, it was not.

Staying in the teaching profession is not always for positive reasons. Betty knows of several teachers who do not have adequate job satisfaction, but “they are just going through the motions because they don’t have any choice but to try get everything done. And I didn’t want to live like that – I didn’t have to.” David’s comments agree with Betty in that teachers stay teaching out of fear and for their pension, not because they like it. Fred questioned whether he could stay in the teaching profession for the rest of his working career. He said he was so lucky and grateful when he had another job offer in another field because he knows of several teachers who would like to find something else but have not been successful. He acknowledged that in the southeast region, women have considerably less options for employment that compares to teaching in terms of hours, salary, and benefits.

Validity of Findings

While qualitative research is less concerned with validity than quantitative research, this study has threats to consider. Selection of participants can pose a threat to

the validity of the data in this study. In order to ensure the data is credible, all participants were trained as teachers and hold a four-year Bachelor of Education with the intention of being a classroom teacher in the public education system in Canada, specifically Saskatchewan, for the duration of their career. To include participants who were not trained as teachers would alter the results and trustworthiness of this study.

Locating and selecting ex-teachers by using snowball sampling may also affect the results. Using word-of-mouth to locate participants may present participants who have an extreme story to tell or have already shared their information with someone else and this reflected much on their experiences. As a concern with phenomenology, interviews always only give one person's interpretation of an event or experience (Eberle, 2014). Locating participants who have not spoken about their career change would offer the most valid research data. It is also important to note in this study that self-reporting occurred. This means that data collected for this project presents limitations in the validity as people can alter or choose their answers to describe themselves in a certain light, whether it is accurate or not.

Another measure used to ensure validity and reliability in this research project was through triangulation. In order to ensure credibility of findings, interview data was collected from people who taught at different schools, different school divisions, different time periods, different grade levels, and different subjects throughout one main region in the same province and spanning a time period of 20 years. This allows for different perspectives to be presented and analyzed in terms of the relationship to the research question.

Two important strategies used to increase credibility was respondent validation or member checking and using thick, rich descriptions. Data from interviews were presented with much detail to explain the context of which each participant was answering in terms of the parameters of the study. Following analysis of data collected, participants were solicited for feedback on the findings and that the viewpoints presented during the interviews were represented accurately. Specifically, participants were asked whether categories and themes that the data presented were accurate to what they had spoken about.

Researcher bias or researcher's position posed a large threat to validity of this study. The researcher is also a teacher who has taught in a variety of different capacities and locations, including three different countries. Reflexivity has been used in an attempt to control this. I always wanted to travel and loved learning from a young age. Being a teacher seemed like the perfect career choice, yet deep down I do not ever think I wanted to be a teacher for my entire career. Upon graduating from my Bachelor of Education program, I began a 2-year teaching position abroad. Wanting to return to Canada, I relocated and taught for another 4 years before deciding to return to graduate school. Going to grad school was a decision I made in order to gain new skills and a wider knowledge base that would be useful whether I continued working as a teacher or chose to pursue a new career. I have been teaching adult basic education throughout the research and writing of this project. In reflecting on my own past experiences and current situation, I have used the strategy of negative-case sampling. I attempted to search for information that disconfirms the expectations and explanation I already had about why teachers leave the profession.

Lastly, in interpreting the findings of this study, theory triangulation was used. Multiple social theories and philosophical perspectives were used in order to interpret and explain the data that was collected. Human capital theory, critical theory, post-modern philosophy and post-structural philosophy are used within the framework of neoliberalism to interpret the data and ensure trustworthiness of this study (Ball, 2012; Foucault, 1977; Webb, 2009).

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

As global economics change, education policy changes and impacts not only students but teachers as well. This study seeks to understand the current state of the teaching profession in Saskatchewan, Canada and how the current jobs of ex-teachers reflect this. Using in-depth interviews to collect data about why teachers chose to leave teaching and what they are doing for work now, four themes regarding the teaching profession emerged as having key importance: life-long learning, teacher expectations, organizational structure, and professional autonomy. These themes can be further classified into three categories in order to discuss the current state of teaching as it relates to current literature: teacher identity, surveillance and power, and teacher control. In interpreting the meaning in the data collected, an empathic interpretation was used (Willig, 2014).

Discussion of Results

Teacher Identity

Originally, excluded from the study were people who continue to work in any type of capacity related to the teaching profession, such as administrative positions, substitute teaching, or classroom teaching outside the particular area of specialization, as this could be a threat to the validity of the results. However, once participants identified

themselves as ‘having left teaching’ and stated interest in participating in the study, numerous career paths came to light. Some ex-teachers had returned to teaching positions that the researcher was not aware existed prior to this study and thus these participants were admitted to participate in the study. It became evident very quickly that a career change from the teaching profession to another is not always clear-cut, and the process and choices made along the way are valuable sources of information.

The data presents very intriguing insight into the nature of teachers and the nature of ex-teachers. This study shows much consensus from ex-teachers that they originally became teachers because they genuinely like to help people, feel that teaching is natural for them, and enjoy being with kids. Due to many complications and factors, these people eventually chose to leave teaching at some point in their career. In presenting their personal experiences through interviews, more questions were generated by both the participants and researcher: Had these individuals failed as teachers? Or, had the system in which they were working failed them? And as a result, to what extent is this to the detriment to the students? What distinguishes a teacher who can teach in the same education system for their entire career from one who cannot?

In a comparative study conducted on how the media represents teachers, Alhamdan et al. (2014) found that across the five countries that were studied (Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Oman, Bangladesh, Australia), there are four different constructs of teacher identity: the caring practitioner, the transparent (un)professional, moral and social role models, and transformative intellectuals. This complex view of teachers creates an image and expectation of teachers being “unprofessional” while at the same time having expectations that are considered “superhuman” (Alhamdan et al., 2014, p. 8). It became

quickly evident through the data collected in this study that the ex-teachers interviewed love not only teaching, but also love learning. As professionals, they need growth, stimulation, success, and some acknowledgement of the complicated nature of being a teacher. Without having their needs met in their current jobs as classroom teachers, they sought out life-long learning opportunities by making career changes or retraining in other areas of interest. Researchers posit that there may be a link to the societal expectation of teachers and the growing “corporatization of education” around the world and what this means in terms of teacher performance and accountability (Alhamdan et al., 2014, p. 12).

Surveillance and Power

The general consensus among all participants in this study is that teachers have expectations placed on them by a variety of forces that can make the job of teaching daunting, exhausting and overwhelming. According to the data collected, there is a growing frustration and dissatisfaction with teaching in public schools in Saskatchewan. Teachers have an unfair and unbalanced workload in comparison to what is expected of students. The workday for a teacher is much longer than the school day, and mounting expectations such as continual curriculum change, increasing paperwork, and high-needs students makes a teaching job very demanding. This reflects a low value for teachers, and even education.

“Once we brought in no zeros, no failing – to me that’s, and having been in the business community, a huge disservice to students” (David). The “no fail” policy mentioned by all participants is also known as the “no zero grading policies” which had been in effect across Canada by 2012 and continues to saddle teachers with not being

able to give zeros for assignments and tests not completed. This results in students passing without actually completing the grade level requirements. Zwaagstra (2012) criticizes these policies as they undermine the professional expertise of a teacher to make decisions for individual students and grant marks that accurately reflect the work demonstrated by a student. The ex-teachers who participated in this study also expressed much discontent over the effects of this policy not only on them as teachers, but over the long-term consequences of the policy by students. Evidence does not support this policy educationally, and it serves to discourage teachers (Zwaagstra, 2012).

Webb (2009) makes the connection between an uncertain teacher identity and teacher power. Teachers' knowledge is controlled through a variety of means, which Webb (2009) refers to as "macropolitics" in which governments assert control through measures of accountability (p. 10). According to Webb, education policy that is dictated from myriad forces causes "professional schizophrenia" within the teaching profession as teachers shape and create multiple teaching identities as they respond and resist to policies of control (p.7). In most cases, surviving as a teacher becomes the most salient part of a teacher's job (Webb, 2009). In the case of this study, the participants struggled with their identity and power as a teacher and made a very difficult and personal decision to change careers based on a feeling of hopelessness.

Teacher Control

The need for control and surveillance of teachers can be explained economically in order to support neoliberal economic agendas (Webb, 2009). Webb (2009) uses the work of Foucault (1980) to explain that by controlling teachers through accountability measures, economic production can be driven. Essentially, by controlling teachers and

the knowledge that is disseminated to students, economic production is controlled. It is the corporate state that has much interest in regulating teachers and students as “technologies of power seek conformity by controlling people’s thoughts and desires” (Webb, 2009, p. 25). Foucault (1977) illustrates that one way to control and train people is through surveillance. For example, “parental help in the classroom also has unintended effects on teacher performance when parents act as panoptic surveillance for other parents, principals, and districts” (Webb, 2009, p. 32). Several references were made in this study to the on-going need for teachers to discuss, and justify, decisions they made with both administrators and parents. So much so that it became exhausting. The reasons given for surveilling teachers are “to produce more standardized and efficient teachers” (Webb, 2009, p. 34). But, as Webb (2009) points out, teachers can resist this control. As this study has shown, leaving the profession is the ultimate way for teachers to resist and regain control of their professional selves.

Limitations

One limitation to the findings in this study includes the sampling. Working within a rather short time frame and project deadlines created a small, but informative, group of participants. Starting in other fields and enquiring about the training they had received may have brought to light that there are ex-teachers working in other professions. A survey of education in a wide variety of fields: oil field, sales, personal finance, hospitality, etc. may have presented individuals with training as a teacher who could have been interviewed rather than starting the recruitment phase by asking current teachers if they know of any ex-teachers.

A study with a small number of participants has limitations in terms of generalization to the greater population. Using a different sampling method to include people working in a variety of fields to find out about their path in getting to that job can create data that lends itself more easily to generating statistical data about teacher training and moving out of the teacher profession. This can also provide more opportunities for comparison between professions and ultimately a deeper analysis of teacher attrition.

The interview protocol for this study was quite lengthy. There were 17 questions asked in each interview. Several times participants had answered questions before reaching the question, and some participants had run out of things to say before reaching the final questions. All questions were asked, however, to keep all interviews structured the same. Fewer interview questions and a less structured interview protocol could have been used to allow for more time for participants to expand on their answers and provide information that the research did not think to ask. Using a survey or questionnaire prior to conducting interviews could have also helped to localize more efficient interview protocol.

Recommendations for Future Research

To see teachers as life-long learners presents an area to explore in terms of teacher attrition. This study has shown that people who love learning are drawn to the teaching profession. It is important to consider how this is taken into consideration when education policies are implemented or being reviewed. Further research into how policies may be hindering the growth of teachers and causing job dissatisfaction should be considered.

This study also raises the question whether teachers are being or have been skilled out of the profession. This meaning that the skill set demanded of teachers according to current education policy has shifted, and different skills are being highlighted and others neglected. Further research into current skill demands for teachers would aid in shedding light on this.

Further investigation into the policy effects of students not failing grades, no matter how much or little work they accomplish during a school year or whatever situation arises, should be considered. As highlighted by this research project, this policy sends the message that students do not need to attend school in order to move along through the grades and that student expectations are low. This does not cultivate intrinsic motivation for growth and development in students and actually places more work and pressure on teachers. This can have implications for teacher training programs. Also, having an education system where students are not expected to achieve certain standards and milestones without any dire consequences changes the role of the teacher within that system.

This study highlights the fact that teachers, who are educated and dedicated employees, are leaving the teaching profession for other professions. Research into how impactful post-secondary training is on long-term career choices can inform post-secondary policy and programming. Also, research into job satisfaction of current teachers can assist with influencing future education policy, specifically with teacher retention as a focus.

Conclusion

The findings from this research project suggest that while ex-teachers demonstrate a wide range of possibilities for employment outside of public school classroom teaching, the state of teaching had an impact on a teacher's decision to leave. Also demonstrated in this study is that teachers tend to have a natural ability for learning and are drawn to life-long learning. This can make career changes more likely, but not the sole reason that ex-teachers cite for leaving teaching.

There are several possibilities for teachers who desire a career change. Teachers have a multifaceted skill set that can be applied to numerous jobs. This study focused on ex-teachers who chose to leave teaching public school for another job. The data from this study contributes much to the discussion of the current state of teaching in public schools in Saskatchewan. Ultimately, The teaching profession in Saskatchewan is losing teachers, or more specifically a certain kind of teacher. This loss leads one to consider what teachers really do and who they are.

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR EX-TEACHERS

1. How long did you teach?
2. Did you teach in different capacities, or the same general area?
3. What kept you teaching that long?
4. What eventually led you to leave?
5. What view of teaching did you have before you entered the profession?
6. As you look back on that transition time, when you were deciding to leave, how did you feel?
7. What thoughts were going through your mind?
8. Is there anything that would/could have kept you in the teaching profession?
9. What is your current job?
10. What training or skills were needed to enter your new profession?
11. To what extent do you use the skills and knowledge you gained in teaching in your current work?
12. To what extent did your teaching skills shape your decision to move into your current career?
13. How would you compare your teaching to your current work in the following areas: salary?
14. Workload?
15. Responsibility?
16. Working conditions?
17. 'Prestige' of the job?

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VITA

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