DIFFERENCES IN EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES OF TRANSFER AND NATIVE STUDENTS IN AN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION PROGRAM:

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

August 2012

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Tucker, Tami L. Differences in Experiences and Outcomes of Transfer and Native Students in an Elementary Education Program: An Exploratory Study. Doctor of Philosophy (Higher Education), August 2012, 106 pp., 11 figures, references, 52 titles.

This research targeted elementary education graduates of a large Southwestern university who were transfer students, and compared them to native students on selected variables. These variables included retention in teaching, and perception of supports and obstacles at the university. The sample consisted of 143 respondents: 73 native and 70 transfer students. Data were collected through submission of online surveys and through postal mail. Quantitative and qualitative analyses were used to answer the research questions. Astin’s input-environment-outcome model provided the conceptual and theoretical framework for this study. Native and transfer students considered student teaching to be the “most helpful” course or service during their time at the university, yet both felt they lacked elements of preparation for teaching in the real world. Transfer students reported the following as supports during their transition from community college to university: academic advising, finances, support network, and the university. They reported these obstacles: university bureaucracy, credit transfer, expenses, and adapting to campus. There was no significant difference between the two groups’ intentions to remain in teaching ($p = .249$), and a statistically non-significant higher percentage of transfer students than native students reported to be teaching at the time of survey completion ($p = .614$). The findings support further inquiry into support systems for transfer students, as well as further examination of teacher preparation curricula.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank all the people that guided me, helped me, and supported me throughout this process. I could not have done this without your encouragement and prayers. Thank you!

To my dissertation committee, thank you for your guidance and knowledge throughout this process. Dr. Marc Cutright, major professor, you provided both tough love and encouragement as needed - Thank you! Dr. Mary Harris, supervisor and committee member, you have provided so many opportunities for me not only with this dissertation, but throughout my time as a graduate student - Thank you for your mentorship! Dr. Kathleen Whitson, advisor and committee member, from my initial doctoral program interview, you have been there for me to discuss everything from course options to career options and everything in between - Thank you for being a great advisor! To Frank Mensal – thank you for initiating this project.

To my family, thank you for listening, encouraging, and supporting me through this process. Maw Maw, thank you for being the first educator in the family and for always supporting my education goals. To my parents, thank you for setting an expectation that college was the only choice as I was growing up. Kathy, as an educator, thank you for being my cheerleader any time I needed one. Dad, thank you for always being there! Mom, thank you for always listening. Jami and Steven, thank you for helping me whenever with whatever. Kati and Andrew, thank you for your continuous motivation and encouragement. Dylan, thank you for your respect even though we chose different paths. Tucker, Parker, and Cooper, my nephews, thank you for reminding me to embrace the moment and enjoy life!
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The issue of teacher shortage is not new to our generation. Initially positioned as an issue of growth in student enrollment while large numbers of teachers were approaching retirement, the teacher shortage predicted since the mid-1980s was to be countered by recruitment (Ingersoll, 2001, 2003; Carroll & Foster, 2010). According to Ingersoll (2003), “In recent years a wide range of initiatives have been implemented to recruit new candidates into teaching. Among these are career-change programs, such as ‘troops-to-teachers,’ and Teach for America, designed to lure the ‘best and brightest’ into understaffed schools” (p. 5). But in 2003, Hunt & Carroll proposed that a shortage of teachers was not the problem:

Today, thousands of unqualified individuals are in classrooms across the nation, hired because state laws and district policies are ignored in the name of meeting immediate needs of schools that appear to face “shortages.” But the real problem is that these schools are unable to retain a sufficient number of teachers with the proper credentials. We have mistaken the symptom for the problem. (Hunt & Carroll, 2003, p. 6)

According to Greiner and Smith, only recently have researchers realized that “retention is more of a problem than recruitment” (2006, p. 653). Everyone can agree that “developing good teachers remains essential. But . . . the nation cannot achieve quality teaching for every child unless those teachers can be kept in the classroom” (Hunt & Carroll, 2003, p. 7).

The number of employed full-time teachers grew from 3.1 million in 1988-89 to 3.5 million in 2007-08 (Aud et al., 2011). This increase was 400,000 teachers or approximately 11% of the teaching work force. Unfortunately, not only did the number of teachers increase, but the number and percentage of teachers who left the
profession also increased. In 1988-89, 172,000 teachers (5.5%) left the profession compared to 347,000 teachers (9.9%) who left the profession in 2008-09 (Aud et al., 2011). Ingersoll (2001) “suggest[s] an image of the teaching profession as a ‘revolving door,’ an occupation in which there are relatively large flows in, through, and out of schools” (p. 514). This “revolving door” is commonly referred to as teacher turnover.

Considering the amount of teacher turnover, a more in-depth look at those who major in education and their experiences is necessary. According to The Condition of Education 2011 report, 1.6 million bachelor’s degrees were awarded in 2008-09 an increase of 33% from 1998-99 (Aud et al., 2011). The distribution of these degrees were: 22% in business, 11% in social sciences and history, 8% in health professions and clinical sciences, 6% in education, 6% in psychology, 6% in visual and performing arts, 5% in engineering and engineering technology, 5% in communications and communication technology, and 5% in biological and biomedical sciences. From 1998-99 to 2008-09, bachelor’s degrees in the field of parks, recreation, leisure, and fitness studies had the largest percent of change, with a 92% increase in degrees awarded. The field of security and protective services had the next largest percent of change, with 70% increase in degrees awarded. Only one field decreased in the number of degrees awarded in 2008-09 compared to 1998-99. Education had a negative 5% change in degrees awarded in 2008-09 compared to 1998-99 (Aud et al., 2011). Considering this decrease in degrees awarded, are less students majoring in education or are less students completing the requirements to earn a bachelor’s a degree?

One third of all first-time students transferred at least once within five years (Hossler et al., 2012). Of students who started at a 2-year institution, 20% made their
first transfer to a 4-year institution. The transfer rate from 2-to 4-year public institution was about 14% of all students who started at a public institution around the same time (Hossler et al., 2012). According to research, transfer students struggle with adjusting to the university from the community college that can affect their success. Best and Gehring (1993) encourages students to complete two years at the community college before transferring to ease the transition. Johnson (2005) suggests factors such as the class size or the location of the university is important when transferring from community college to university. According to Duggan & Pickering, “Universities must take great care, then, to continue to see each transfer student as an individual, with individual barriers to academic success and persistence” (2008, p. 447).

Statement of the Problem

Future teachers take a variety of paths that lead to graduation, some start at a community college (transfers) and others complete all four years at a university (natives). How does this variation, which involves differing experiences and pathways to teacher education degree completion, matter in retrospect to the student?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to compare transfer and native students who graduated from the University of North Texas College of Education with degrees leading to certification in elementary education during the years 1995–2005. Specifically, the research targets elementary education graduates who were transfer students compared to native students on their perception of their academic experiences in the UNT
program, perception of supports and obstacles for transfer students, and retention in teaching by transfer and native students.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. What differences and commonalities in perception of the university experience are reported by transfer and native students?

2. What particular supports and obstacles did transfer students encounter throughout the transition from the community college to the university as perceived retrospectively by students?

3. (a) Is there a significant difference in the retention rate of transfer students and native students who enter the teaching profession?

   (b) Is there a significant difference between the intention to retain in teaching of transfer students and native students who enter the teaching profession?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because the study will compare and contrast factors within the educational experience as a transfer or native student. Knowing supports and obstacles perceived by students will help the college retain students by addressing the areas of concern. The study is also comparing teacher retention rates based on the teacher’s experience as a transfer student or native student. Based on the results, areas of practice can be modified to increase retention rates.

In addition, the study will add to a growing body of literature in two areas of education. First, the experience of transfer students has been a growing area of research. This study reviews the experiences of transfer students compared to native students in an elementary education program. Second, the research will contribute to
the body of literature on elementary education programs. The research evaluates elementary education graduates on perception of their academic experiences in the UNT program by transfer and native students, perception of supports and obstacles for transfer students, and retention in teaching for transfer students compared to native students.

Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Orientation

Astin developed the input-environment-output (I-E-O) model primarily for natural experiments (Astin & American Council on Education [ACE], 1991). Natural experiments study the real world instead of an environment created for experimental purposes. According to Astin and the American Council on Education, this type of experiment has two major benefits: (1) it does not study simulated environments and (2) it provides the ability to research multiple environmental variables concurrently. “Since natural experiments permit us to compare and contrast the great variety of educational approaches and practices (i.e., the different environments) that characterize higher education in America, they can help us to understand which educational environments and practices are most effective and under what conditions” (Astin & ACE, 1991, p. 28).

The I-E-O model is comprised of three component areas shown in Figure 1. Student inputs are the characteristics that a student already has when entering college (Astin & ACE, 1991). These characteristics commonly are “talent, skills, aspirations and other potentials for growth and learning” (Astin, 1970, p. 225). Astin (1970) claims, “Inputs can be a ‘pretest’ on specific outputs (career choice, personal values, etc…) or personal attributes (sex, race, etc…)” (p. 225). Inputs affect outputs in two ways: (1)
through direct interaction or (2) through interaction with the environment (Astin, 1970). The college environment refers to all aspects of the university that can affect the student in any way. According to Astin (1970) these items typically include: “administrative policies and practices, curriculum, physical plant and facilities, teaching practices, peer associations, and other characteristics of the college environment” that have potential to affect the student (p. 225). The last component of the I-E-O model is student output. Outputs are characteristics of the student that the university affects or tries to affect through the student’s experience at the institution (Astin & ACE, 1991). Astin (1970) refers to output as “measures of the student’s achievements, knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, aspirations, interests, and daily activities” (p. 224). Assessment of student outputs is necessary for significant research on college impact (Astin, 1970).

![Figure 1. Visual representation of Astin’s I-E-O model. Adapted from Astin (1991, p. 18).](image)

Figure 1 also shows the relationships of the three components which are represented with the letters A, B, and C. Relationship A refers to the student enrollment process and its effect on the college environment, through the characteristics and traits of the students enrolled at the university (Astin, 1970). Relationship B refers to the college environment (academic, social, etc…) and its effect on the student outputs or
growth of the student during the college years. Assessment of relationship B is used to measure the impact of college on the student (Astin, 1970). Relationship C refers to the students enrolled at the university (or inputs) and its effect on student outputs) (Astin, 1970). In addition to the three relationships, considered main effects, there are two interaction effects. First, there is an interaction between A and C, which suggests the effect of student input on student output will vary according to the college environment (Astin, 1970). Second, there is an interaction between A and B that suggests the effect of the college environment is dependent on the type of student enrolled (or student input) (Astin, 1970). This type of interaction is commonly used for research on college impact (Astin, 1970). This project will review the interaction between A and B shown in Figure 2. The research will look at the effect of the college environment (university experience and benefit of curriculum as reported by the student) for transfer students and native students on teacher retention (student output). Relationship C will also be reviewed in this study.

![Visual representation of Astin's I-E-O model personalized as conceptual framework for this research. Adapted from Astin (1991, p. 18).](image)

*Figure 2. Visual representation of Astin’s I-E-O model personalized as conceptual framework for this research. Adapted from Astin (1991, p. 18).*
Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined as:

- Transfer student - “A transfer student is defined as any student new to UNT who graduated from high school more than one year prior to the date of anticipated enrollment and who has been enrolled at another college or university or has earned college credit prior to attendance at UNT” (University of North Texas [UNT], 2011).

- Native student –“A non-transfer [native] student is a student who has never attended college or community college” excluding college credit earned while still in high school (UNT, 2011).

- Teacher retention –Teacher retention refers to the length of time a teacher stays in the profession. This will not be measured in a specific number years, but will be measured at three different points over the career of the participants:
  
  1. Are you currently teaching?
  2. Have you taught five months or more since completing your degree?
  3. How likely are you to finish out your career as an educator?

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

The participants from this study are all graduates of the same university; therefore, the findings may not be generalized to other university populations. In addition, the participants chosen to be included in this study were teacher education graduates over a ten-year time span. Considering the time frame, 1995-2005, many graduates did not have accurate contact information on file with the university. Over 200
of the graduates could not be contacted due to inaccurate email and mailing addresses. Any bias due to those that could not be contacted is unknown.

Delimitation

Participants of this study were limited to graduates of the elementary education program, which is called Interdisciplinary Studies in the College of Education at the University of North Texas. The study included perceived supports and obstacles as reported by transfer and native students; however, since the participants are graduates, the study does not include data from students who did not complete their degree.

Within the conceptual framework, Astin’s I-E-O model, the study examines student input only as transfer or native student status. The student’s personal characteristics are not evaluated with this instrument.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews two major bodies of literature within the field of education and attempts to narrow them down and streamline the focus to the specific research. The first body of literature reviews the population of transfer students. Within transfer students the main categories are: an overview of the transfer student population, supports for transfer students, and obstacles for transfer students. The second body of literature reviews teacher retention. Teacher retention contains the following categories: teacher turnover, factors that contribute to turnover, and the effects of turnover. The chapter concludes with a small but emerging body of literature that combines transfer students and teacher education.

Transfer Students

*Overview of Transfer Student Population*

Growth in Enrollment

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) reported that nearly half (48%) of high school graduates in Texas were enrolled in a postsecondary institution the fall after graduating in the spring of 2003 (2012). Undergraduate enrollment at postsecondary institutions in the United States has increased over the last forty years from 7.4 million in 1970 to 13.2 million in 2000 and 17.6 million in 2009 (Aud et al., 2011). Postsecondary public institutions experienced a growth of 27% from 10.5 million in 2000 to 13.4 million in 2009. The National Center for Education Statistics projects undergraduate enrollment to reach 19.6 million by 2020 (Aud et al., 2011).
Enrollment at 4-year institutions increased from 7.2 million in 2000 to 10.0 million in 2009 and is projected to reach 11.1 million in 2020 (Aud et al., 2011). Specifically, public 4-year institutions experienced a 30% growth in enrollment from 4.8 million in 2000 to 6.3 million in 2009. Enrollment also increased at 2-year institutions from 5.9 million in 2000 to 7.5 million in 2009 with a projected enrollment of 8.5 million by 2020 (Aud et al., 2011). Public 2-year institutions experienced a 25% increase in enrollment from 5.7 million in 2000 to 7.1 million in 2009.

According to Aud et al., the immediate college enrollment rate is the percentage of students who enroll in a 2- or 4-year institution immediately after completing high school (2011). This rate has varied at 2- and 4-year institutions since 1975. The immediate college enrollment rate for 2- and 4-year institutions combined increased from 51% in 1975 to 67% in 1997. From 1997 to 2001, the immediate college enrollment rate declined to 62%, and then increased to 70% from 2001 to 2009 (Aud et al., 2011). Immediate college enrollment rate by institution type has not changed much over the years. In 1975, the immediate college enrollment rate at a 4-year college was 33% and increased to 42% in 2009. The immediate college enrollment rate at 2-year colleges increased from 18% in 1975 to 28% in 2009. Although the immediate college enrollment rate has varied, when combined, both 2- and 4-year institutions have seen an overall increase in enrollment (Aud et al., 2011).

Path of a Transfer Student

“*A total of 2,792,961 students began their postsecondary educations at U.S. colleges and universities in fall 2006. After enrolling in these institutions — students’
origin institutions — 33.1 percent of students enrolled in a different institution at least once during 2006–2011” (Hossler et al., 2012, p. 17). The National Student Clearinghouse issued a Signature Report on Transfer and Mobility in February 2012. This study follows over 2.8 million students who enrolled in any postsecondary institution during the fall of 2006 through the summer of 2011 to research trends for transfer and mobility. According to Hossler et al., many postsecondary students do not follow a path of college entry to degree completion at a single institution; instead “students attend multiple institutions, transferring once, twice, or even three times before earning a degree” (2012, p. 5). Hossler et al. found that one-third of all students transfer institutions before earning their degrees. Of students who transfer from one institution to another, “37% transfer in their second year, 22% transfer as late as their fourth or fifth year; 25% transfer more than once; 27% transfer across state lines, and 43% transfer into a public 2-year college” (Hossler et al., 2012, p. 5). The study found the second year was the most common year for transfer regardless of the direction of transfer (vertical, lateral, or reverse), and 2-year public institutions are the most frequent choice for transfer students. Hossler et al., also found 20% of students who started at a 2-year institution transferred to a 4-year institution as their first choice of transfer, and transferring later in a student’s college career could significantly increase time for the student to graduate with a bachelor’s degree (2012).

Degree Completion

The Texas Higher Education Coordination Board completed a study with the Texas Education Agency on degree completion and financial aid support of graduates
from the class of 2003 in Texas. The study found that “the completion of a degree or certificate within six years is strongly linked to the type of institution in which the student first enrolls” (THECB, 2012, p. 1). The study followed 210,621 of 238,109 students who graduated in 2003 from public high schools in Texas through student identification numbers for six years. Almost half (48%) of the graduating class of 2003 attended a postsecondary institution; however, six years after graduating, over three-fourths (76%) of the students had not earned a postsecondary degree or certificate (THECB, 2012). During the six years, less than one graduate in five earned a bachelor’s degree or higher (18%) and less than one graduate in 20 (6%) earned a 2-year degree or certificate. The study also looked at degree completion rates based on the institution of first enrollment by the student. Of members of the class of 2003 who first entered 4-year institutions after graduation, more than half (57%) earned a bachelor’s degree and an additional 6% earned a certificate or 2-year degree. The graduates of 2003 who first entered a 2-year institution after graduation had a different experience; a majority (70%) did not earn a certificate or degree within six years after graduation. However, of the students who first entered a 2-year institution, approximately equal numbers earned a bachelor’s degree (14%) or a certificate or 2-year degree (15%) (THECB, 2012). It is important to note that degrees completed at private institutions or degrees completed out of state were not included in the degree-completion statistics of the THECB report; however, other studies support their findings. In 2009, Long and Kurlaender found that students who began college at a 2-year institution were 43% less likely to complete the requirements necessary to earn a bachelor’s degree than students who began at a 4-year institution. Best and Gehring (1993) found that the most noticeable difference
between juniors who transferred to the university from a community college and juniors who were considered native to the university to be their graduation rates. In a study that used an equal sample (197) of transfer juniors and native juniors, 60.4% (119) of the native juniors graduated compared to 40.1% (79) of the transfer juniors (Best & Gehring, 1993).

Grade Point Average (GPA)

In 2005, Johnson found no difference in the academic performance of transfer students when compared to native students when looking at both the raw grade point average (GPA) and the GPA adjusted on specific variables. Glass and Harrington (2002) found that transfer students experienced a decline in GPA the first semester of their major area of study, while the native students did not experience this decline. However, by graduation there was no difference in GPAs for native and transfer students. Consistent with these findings, Best and Gehring (1993) found no significant difference in the mean GPAs of community college transfer students with more than 60 credits (2.45) compared to GPAs of native juniors of the university (2.55).

Supports for Transfer Students

Academic and Social Preparation

The amount of preparation done by a student who transfers from a 2- to 4-year university affects the level of satisfaction and involvement of the student at the 4-year university (Berger & Malaney, 2001). Specifically, “the degree to which community college transfer students have actively prepared for and been able to learn about the
transfer process is crucial to their ability to be satisfied with and academically successful in the university environment” (Berger & Malaney, 2001, p. 14). Best and Gehring (1993) suggest that students at a community college be encouraged to complete two years of course work before transferring to a 4-year institution. At this point the students should be prepared to handle the academic course work; however, they need to be better prepared to handle other aspects of the university (Best & Gehring, 1993).

Advising and Orientation

In 2007, Santos found that students who met with academic counselors while enrolled at a 2-year institution experienced higher levels of academic difficulties when enrolled at a 4-year institution. Learning to navigate the university and support services is the suggested cause for this finding; however, Santos recommends more research in this area. The study also found students who have insecure feelings about the university environment will have difficulty making academic adjustments to the environment of a university. Transfer students can address these feelings of anxiety and reduce fears by talking with faculty, academic counselors, student affairs professionals, or other students. In summary, the study suggests that “although there are two factors from the 2-year college that predict students’ academic achievement, a larger contribution is in the environment of the 4-year institution. Therefore, what students do after they arrive at the 4-year institution will positively or negatively affect their academic adjustment process” (Santos, 2007, p. 54).

According to Flaga (2006), communication and collaboration between community colleges and 4-year universities, particularly in advising, would make the transition from
community college to university easier for the students and would lead to increased satisfaction and retention. Students should meet with an academic advisor at the 4-year institution if they are even considering transferring. During this meeting the student and advisor can discuss potential majors and specific courses that will transfer toward the degree of interest. Transfer students get frustrated because they end up taking courses that do not transfer toward the desired degree (Flaga, 2006). The study also recommends personalized programming at orientation to better meet the needs of transfer students. Transfer students in the study stated orientation allowed them time to create new friendships and connect with old friends who would continue through the academic year. Students from the study suggested co-sponsored activities, such as information fairs, meetings with community college and 4-year university advisors, and a pre-transfer orientation course (Flaga, 2006).

Getting Involved

Santos (2007) found that involvement led to successful social adjustment for transfer students. Joining a cultural group, academic group, or student organization is one way to become involved on campus; participating in group projects or study groups also create a sense of belonging that will help connect the transfer student to the university (Santos, 2007). Students in Flaga’s study have the same opinion about campus involvement and its ability to connect you to the university (2006). This involvement includes creating relationships with other students. In a study of 372 transfer students, Berger and Malaney confirmed that patterns of involvement in a community college varied greatly from patterns of involvement at a university (2001).
The study found that transfer students were more likely to spend time socializing with peers and studying on campus while enrolled at the university than they were when they were enrolled at the community college.

Other

In 2006, Flaga interviewed 35 community college transfer students in a study on transitioning from community college to university. Increased learning connections and on-campus living are other areas mentioned by the transfer students in the study as having helped with the transition from community college to university. Students reported using informal learning resources (or friends) the most to learn about the academic, social, and physical environment of the university. In addition, students reported that living on campus eased the transition by providing more opportunities for them to integrate into the academic, social, and physical environments of the university (Flaga, 2006).

Obstacles for Transfer Students

Employment and Creating Balance

In 1970, 34% of full-time college students (ages 16-24) were employed. This amount increased to 52% by 2000, but declined to 41% in 2009 (Aud et al., 2011). The percentage of full-time college students who worked 20-34 hours per week increased from 10% in 1970 to 22% in 2000, and was mostly recently at 18% in 2009. Full-time college students who worked 35 or more hours per week increased from 4% in 1970 to 9% in 2000, and recently declined to 6% in 2009. “The employment rates of full-time
students were higher at public 2-year institutions than at 4-year institutions for nearly all years of data shown between 1990 and 2009" (Aud et al., 2011, p. 124). Between 1990 and 2007, the employment rates for part-time students did not differ by institution; however, "in 2008 and 2009, a higher percentage of part-time students at public 4-year institutions worked than did those at public 2-year institutions" (Aud et al., 2011, p. 124).

Berger and Malaney (2001) found that transfer students had to reduce other commitments and increase time to study while transitioning from community college to a university. This included reducing work hours from 18 hours per week when enrolled at the community college to 10 hours per week when enrolled at the university. It also included cutting family events and quality time from 12 hours a week while at the community college to eight hours a week when enrolled at the university. Berger and Malaney (2001) suggest that some transfer students need help creating a balance between academic and social life on the 4-year campus. According to Duggan and Pickering, “an overall theme of balance permeated the responses of at-risk transfer students who often struggled to find a balance in various aspects of their academic, social, work, and family obligations” (2008, p. 454). The study found many transfer students are trying find a balance between classes and working part-time or full-time; this balance is particularly difficult for freshman and sophomore transfer students. Upper level transfer students struggle with balance, too; however, they struggle with missing class for family commitments and with spending too much time talking with faculty outside of class. Although interaction with faculty is encouraged outside of the classroom, too much time may be taking away from homework or may reflect that additional help is needed by the student (Duggan & Pickering, 2008).
Self-Awareness

Duggan and Pickering (2008) found that an inaccurate view of their own abilities and traits caused a barrier for freshman transfer students on the road to academic success and persistence. Freshman transfer students also exhibit inconsistencies between their attitudes and behaviors as students. As transfer students, sophomores get distracted from academics through communication and socialization with friends. Sophomore transfer students are also unaware of their own abilities, exhibiting inconsistencies in academic abilities and personal awareness. At the upper level, transfer student confidence and self-esteem are commonly still lacking; this is exhibited through lack of direction, lack of motivation, and guilt for spending time and money on education (Duggan & Pickering, 2008).

Teacher Retention

In 2007, the National Center for Education Statistics projected that the United States would need to hire more than two million teachers over the next decade (Carroll & Foster, 2010). This statement and with other research reports (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1997; and U.S. Department of Education, 2001) have led the public to believe that America is facing a shortage of teachers (Ingersoll, 2002). In addition to the predicted need for additional teachers, student enrollment in kindergarten through 12th-grade (K-12) has consistently increased since 1984; thus many schools have experienced job openings for the first time in years and an increase in the overall teacher workforce (Ingersoll, 2001; 2003). For academic
years 1990-91 and 1993-94, personnel offices reported having difficulty filling a position with a qualified candidate in 47% of the job openings (Ingersoll, 2001). By academic year 1999-2000, a 58% difficulty was reported for filling positions with qualified candidates (Ingersoll, 2003). Increasing student enrollments, along with an increasing number of teachers approaching retirement, have caused educators to predict a teacher shortage continually since the early 1980s (Ingersoll, 2001). Difficulty staffing schools with qualified teachers would potentially affect educational performance of students (Ingersoll, 2001). Ingersoll (2001) discovered that although student enrollment and teacher retirement contributed to the teacher shortage problem, neither was the source of the problem. Later, Ingersoll identified the source of the teacher shortage problem a “revolving door” (2001). The “revolving door” occurs when large quantities of teachers leave the workforce for reasons other than retirement.

Teacher Turnover

In 1988-89 there were approximately 2.3 million teachers in the workforce (Keigher, 2010). Over the next twenty years, the teaching workforce grew by over one million teachers. In 2008-09, the teaching workforce consisted of over 3.3 million teachers (Keigher, 2010). This amount consists of stayers, movers, and leavers. The actions of movers and leavers contribute to turnover in the teaching field (Aud et al., 2011; Keigher, 2010; Kaiser, 2011).

Stayers are defined as teachers who stay at the same school from one academic year to the next (Aud et al., 2011; Keigher, 2010; Kaiser, 2011). They have also been referred to as remainers (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). In 1988-89, a little over two million
teachers were classified as stayers, compared to 2.8 million in 2008-09 (Keigher, 2010). Although the numbers increased, the percentage of teachers who stayed decreased. Stayers in 1988-89 accounted for 86.5% of the teaching population. By 2008-09, this number decreased by 2% with stayers accounting for only 84.5% of the teaching population (Keigher, 2010).

Teachers who move from one school to another school are defined as movers (Aud et al., 2011; Keigher, 2010; Kaiser, 2011). The number of movers increased significantly from 188,000 in 1988-89 to 255,000 in 2008-09 (Keigher, 2010). Although the numbers increased, the percentages over the twenty-year span barely waivered. In 1988-89 movers accounted for 7.9% of the teacher turnover, only a 0.3% difference from 7.6% in 2008-09 (Keigher, 2010). Some researchers have narrowed down this category by differentiating between within district moves, moves that cross districts, and moves that cross teaching fields. When discussing these other components, terms commonly heard include: teaching area transfer (switchers and remainers), school transfer, and teacher migration (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008). Since movers do not leave the profession, many researchers have not considered them a problem; however, from an organizational perspective the vacancy still has to be filled (Ingersoll, 2003).

Leavers encompass all teachers who leave the profession regardless of the reason (Aud et al., 2011; Keigher, 2010; Kaiser, 2011). This category may also be referred to as attrition (Boe et al., 2008). Over the last twenty years, leavers have increased in both numbers and percentage. In 1988-89 leavers accounted for 132,000 (5.6%) of teacher turnover. By 2008-09 the number of leavers rose to 269,000 (8%)
(Keigher, 2010). With an increase of 2.4%, leavers account for a high proportion of teacher turnover.

Nearly one third of all beginning teachers leave the profession within the first three years of teaching, increasing to approximately one half after five years (Ingersoll, 2002). The Institute of Education Sciences and the National Center for Education Statistics implemented a longitudinal study of beginning teachers to investigate this further. Initially they found that of the teachers who began teaching in 2007 or 2008, 9.9% were no longer teaching in 2008-09 (Kaiser, 2011). By 2009-10, this number had grown to 12% (Kaiser, 2011). The No Child Left Behind Act brought attention to recruiting highly qualified teachers, but the focus needs to transition to maintaining quality teachers (Greenlee & Brown, 2009).

**Factors that Contribute to Turnover**

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) administer the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) to gather data to study the elementary and secondary school system. The Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS) is administered to a portion of the SASS sample to gather data on teachers who move, leave, and stay in their current teaching positions. More importantly, the TFS studies why teachers decide to move from one teaching position to another, stay in their current position, or leave the teaching field all together. These data are reported categorically by movers and leavers and by public and private school teachers. The reasons teachers move or leave schools vary according to whether the teacher taught at a private or public school, but the same themes continually appear. The following
themes emerged from the TFS data: personal reasons, indirect personal reasons, reasons related to leadership, and reasons indirectly related to leadership.

Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS) Sample

The 2003-04 Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS) sample consisted of 7,429 public and private school teachers (Cox, Parmer, Tourkin, Warner, & Lyter, 2007). This sample was taken from the 51,223 teachers who had participated in the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) during the 2003-04 academic year. The TFS sample was stratified to account for stayers, movers, leavers for both public and private schools. Other characteristics, such as years of experience, minority status, and teaching level, were also considered in the sample (Cox et al., 2007).

In 2008-09, the TFS sample consisted of 5,596 public and private school teachers (Graham, Parmer, Chambers, Tourkin, & Lyter, 2011). This sample was drawn from the 44,198 teachers who participated in the SASS during 2007-08 academic year. This was a stratified sample to ensure an equal representation of leavers, movers, and stayers from private and public schools. In addition, teachers from varying backgrounds, minority and non-minority, different levels of experiences, and elementary, middle, and high school teachers are equally represented in the sample (Graham et al., 2011).

Personal Reasons

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2005, 2009), the Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS) shows that teachers move or leave teaching
positions for a variety of personal reasons. Accepting a job at a school closer to home, a job with better benefits, or a job with a higher salary are common reasons teachers move to a new school. In 2007-08, 32.7% of teachers changed schools to be closer to home. Teachers do not always change schools when moving to a new home; however, public and private school teachers both reported leaving their teaching positions because of a move. In addition to moving, retirement and health are reasons commonly reported by teachers who leave their positions. Teachers also leave their positions to have children or raise their children. TFS results show that 22.4% teachers left their jobs in 2007-08 to retire while 13.7% left to raise a family (NCES, 2009).

Indirect personal reasons.

Teachers reported on the Teacher Follow-Up Survey other reasons for leaving their jobs that are more career-centered and less family-centered (NCES, 2005, 2009). These reasons were only reported by teachers who left their positions; they were not reported by teachers who moved to another school. In 2007-09, 24.9% of teachers who left their teaching positions decided to pursue other positions (NCES, 2009). Some of these teachers were dissatisfied with teaching as a career, others decided to take additional coursework in education, and some chose to take courses in another field of study.

Reasons Related to Leadership

According to the Teacher Follow-Up Survey, leadership directly affects teacher turnover (NCES, 2005, 2009). Public and private school teachers are more likely to move to a new school than leave teaching if they are dissatisfied with the lack of
support from the administration. However, some teachers will leave teaching altogether if they do not feel supported by the administration. In 2007-08, 17.4% of teachers changed schools, while 12.3% left their jobs because they were dissatisfied with the lack of support from the administration (NCES, 2009). In addition, 17.3% of teachers changed schools and 12.8% left their positions because they were generally dissatisfied with the administration (NCES, 2009). Other times, teachers have to change schools or leave their positions unwillingly. Both public and private school teachers reported changing schools or leaving positions due to being laid off or involuntarily transferred.

Reasons Indirectly Related to Leadership

Leadership at the school and in the school district can also indirectly affect teacher turnover according to the Teacher Follow-Up Survey (NCES, 2005, 2009). Although the reasons reported in this section do not specifically refer to the administration, they are a result of the leadership in the school and school district. The reasons discussed in this section were reported by teachers who moved to a new school. Teachers who left the teaching profession did not report any of these reasons for leaving. In 2007-08, 11.5% of teachers reported changing schools because of reasons related to student discipline, and 9.8% changed schools because they were dissatisfied with the lack of influence over school policies and practices (NCES, 2009). Teachers at public and private schools changed schools to attain a better teacher assignment or a position with more job security. Dissatisfaction in a variety of areas causes teachers in public and private schools to change positions. Teachers reported being dissatisfied with the following: (a) lack of influence over school policies and
practices, (b) changes in their job description, (c) lack of professional development opportunities, (d) not having enough autonomy over the classroom, (e) issues with student discipline, and (f) overall workplace.

The Effects of Turnover

Many researchers have explored teacher turnover and the various aspects that contribute to teachers leaving a school or leaving the profession. Less research has been completed on the effects of teacher turnover on the school, academic achievement, and community. Ingersoll (2003) analyzed teacher turnover from an organizational perspective. This analysis implied that some turnover is beneficial to an organization. According to Ingersoll (2003), little or no turnover within an organization can lead to an inefficient and stagnant organization; however, too much turnover can be a sign of deeper problems within the organization. The effect that turnover has on an organization varies in significance according to the responsibilities of the employees and the type of organization. The study found schools to be vulnerable to turnover due to the flexibility in positions and the highly interactive nature of the job. Ingersoll’s study also compared schools to corporations: children are the raw materials in the schools; teaching and learning is the technology; and the product is the child’s academic and social growth. The study also relates schools to a family unit, stating that effective schools have a sense of community, belongingness, communication, and cohesion. An amount of turnover is necessary in any organization; however, too much turnover can cause an organization to become disjointed affecting the success within that organization (Ingersoll, 2003). Barnes, Crowe and Schaefer’s (2007) study supports the
idea that schools with high rates of teacher turnover typically have students who are considered low performing. The achievement gap in schools with high turnover is almost impossible to close because the continual change in employment creates an environment that lacks cohesion resulting in a continuous gap in teacher quality. According to Barnes et al. these schools are investing financially in teachers who often leave before the students are able to benefit from them academically. This creates a vicious cycle where schools are financially investing in hiring and training teachers instead of improving the quality and achievement of their students (Barnes et al., 2007).

Financial Effects of Teacher Turnover

Barnes, Crowe and Schaefer (2007) completed a pilot study of five school districts using actual cost in their roles with National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF). Their study looks at five other studies on the cost of teacher turnover and evaluates the pros and cons of each. According to Barnes et al., when a teacher leaves a job, the school district loses between $4,000 and $17,000 per teacher. The cost is estimated to total between $76 and $128 million per year on teacher turnover. Included in this cost is recruiting, hiring, and training replacement teachers; however, loss of productivity is not included. In 2007, at the time of the study, leaders of many school districts were unaware of the resources that were being drained through teacher turnover. In addition, many school districts were not tracking information necessary to produce an accurate numeric value for the actual cost of teacher turnover (Barnes et al., 2007).
In completing the 2007 pilot study, NCTAF identified and defined eight cost categories that should be tracked to accurately examine the cost of teacher turnover. The categories are:

1. Recruitment and advertising
2. Special incentives
3. Administrative processing
4. Training for new hires
5. Training for first-time teachers
6. Training for all teachers
7. Learning curve
8. Transfer (Barnes et al., 2007)

Barnes et al. also discovered that comparing the cost of teacher turnover across school districts is a complicated task. In addition, the data are easily misinterpreted due to the variation in numbers from one school district to another school district. When comparing data across districts, the following areas need to be considered for consistency:

1. Retirement
2. Fixed costs
3. Teacher salary differential,
4. Teacher productivity
5. Productive turnover (Barnes et al., 2007)

Barnes et al. found that higher rates of teacher turnover are related to higher financial cost and lower student achievement; school districts need to realize this
alarming data. However, school districts will need to collect and analyze necessary information to track this cost before they understand the financial effects of turnover. Minimally, school districts should collect data on: subject area taught; licensure area; school assignment; teacher experience; cost of recruiting, hiring, and placing a teacher; cost of orientation, induction, mentoring, and professional development; and the cost of turnover at several focus schools (Barnes et al., 2007). NCTAF has recommended accurate tracking at the district and state level for teacher turnover and attrition since 2003 (Hunt & Carroll, 2003).

Academic Effects of Teacher Turnover

Teacher turnover not only costs the schools financially, but it also affects the academic achievement of the students. Barnes et al. (2007) refer to this as a vicious cycle; teacher turnover leads to lower student achievement, and low student achievement leads to teacher turnover. Teachers are more likely to leave schools that have low performing academics, schools with high populations of poverty, or schools that have high minority populations (Barnes et al., 2007). Most of these factors are related and schools that exhibit one of these traits will typically exhibit more than one. Hunt and Carroll (2003) identify other consequences of teacher turnover, such as the fact that students who need stability do not always receive this stability at school. In addition, most high-need schools hire beginning teachers who lack experience, which contributes to the vicious cycle of turnover. Schools that are stuck in this cycle typically cannot break it, and the student's academic growth continues to be negatively affected one year after another (Hunt & Carroll, 2003).
According to Carroll and Foster, schools that experience continual turnover among their staff are constantly trying to close the achievement gap amongst their students; however, this gap is never closed because the gap in teacher quality is never closed (2010). The gap in teacher quality is established through continual turnover; beginning teachers who are not yet experienced and veteran teachers who are retiring create a gap in teacher quality. Beginning teachers bring new ideas and concepts to the classroom, but research has shown that a teacher improves in proficiency and effectiveness over the first seven years (Carroll & Foster, 2010). In addition, teaching the same grade level over time creates a familiarity with the content that enables the teacher to excel in the job. Figure 3 shows the relation of teaching experience at the same grade level to gains in student achievement.

![Figure 3](image)

*Figure 3. Student achievement gains per additional year of teaching experience at grade level. From Carroll and Foster (2010, p. 12).*

Transfer Students in Teacher Education

King and Minchew (2010) studied teacher education graduates and found that community college transfer students were less likely to be teaching after graduation than native university students. The study found a significant difference in teaching
status between community college transfer students and native university students. According to King and Minchew, community college transfer students (54%) were more likely to return to their communities to teach than university native students (38%); however, this difference was not statistically significant (2010). In 1988, Pigge and Marso found that more transfer students saw “teaching as a stepping stone to other careers, which might suggest a potentially higher attrition rate from the field of teaching either prior to or following graduation” (p. 26). Their study also looked at the impact of transfer students on the quality of teacher preparation. They found that transfer students are not a “threat to the quality of candidates preparing to become teachers either in terms of academic or affective attributes” (Pigge & Marso, 1988, p. 24). Henderson, McMillan, and Gufford (1974) found that transfer students as a group are significantly more likely to withdraw from their programs than native students. However, there was no significant difference in the student teaching performance of those who persisted. The study found that native and transfer students are equally prepared to enter the classroom (Henderson, McMillan, & Gufford, 1974).

In 2011, Isbell and Harris researched the differences between transfer and native students in portfolio assessments near the beginning of their teacher education programs. Although they found a slight difference in the overall means there were no significant differences. The sub-category for reflection had the greatest difference in means. Townsend, Carr, and Scholes (2003) also researched the academic performance of native and transfer students through portfolio assessments. They found “that transfer students, whether 2-year or 4-year college transfers, do as well or better than native students” (Townsend et al., 2003, p. 7).
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

Research Background

During the semester of spring 2009, the College of Education was contacted regarding research on the teacher education population at the University of North Texas. Specifically, the interest was in experiences of teacher education graduates and the role the Pell grant played in their educational careers. Other areas of interest included how student experiences differed according to transfer or native student status and whether this status affected the students’ careers once they graduated. Mary Harris, a faculty member in the College of Education, took the lead on data collection. The instrument and questions were refined over the semester. The Institutional Review Board application was submitted in April 2009 and approved in May 2009 (Appendix A). Data were collected over the summer of 2009.

Research Setting

Originally founded in 1890, Texas Normal College and Teacher Training Institute was located above a hardware store on the town square in Denton, Texas (University of North Texas, College of Education, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education Committee [UNT COE NCATE], 1998). In 1891, the school moved into a new building and a campus was established. After only four years of existence, the college changed its name to North Texas Normal College in 1894. In 1901, the college began receiving state support and became a public institution. With that came another name change, and North Texas State Normal College was established. A change in
administration in 1922 changed the status of college. In 1923, North Texas State Teachers College had the ability to grant baccalaureate degrees. During World War II, the college provided various training programs for the military, and many students attended college after the war with help from the G.I. Bill. With these changes in responsibility and student body, the institution experienced another name change. Dropping the word “teachers” from its name, North Texas State College was established in 1949, and its first doctoral programs were approved in 1950. By 1961, the institution had reached university status and changed its name to North Texas State University (UNT COE NCATE, 1998). Beginning with another name change in 1988, the University of North Texas (UNT) continued to undergo many changes.

Consistent with the year of attendance at UNT of the research sample, the next section focuses on 1995-2005, when University of North Texas was classified as a 4-year public Class I Doctorate-Granting institution (Jones et al., 1995). In 2001-02, the university’s classification changed to 4-year Doctoral/Research University – Extensive (Anzaldua, Clark, Lowrie, Villareal, & Wheeless, 2002). UNT is currently ranked as a 4-year Doctoral/Research University – High Research activity. To have this Carnegie Classification, an institution must have awarded 50 or more doctoral degrees per year across at least 15 disciplines.

UNT is located in Denton, Texas, a city with a population of approximately 113,400. The city of Denton and UNT are also located in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. This area has a population over 6.5 million (Clark, Barton, & Fuentes, 2012). In 1995, the city of Denton had a population of approximately 69,600, and the Dallas/Fort Worth area had a population of over 3.9 million. By 2005, Denton’s population had grown to
approximately 96,100, and the Dallas/Fort Worth area had over 5.6 million people (Clark, Fuentes, Donzello, & Todd, 2005). The university is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Since 1999, the University of North Texas is the 4th largest university in Texas and among the 50 largest universities in the United States (Clark et al., 2012).

**Enrollment at the University of North Texas (UNT)**

The University of North Texas (UNT) currently has an enrollment of over 35,000 students. Over 28,000 of these students are undergraduate students. Approximately 4,000 students are considered first-time freshman, and 3,650 are new undergraduate transfer students (Clark et al., 2012). In 1995, UNT’s enrollment was just over 25,000 students with 18,600 being undergraduate students. At that time 2,230 students were classified as first-time freshman, and 2,580 were new undergraduate transfer students (Jones et al., 1995). Enrollment fluctuated year to year but as a whole grew over the ten year time span. By 2005, the enrollment at UNT was 31,160 students with 24,270 undergraduate students. Of these, 3,540 were first-time freshman and 3,000 were new undergraduate transfers (Clark et al., 2005). During this time a transition was occurring at the University of North Texas. Although the numbers were close, transfer students outnumbered first-time freshman until 1998-99; since then first-time freshman have outnumbered new undergraduate transfer students by narrow margins.

Enrollment in the College of Education has not changed much over the years. Currently, the College of Education has an enrollment of approximately 4,500 students. In 1995, enrollment in the College of Education’s enrollment was at 4,100 and reached
4,700 by 2005. Over the years 1995-2005, enrollment in the College of Education was at its lowest in 1998-99 with an enrollment of 3,900 and at its highest in 2003-04 with an enrollment of 4,900 (Jones, Vestal, & Wheeless, 1999; Clark, Fuentes, & Wheeless, 2004). The enrollment of students who majored in elementary education (Interdisciplinary Studies) did not follow the same trend as the college's enrollment. With a current enrollment of 1,610 students majoring in elementary education (Interdisciplinary Studies), this number was at approximately 900 in 1995 and grew to over 1,700 in 2005 (Clark et al., 2005; 2012; Jones et al., 1995).

Where Do UNT Students Come From?

A majority of the student population at the University of North Texas (UNT) comes from four surrounding counties: Dallas County, Denton County, Tarrant County, and Collin County. When enrollment is classified by county, these four counties have consistently ranked the top four since 1995. Dallas County was at the top until 2003-04 when Denton County took the lead for having the most students enrolled at UNT. Since then Dallas County provides the second most students from one county to be enrolled at UNT. Tarrant County has consistently ranked third and Collin County fourth in providing the most students from one county to enroll at the University of North Texas (Clark et al., 2004; 2012; Jones et al., 1995).

Enrollment has also been calculated by Texas Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA). These percentages were consistent for the time frame of 1995-2005, and appear to still be consistent when compared to current data. The Dallas MSA currently accounts for 48.60% of the student population. In 1995, the Dallas MSA accounted for
49.97% of the student population and decreased to 48.10% in 2005. The Dallas MSA represents the following counties: Collin County, Dallas County, Denton County, Ellis County, Kaufman County, and Rockwall County. The Fort Worth MSA currently provides 18.60% of the student population. In 1995, the Fort Worth MSA accounted for 16.91% of the student population and grew to 17.00% by 2005. The Fort Worth MSA represents Johnson County, Parker County, and Tarrant County. The Houston MSA currently represents 4.60% of the student population. This number decreased from 5.00% in 2005, but increased from 3.13% in 1995. The Houston MSA represents: Fort Bend County, Harris County, Liberty County, Montgomery County, and Waller County. Other Metropolitan Statistical Areas include Austin, San Antonio, and El Paso County, but these MSAs represent below 3% of the student population. Texas Counties not in an MSA represent between 14% and 16% of the student population (Clark et al., 2005; 2012; Jones et al., 1995).

Where Do UNT Students Transfer From?

Students transfer to the University of North Texas (UNT) from community colleges, public universities, and private universities. In 1995-96, UNT had 2,584 transfer students. Of those students, 1,700 transferred from community colleges in Texas, 453 transferred from public universities in Texas, 92 transferred from private universities in Texas, and 339 transferred from out of state (Jones et al., 1995). Although the numbers have increased, the pattern has been consistent over the years. In 2003-04, UNT had 2,991 transfer students. Of those students, 2,031 transferred from community colleges in Texas, 411 transferred from public universities in Texas,
135 transferred from private universities in Texas, and 414 transferred from out of state (Clark et al., 2004).

The institutions that new undergraduates transfer to the University of North Texas from have been fairly consistent over the years 1995-2005. Dallas County Community Colleges provided the most transfer students every year with the most students in one year being over 600 in 1995-96 and the least being slightly less than 500 in 2004-05 (Clark et al., 2005; Jones et al., 1995). Tarrant County College continually provided the second most transfer students in one year to the University of North Texas. The most students to transfer in one year from Tarrant County College was in 1999-2000 with approximately 440 and the least was in 1997-98 with 291 students transferring to UNT (Anzaldua et al., 2000; Jones et al., 1998). Over the ten year time span, the third college to provide transfer students to UNT was Collin County Community College. In 1996-97, Collin County Community College had their smallest class transfer to UNT with 196 students and in 2003-04 their biggest class transferred with over 300 students (Clark et al., 2004; Jones, Naugher, Winger, & Wheeless, 1997). In 1995-96, the University of Texas at Arlington was fourth in providing 87 transfer students to UNT (Jones et al., 1995). However, consistently since 1996-97, North Central Texas College has ranked fourth in students to transfer to the University of North Texas. Transfer classes from North Central Texas College ranged from approximately 100 in 1997-98 to approximately 200 in 2003-04 (Clark et al., 2004; Jones et al., 1998). Although the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) did not maintain a specific ranking in the number of students who transferred to the University of North Texas, UTA was in the top ten of institutions from which students transfer from
every year from 1995-2005. Texas Tech University also appeared in the top ten of institutions from which students transfer from every year with over 50 students transferring to UNT in the years 1995-2000 and 2004-2005, and less than 50 students transferring in the years 2000-2004. While other colleges did not appear every year, Tyler Junior College, Austin Community College, and Grayson County College appeared in the top ten of institutions from which students transfer eight of the ten years from 1995-2005. Navarro College appeared in the top ten institutions from which students transfer five years, and Weatherford College and Blinn College appeared three of the ten years. Other colleges that ranked in the top ten of having students transfer to the University of North Texas at least once during the years 1995-2005 were: Kilgore College, Midwestern State University, McLennan Community College, North Harris Montgomery County College, Stephen F. Austin University, and the University of Texas at Austin (Anzaldua et al., 2000, 2002; Clark et al., 2004, 2005, 2012; Jones et al, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999).

*University of North Texas, College of Education*

The College of Education experienced significant growth and development from a program perspective over the years from 1995-2005. In 1997, the College of Education at the University of North Texas (UNT) was accredited by The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (Wise, 1997). NCATE is an independent accrediting body for schools, colleges, and departments of education to help establish high quality teacher preparation (NCATE, n.d.). UNT was previously
accredited by NCATE until 1991, but struggled to meet the demands of changes in state legislature and the national standards (Keller, Wilhelm, & Harris, 2002).

In response to the 1996 NCATE review, the College of Education developed a task force whose goal was to create a vision that could be easily communicated in 1999-2000. The conceptual framework was created because it could be easily communicated and it represented the many programs and audiences in the College of Education. The written conceptual framework was shared with faculty in the fall of 2000. A contest was used to narrow down a graphic representation of the conceptual framework and then a graphics artist completed the final design that was released in 2001 (Keller et al., 2002). Figure 4 is the graphic representation of the conceptual framework. As an extension to the university’s mission and vision the conceptual framework can be summarized as “educators as guides for engaged learners” (Keller et al., 2002, p. 3).

Figure 4. Graphic representation of the UNT conceptual framework for teacher preparation. From University of North Texas, College of Education (n.d.).
Guiding engaged learners includes the following six areas: (1) content and curricular knowledge, (2) pedagogical knowledge of teaching and assessment, (3) promotion of equity for all learners, (4) encouragement of diversity, (5) professional communication, and (6) engaged professional learning. In 2002, the NCATE Board of Examiner’s report this item was considered corrected. *The Knowledge Base for the Conceptual Framework of UNT Education Programs* written by Harris, Wilhelm, and Lane, provides an in-depth look at the conceptual framework and each of its component areas (2002).

**Elementary Education/Interdisciplinary Studies at UNT**

The University of North Texas (UNT) has used a professional development school (PDS) model since 1992. This model provides students an opportunity to start applying their knowledge and skills in real world situations one full semester before student teaching. Students go to class in PDS clusters for two semesters. During these two semesters students are enrolled in a block of courses for Internship I and Internship II (student teaching), while gaining experience in a classroom. The first semester consists of two days in classrooms per week, and two half-semester placements. This gives the student the opportunity to experience two grade levels with two mentor teachers. The second semester consists of two half-semester full-time placements that meet and exceed the state requirements for student teaching (Keller et al., 2002).

According to the 1996 preconditions to NCATE accreditation report, the elementary education program, Grades 1-8, went through an initial critique in 1995 by Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) (Williams, 1996). In this review over 15 of ACEI’s guidelines or competencies were considered not met, with a majority
of the reasons given being inadequate responses and weak or insufficient documentation. The program’s only perceived strength noted was the professional development school (PDS) model. The program had several perceived weaknesses noted such as: (1) syllabi need updating, (2) syllabi of record should be separate from teaching syllabi, and (3) several developmentally appropriate practices were not present in the program. At this time the basic elementary education program, Grades 1-8, was considered not in compliance with NCATE specialty guidelines as assessed by ACEI (Williams, 1996).

In 1996 a second critique of the elementary education program, Grades 1-8, was completed by ACEI as part of the 1996 preconditions to NCATE accreditation report (Williams, 1996). “No responses provided for the guidelines/competencies not met in first critique” was written in the section provided for comments. No perceived strengths were listed for the program. As for perceived weaknesses, it was commented that a description was provided for how the first three weaknesses given in the first critique were being addressed, but no documentation was provided. Specific comments stated that documentation needed to be provided to show how weaknesses were being addressed. Again, the elementary education program, Grades 1-8, was considered not in compliance with NCATE specialty guidelines as assessed by ACEI (Williams, 1996).

In 2000, the Texas State Board for Educator Certification changed the teaching certification levels from kindergarten through sixth grade (K-6) and first grade through eighth grade (1-8) to early childhood through fourth grade (EC-4) and fourth grade through eighth grade (4-8). At UNT, interdisciplinary studies is the major for those wanting a teaching certification in EC-4 or 4-8. Also in 2000-2001, UNT began to focus
on national recognition for each of its program as required by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Originally the EC-4 and 4-8 program reviews were submitted to the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) only to find out from NCATE that ACEI had declined to review the programs. It was recommended that the 4-8 program be reviewed by Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE, formerly National Middle School Association, NMSA), but the UNT program was a generalist program and did not follow the AMLE structure. Because of this, the 4-8 program was excused by NCATE from a national review for the round. The EC-4 program was submitted to National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for review in April 2002, and the program was nationally recognized (Keller et al., 2002).

In 2002, the NCATE Examiner’s report stated “Though some programs are currently in review, with decisions pending, by the national specialty organizations, the Texas State Board for Educator Certification has approved all College of Education programs” (Prinzing et al., p. 4). The 2002 NCATE Examiner’s report contained a few areas for improvement and noted other areas that were corrected since the previous visit. The first area of improvement was that the assessment plan for students was not connected to the conceptual framework. Similarly, another area of improvement was that performance in the field experience was not linked to the conceptual framework. “In the 1997 NCATE Accreditation Action Report, the unit was cited for the following weakness: The unit does not have an explicit plan with adequate resources to ensure the recruitment and retention of a culturally diverse faculty” (Prinzing et al., 2002, p. 33).

In 1998, the College of Education established a diversity committee. The committee
created a diversity plan with five specific goals and continually worked at achieving those goals. In 2002, NCATE marked this item as corrected due to the hard work and documentation of efforts by the College of Education and the diversity committee. The unit was also cited for having insufficient faculty to supervise its field experiences in 1997; however, this was also considered corrected in 2002 considering the use regular faculty, adjunct faculty, and clinical faculty working together as a team (Prinzing et al., 2002).

Assessment of Students

From 1997-2001, 1,345 UNT students took the elementary Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas (ExCET). Of these, 1,175 passed, a passing rate 87.4%, with a mean score 80.50. The EC-4 examination was the most commonly taken of the state licensure content examinations. In 2001, the College of Education administered a survey to graduates from 1996, 1998, and 2000. Of the 53 interdisciplinary studies respondents:

- 67.9% rated the quality of education they received in their program as good or very good
- 39.6% rated the intellectual stimulation of the program as excellent or very good
- 81.1% said that their knowledge was superior to or comparable to that acquired by their peers who received similar degrees at other institutions
- 73.6% would recommend the program to others (Keller et al., 2002, p.16).

In spring 2002, Internship II students completed a self-assessment at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. One statement on the self-assessment was, “I understand the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of this discipline, and I can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter
meaningful to students” (Keller et al., 2002, p. 26). Students had to rank their ability in the following subjects: mathematics, reading/language arts, social studies, science, the arts, and health and physical education. Student gain in self-perception of knowledge and skills from the beginning to the end of the semester was significant at the .01 level, except in reading/language arts where it was significant at the .05 level (Keller et al., 2002).

The Center of Interdisciplinary Research completed a survey of employers of UNT teacher and other educator graduates in 2002. Of the 42 responding human resource directors:

- They all hired UNT graduates in the past 3 to 5 years
- 100% rated quality of UNT graduates as good to excellent
- 100% rated UNT graduates as excellent or very good compared to recent graduates of other institutions
- Knowledge of content was cited as strength by 5 of the 19 respondents
- No one indicated knowledge of content as a weakness (Keller et al., 2002)

When asked to describe UNT educators, the following words were used by the respondents: prepared or well prepared, professional, and energetic. Technology integration was mentioned as a weakness by two respondents, but as a strength by one respondent. Other strengths focused on pedagogical knowledge and skills. “School principals consistently lauded the professional ability of candidates and graduates and the sound foundation received during the program that allowed new teachers to function at the 2nd or 3rd year level of teaching” (Prinzing et al., 2002, p. 21).
Sample Selection and Data Collection

Participants in the study were University of North Texas (UNT) teacher education graduates from 1995-2005 who majored in elementary education (interdisciplinary studies). The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness provided the requested information for the graduates over the specified time span: student number, graduation year, student status, ethnicity, address, phone number, email, and degree attained. Information was obtained on 1,744 graduates; 499 of them were classified as native students and 1,243 were classified as transfer students. A total of 120 responses, 60 transfer and 60 natives, was the goal for data collection and analysis. Stratified sampling was used to ensure an equal number of respondents in each category. Within each sub-category random sampling was used to reflect the population. To accomplish this: (1) the sample was divided into transfer and native students, (2) sorted by year, (3) and then divided evenly. Of the 1,243 transfer students, every fifth person was contacted totaling 249 graduates. Of the 499 native students, every other person was contacted totaling 250 graduates. These numbers reflect participants contacted during the first round of surveys.

Participants were contacted first by e-mail. The initial contact included information about the study and an opportunity to respond online through surveymonkey.com. Submission of an online survey included notice of informed consent. The subjects were also provided a phone number and e-mail addresses to contact for more information regarding the research project. Subjects could withdraw from participation through a link on the first email notice. For those who did not withdraw consent, communication was attempted multiple times. Two weeks later participants
were sent an email reminder. On the third week participants were sent a final email reminder. One month after making the first attempted contact with participants postcards were mailed directing participants to the web link of the survey. Attempts were made to contact participants through electronic and postal mail.

Approximately six weeks into data collection, a decision was made to contact a second round of participants due to a low number of responses. Additional participants were selected following the same procedure as the first contacts. The participants received an initial email communication with two follow up reminder emails; however, they did not receive a postcard or letter. Approximately two months into data collection, the last attempt was a hard copy of the survey that included a notice of informed consent and an envelope with prepaid postage for easy return (Appendix B).

After three months of data collection the response goal was met with a total of 70 responses from graduates who were classified as transfer students and 73 responses from graduates who were classified as native students for a 16% response rate of those contacted. Data were collected as respondents completed the survey online through surveymonkey.com. Other respondents completed the survey by hand and mailed in the completed survey. These surveys were entered into surveymonkey.com. All responses were exported from surveymonkey.com to an Excel spreadsheet for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The study requires both qualitative and quantitative analysis to answer the research questions. Questions 1 and 2 are addressed by classifying and coding the
data into themes. Question 3 will be analyzed using a chi-square test of independence and a $t$-test.

The research questions for this study are:

1. What differences and commonalities in perception of the university experience are reported by transfer and native students?

   The data are self-reported, open ended responses. Responses were sorted from most helpful to helpful, and then coded for common themes. The data come from Section 8, Questions 1 and 6, on the survey instrument. The survey questions are: “In the context of your career, what courses/services at UNT have proved most helpful?” And “If you have observations about how your experiences as an undergraduate helped or hindered your career, please share them here.”

2. What particular supports and obstacles did transfer students encounter throughout the transition from the community college to the university as perceived retrospectively by students?

   The data are self-reported, open ended responses. Responses were sorted by supports and obstacles and then coded for common themes. The data come from Section 8, Questions 3 and 4, on the survey instrument. The survey questions are: “What obstacles, if any, did you encounter in the transition from community college to university?” And “What supports, if any, did you encounter in the transition from community college to university?”

3. (a) Is there a significant difference in the retention rate of transfer students and native students who enter the teaching profession?
   (b) Is there a significant difference between the intention to retain in teaching of transfer students and native students who enter the teaching profession?

   The chi-square test of independence is used to see if a relationship exists between two variables that both contain categorical data; therefore, a chi-square test of independence will be used for the first part of question one (Yockey, 2007). To answer
Question 3a, a chi-square test of independence was run to see if a relationship exists between the student (transfer and native) and their current teaching status (yes or no). The data come from Section 1, Question 2, on the survey instrument. The survey question asks: “Are you currently teaching?” Also, in consideration of Question 3a, a chi-square test of independence was run to see if a relationship exists between the student (transfer and native) and if the respondent taught 5 months or more since graduation (yes or no). The data come from Section 3, Question 1, on the survey instrument. The survey question asks: “Have you taught five months or more since completing your degree?” Question 3b was analyzed through analysis of a t-test to see if a relationship exists between the student (transfer and native) and the intent to remain in teaching (most likely, likely, least likely). A t-test is used when you have one variable that contains categorical data and the other variable contains continual or scale data (Pallant, 2007). The data come from Section 8, Question 5, on the survey instrument. The survey question asks: “How likely are you to finish out your career as an educator?”
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Descriptive Statistics

Of the 143 completed surveys, 73 were submitted by participants classified as native students and 70 were completed by transfer students. Out of the 73 native students, 55 students stated that they were teaching at the time of completing the survey. Of the 70 transfer students, 55 stated that they were teaching at the time of completing the survey. The current teaching subject(s), grade level(s), and district of the 110 participants who are currently teaching are reported as follows.

*Teaching Grade(s) of Participants*

Participants were asked to select the grade(s) they were currently teaching and to select all that applied. Some participants teach students in multiple grades. Participants reported teaching students as early as pre-Kindergarten (pre-k) and as late as the 12th-grade. Of the 110 respondents who indicated that they are currently teaching, seven (2 native, 5 transfer) taught pre-K age children. Fourteen (6 native, 8 transfer) graduates indicated that they taught children in kindergarten, and 17 (9 native, 8 transfer) taught first grade. Fifteen (7 native, 8 transfer) graduates taught second grade, and 16 (6 native, 10 transfer) taught third grade. A majority of the graduates who were currently teaching indicated that they taught students in the fourth grade, representing 21 (11 native, 10 transfer) participants. Sixteen participants indicated that they taught students in fifth grade (5 native, 11 transfer). Ten (6 native, 4 transfer) graduates indicated that they taught students in the sixth grade. Seven graduates (6
native, 1 transfer) indicated that they taught students in the seventh grade, and six (4 native, 2 transfer) taught students in the eighth grade. Four graduates (3 native, 1 transfer) taught students in the ninth grade, three graduates (2 native, 1 transfer) taught students in the 10th-grade, and two (native) graduates taught students in the 11th and 12th-grades. Participants also made the following notes in the section titled “other”: bilingual, special education, special education with autism, preschool program for children with disabilities (PPCD), dyslexia therapist, technology facilitator, technology integration facilitator, and school counselor.

![Figure 5](image)

**Figure 5.** Graphic representation of teaching grades of participants by transfer and native student status.

**Teaching Subject(s) of Participants**

Participants were asked to select the subject(s) they were currently teaching. As noted for grade level, one teacher may teach more than one subject. Directions on the
survey instructed the respondent to select all that applied. Of the 110 respondents who indicated that they were currently teaching, 53 (24 native, 29 transfer) indicated they were generalists or taught all subjects. After generalists, teachers of the subjects that are considered core subjects were almost equally represented. An equal number of native and transfer students taught math (13 native, 13 transfer). Language arts was next with 20 (12 native, 8 transfer) graduates teaching the subject, and then reading, with 17 teachers (11 native, 6 transfer). The number of participants who taught science and social studies were very close with 16 (7 native, 9 transfer) graduates teaching science and 15 (7 native, 6 transfer) teaching social studies. Four (3 native, 1 transfer) respondents indicated that they taught special education; in addition, four (1 native, 3 transfer) of the generalists also indicated that they were teaching special education. Technology (listed as computer on the survey) was taught by four (3 native, 1 transfer) graduates, and, four (2 native, 2 transfer) generalists indicated that they were teaching technology, too. Only one (transfer) graduate indicated teaching art, but two (1 native, 1 transfer) generalists indicated that they taught art in their classes. One (transfer) participant indicated teaching physical education, and no respondents indicated that they taught music. Participants wrote in the “other” section of the survey that they taught the following: Bible, Spanish, English as a foreign language, geography, library science, and technology. Other comments included: co-teaching, teaching children with dyslexia, PPCD, and full inclusion.
Figure 6. Graphic representation of teaching subjects of participants by transfer and native student status. *Generalist also indicated they taught special education, technology, and art.

Teaching Location of Participants

Of the 110 participants who indicated that they were currently teaching, 109 provided the name of school and district. This information is reported in approximate commute time to UNT as calculated by Google Maps. The first category represents districts that are 35 minutes or less from the university. Of the participants who were currently teaching, 32% (21 native, 14 transfer) of the teachers worked in seven school districts, and one teacher home schools families throughout this region. The next category represents districts that require a commute time greater than 35 minutes but less than 60 minutes. This area included 43% (22 native, 25 transfer) of the respondents in 21 school districts. The next category includes commute times greater than 60 minutes and less than 120 minutes. Eight school districts employed 12% (6
native, 7 transfer) of the responding participants in this region. Of the participants, no one was teaching in a district that was greater than two hours from the university. The next category in which there were participants indicates a commute greater than three hours and less than six hours. Nine participates (8%, 5 native, 4 transfer) taught in eight school districts that are more than a three hour commute from the university. Last, 3% (3 transfer) of participants taught out of state, and 2% (1 native, 1 transfer) of the respondents taught out of the country.

Figure 7. Graphic representation of teaching location of participants by transfer and native student status calculated by Google Maps.

Research Question 1

What differences and commonalities in perception of the university experience are reported by transfer and native students? To answer this research question, the responses of two survey questions were examined.
The first question, "In the context of your career, what courses/services at UNT have proved most helpful?,” provided the opportunity for the respondent to list up to four courses or services in order of importance with the first being the most helpful. Of the 143 (73 native, 70 transfer) student who completed surveys, 98 (54 native, 44 transfer) participants responded to this question. The responses are categorized by level of helpfulness along with frequency mentioned within that level.

Most Helpful Courses or Services Reported by Participants

The top five categories reported as “most helpful” by both native and transfer students were the same; however, the students overwhelmingly responded that student teaching proved to be “most helpful” in the context of their careers. Slightly more native students (30/54, 56%) than transfer students (18/44, 41%) reported that student teaching was “most helpful.” The second category considered “most helpful” by both native and transfer students were general education courses. A higher percentage of transfer students (8/44, 18%) than native students (6/54, 11%) reported that general education courses were “most helpful.” The third category reported as “most helpful” by native and transfer students was methods courses. The same number of native and transfer students reported methods courses as “most helpful;” however, this represented a slightly higher percentage of transfer students (5/44, 11%) than native students (5/54, 9%). The fourth category reported “most helpful” by both native and transfer students were special education courses. This answer was reported the same number of times by both groups of students, but this number represented a slightly
higher percentage of transfer (3/44, 7%) than native students (3/54, 6%). The fifth category reported as "most helpful" by both native (2/54, 4%) and transfer (2/44, 5%) students was reading education courses. Other courses or services considered "most helpful" by transfer students were: Dallas campus (2/44, 5%), computer course for teachers (1/44, 2%), counseling services (1/44, 2%), foundations of bilingual education (1/44, 2%), linguistics courses (1/44, 2%), stress reduction movement course (1/44, 2%), and education ethics (1/44, 2%). Native students reported the following additional items as “most helpful:" early childhood courses (2/54, 4%), math courses (1/54, 2%), observations (1/54, 2%), child development (1/54, 2%), history courses (1/54, 2%), English courses (1/54, 2%), and I don’t remember (1/54, 2%).

![Figure 8](image.png)

**Figure 8.** Graphic representation of self-reported courses and services that proved "most helpful" in the context of participants' careers. Categories with fewer responses are listed in the narrative.

Next Most Helpful Courses or Services Reported by Participants

Of the 98 (54 native, 44 transfer) participants who answered this question, 72 (43
native, 29 transfer) provided a response. Other four levels of response to this question (most helpful, next most helpful, very helpful, and helpful), this is the only level where native and transfer responses did not result in the same ranking. Methods courses were as the top answer for “next most helpful” course or service by native students (12/43, 28%) compared to transfer students (3/29, 10%), who reported student teaching as the “next most helpful” course or service. Literacy or reading education courses were reported to be “next most helpful” by both native (7/43, 16%) and transfer (4/29, 14%) students. Observation hours were reported “next most helpful” by a higher percentage of transfer students (5/29, 17%) than native students (3/43, 7%). Education curriculum was reported “next most helpful” by a small percentage of both native (4/43, 9%) and transfer (3/29, 10%) students. A higher percentage of transfer students (3/29, 10%) than native students (2/43, 5%) reported courses to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) to be “next most helpful.” Native students also reported the following reasons to be “next most helpful” in the context of their careers: classroom management (2/43, 5%), literature courses (2/43, 5%), child psychology (1/43, 2%), experience in each grade level 1-8 (1/43, 2%), testing and analysis (1/43, 2%), library sciences education (1/43, 2%), political science courses (1/43, 2%) and good professors (1/43, 2%). Transfer students also reported the following reasons to be “next most helpful” in the context of their career: professors (1/29, 3%), preparation for certification exam (1/29, 3%), job fair (1/29, 3%), students in cohort (1/29, 3%), and early childhood courses (1/29, 3%).
Figure 9. Graphic representation of self-reported courses and services that proved “next most helpful” in the context of participants’ careers. Categories with fewer responses are listed in the narrative.

Very Helpful Courses or Services Reported by Participants

Of the 98 (54 native, 44 transfer) participants who answered this question, 44 (26 native, 18 transfer) provided a response to this question. In response to this question, native and transfer students stated the same top two categories that proved “very helpful” in the context of their careers. Courses on how to teach reading were reported to be “very helpful” at a higher percentage by transfer students (5/18, 28%) than by native students (5/26, 19%). Methods courses were also considered to be “very helpful” by transfer (3/18, 17%) and native students (5/26, 19%). Transfer students also reported the following to be “very helpful:” child development courses (2/18, 11%), observations (1/18, 6%), special education courses (1/18, 6%), hands-on learning and
applications (1/18, 6%), writing lesson plans (1/18, 6%), classroom management (1/18, 6%), Field Supervisor (1/18, 6%), communication courses (1/18, 6%), and world history course (1/18, 6%). Native students reported the following courses and services to be “very helpful” in the context of their careers: computer courses (2/26, 8%), early childhood education courses (2/26, 8%), psychology courses (2/26, 8%), student teaching (1/26, 4%), observations (1/26, 4%), child development course (1/26, 4%), special education course (1/26, 4%), ESL course (1/26, 4%), classical argument course (1/26, 4%), English courses (1/26, 4%), history courses (1/26, 4%), basic course work (1/26, 4%), good courses (1/26, 4%).

Figure 10. Graphic representation of self-reported courses and services that proved “very helpful” in the context of participants’ careers. Categories with fewer responses are listed in the narrative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses/Services Proved &quot;Very Helpful&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Ed. Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Helpful Courses or Services Reported by Participants

Of the 98 (54 native, 44 transfer) participants who answered this question, 31 (16 native, 15 transfer) provided a response to this question. Methods courses and courses
that teach reading were the top two categories reported by both native and transfer students. A higher percentage of transfer students (4/15, 27%) than native students (2/16, 13%) reported that methods courses were “helpful.” Similarly, a higher percentage of transfer students (3/15, 20%) reported that reading education courses were “helpful.” Other courses and services considered “helpful” by transfer students were: math courses (2/15, 13%), special education course (1/15, 7%), Spanish course (1/15, 7%), scholarship and financial aid (1/15, 7%), advisors (1/15, 7%), job fair (1/15, 7%), and bulletin board presentations (1/15, 7%). Native students reported the following courses and services as “helpful:” math courses (1/16, 6%), special education courses (1/16, 6%), child development course (1/16, 6%), Spanish courses (1/16, 6%), speech course (1/16, 6%), music courses (1/16, 6%), economics courses (1/16, 6%), science courses (1/16, 6%), linguistics course (1/16, 6%), English courses (1/16, 6%), core courses (1/16, 6%), advisor (1/16, 6%), and do not recall (1/16, 6%).

Figure 11. Graphic representation of self-reported courses and services that proved “helpful” in the context of participants' careers. Categories with fewer responses are listed in the narrative.
Observations about Experiences as an Undergraduate Student

The second survey question analyzed to assist research was “If you have observations about how your experiences as an undergraduate helped or hindered your career, please share them here.” This question provided an opportunity for the respondent to share an open-ended, unlimited character comment in a response box. Of the 143 (73 native, 70 transfer) completed surveys, 50 participants (24 native, 26 transfer) provided comments in the area provided. The comments were categorized into themes and will be reported with direct quotes from the survey to support each thematic area. The comments were divided into the following themes: real world preparation, student teaching, instruction, positive and negative experiences, and other.

A majority of the comments were negative. Negative comments included statements that students wished they had more training in a specific area. Of the 26 comments provided by transfer students, 18 were negative and seven were positive. Similarly, of the 24 comments provided by native students, 20 were negative and four were positive. In reading the comments, it is common to for people think about what they wish would have been different in the preparation of their career as opposed to seeing the tasks they were prepared to undertake.

Lack of Preparation for the Real World of Teaching

A majority of the comments fell into this section regarding real world preparation. A few subcategories have been created to ensure a holistic view of the real world preparation theme because so many comments 24 (14 transfer, 10 native) of the total 50 comments fall into this theme.
Classroom management was mentioned five times (3 native, 2 transfer) in the comments. One native student stated, “I hoped for more practical courses during the semester before student teaching (i.e. discipline and classroom management).” Comments by the other native students were very similar. The transfer students were more specific in their comments. One transfer student stated, “I wish we had more classroom management classes. I felt that my education prepared me to work in a suburban school. When I got a job in a high poverty, urban school, I felt under-prepared. The ways you teach at risk students in poverty is very different. I think UNT should have a separate degree or program for this. Something like the New Teacher Project, but at the university level.” Another transfer student stated, “Need more classes on discipline, how to deal with parents, and how to deal w/admin responsibilities along with teaching/tutoring all subjects. Also, how to team teach with other teachers to work together in planning. Seek out mentors as new teacher.” This comment touches on dealing with parents, which is the next theme.

Both native and transfer students made comments regarding working with parents (2 native, 2 transfer). One native student who is no longer teaching stated the following, “I now work from home because I have young children. This is the only reason I am not still teaching. I believe I received an excellent education at UNT, which did a good job of preparing me for a teaching career. I would recommend courses on dealing with troubled children and nutty parents! That was the big shocker for me as a teacher - learning how to deal with unreasonable or uncaring or unsupportive parents. That was something I had to learn on the fly. Some preparation in this area - addressing and preparing for the pitfalls of teaching - would serve your students well.”
One transfer student stated, “I wished I had been given the opportunity to spend more time in real classrooms, working with real teachers. I also wish I had more training in practical elements of teaching (report cards/grading, lesson planning, parent conferences, etc.).” This student mentions parent conferences, but the overall comment was regarding practical elements of teaching.

How to handle the first day of school is one practical element of teaching that was mentioned by two native students, but not mentioned by any transfer students. Specifically one native student stated, “I think you need a lot more courses in the classroom. College did not prepare me for the real classroom setting. Student teaching helped, but a college student needs to experience the 1st day of school and all the other things besides teaching we deal with i.e. paperwork, SST’s, special ed, parents, etc....” Another native student stated, “There is a need for more relevant teaching experiences as a student before beginning to teach as a professional. More guidance on how to prepare for the first day of school. What should be done on that first day the students arrive? Where to find resources on the internet, associations that you can join, and local resources?”

Native and transfer students commented on writing lesson plans for utilization in the real world (2 native, 2 transfer). One native student stated, “I would say the hardest part of transitioning from college to the classroom is lack of experience. Even though student teaching (even the year-long program I did) helped, nothing prepares you for everything you are responsible for once it is your classroom. Theories are great, but real life is the best. I wish someone had shown me how to get organized. I also think the lesson plans we were expected to do in class did not equal what we could do in
reality. If I did 2-4 pages of lesson plans for every lesson I did, then I would have had no time for anything else.” Another native student stated, “Future teachers need time in real classrooms with real kids - I haven’t used any of the units I created in college in my actual class.” One transfer student’s comment summarizes the comments regarding lesson plans. Simply stated, “I needed more help with relevant lesson plans...schools don’t want these long drawn out lesson plans. It would have been better to see what is actually expected and create more lessons than drag out lesson plans to go for 2-3 pages. This was not relevant to real life teaching.”

General comments regarding real world preparation were made by both native and transfer students (2 native, 6 transfer). One native student stated, “even though I went through my student teaching, many semesters of observations, and completed all my courses, I still felt very unprepared when I became a teacher and had a classroom of my own. I feel like my real learning came after I graduated from other more experienced teachers.” One transfer student stated, “I don't feel that my undergrad. classes helped or hindered my career. Frankly, I do not remember any of what I read, wrote or discussed. None of my classes seems relevant to my career. Teaching experience from year to year is what makes a difference.” Another transfer student stated, “I didn't feel that what I was taught prepared me for the ‘real world’ of teaching. The courses tended to lean toward the ‘ideal world,’ not reality.”

The last sub-category in real world preparation is employment. Three transfer students (no native students) made comments regarding the lack of preparation finding a job. One transfer student simply stated “hard to find a teaching job.” Another transfer student stated, “I do not feel that I was prepared enough for learning how to get a
teaching job. I have not been able to get a teaching job in a public school." One more transfer student stated, "There was not enough help provided regarding how to land a teaching position - how to get through the interview/how to interview."

Benefits of Student Teaching

All comments regarding student teaching and the time spent in the schools before student teaching were positive. Seven students (3 native, 4 transfer) commented on this experience. One native student said, "Ed teachers were very knowledgeable, helpful. Experience in the public schools before graduation was PRICELESS!" Another native student commented, "The student teaching that UNT provides definitely helped me more than anything. It helped me solidify what grade I wanted to teach and allowed me to see how schools truly work from the inside out."

The last native student said, "Think the full year classroom work is great. Learned it all that year." The comments from transfer students echoed the same messages. One transfer student simply said, "student teaching helped." Another transfer student commented, "I had a pretty good experience at UNT. I was the first group to get to do a yearlong (2 semesters) of student teaching. That part was good." The last two comments by transfer students provide a more insightful description of their experience. This transfer student stated, "UNT prepared me completely. I had a wonderful experience and remain proud to have attended your school. I like how the semester before student teaching we spent 3 days a week in the classroom. This was a great learning experience. I also like how the university had off site classes 2 days a week where all of the Richardson cluster met to have class." The last comment provided by a
transfer student provides a reflective look at the experience. Specifically, the transfer student stated, “The PDS experience was extremely beneficial. While I was there, at the time, it didn't make sense that we spent the first semester out in the field twice a week and constantly rotating around classrooms and schools - BUT this made sense later. I got to appreciate each component of the school and how each person/classroom made the complete school. I now see educators who aren't aware of other colleagues within the building or realize their work load/schedule/nature of their jobs. I have found this greater appreciation for everyone at my school. Also, the subject-area coursework during that semester was helpful in sharing lesson plans and ideas. Still use them and refer to them to this day!”

Wish I Had More Instruction

Native and transfer students (4 native, 3 transfer) commented on specific instruction that they wished they had received during their coursework. Comments were made regarding general elementary education. One transfer student stated, “Needed more K-1 instruction;” while a native student stated, “Many of the classes I attended were geared more to the EC-4 candidates, and the 4-8 candidates were not given as much help in regard to the standard configuration of middle school models. Things that work for first graders will probably not work with eighth graders.” Transfer students also commented on reading courses. One transfer student generally said, “UNT needs to offer better reading classes and psychology classes for elementary education.” Another transfer student stated, “As an education major, I found my student teaching experience to be the most helpful in my career as a teacher. As a lower elementary grade teacher,
I feel it is imperative for ALL education programs to teach students how to teach reading in sequence (Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, etc.). I feel the reading courses at UNT prepared to create lesson plans and themed units, but were not sufficient in teaching the progression of reading." Native students did not comment specifically on reading education; however, they provided three other insightful comments. One native student commented, "More training in special education balanced literacy." Another native student stated, "I wanted to do a bilingual program, and that hadn't really been started yet, but I've heard you have one now. I was able to do my student teaching in a bilingual classroom and that was a huge help to me in learning how to teach and in getting a job." The last native student commented, "More studies focused on 'how-to' teach different lessons. Also, how to make 'cooperative learning' work best."

Positive and Negative Experiences

Native and transfer students shared general good and bad experiences in the comment box. Transfer students shared five comments regarding their overall experience (3 positive, 2 negative); and native students shared four comments regarding their overall experience (1 positive, 3 negative). The positive comment shared by the native student stated, "Enjoyed the program at that time. Great teachers/professors." Transfer students shared similar comments. One transfer student stated, "No student loans, scholarships, stayed home longer, less expensive, worked great!" Another transfer student commented, "I was an adult who returned to college after working many years in the oil and gas industry. I changed careers and thoroughly enjoyed returning to college. I was more appreciative of the college
experiences as an adult. I loved UNT and did not want to leave!!” And the last transfer student simply stated, “I loved UNT and my experiences there. I would recommend UNT to anyone.”

Along with positive experiences always come negative experiences. One negative comment made by a transfer student states the exact opposite of the last positive comment. The transfer student states, “I had nightmare experiences during my last semester at UNT. It really put me on shaky ground starting out as a teacher. I never recommend UNT to anyone I meet. I was not helped at all.” Another transfer student commented, “I had a pretty good experience at UNT. I was the first group to get to do a yearlong (2 semesters) of student teaching. That part was good. I did though have a teacher, …I think was her name. She questioned me and my choice in being a teacher and was very hurtful. She said I didn't pay attention in class and was doing ‘other things’ while she was teaching. She was very hurtful! At the time, I was working full time and going to school full time and was completing class assignments as she was talking. She was teaching about how students learn differently and we must encourage them all. HA! She was doing the very thing she told us not to do. Well, now as you can see that really left an impact on me. So, if anything it was good. So, I can make sure I don't do that to my kiddos. I have been teaching now for 11 years and love it!! I have been a Who's Who Teacher...so; yeah...this is what I was called to do Ms.....” Similar to the transfer student, a native student also experiences being questioned regarding the teaching profession. The native student commented, “I had one of my professors and my student teaching supervisor tell me that I could never be a teacher and that on top of that that I was a bad person. After this experience, I had no desire whatsoever to set
foot in a classroom again, and consequently quit my student teaching 2 weeks before graduation. I also was placed in inappropriate student teaching classrooms (bilingual, when I wasn't bilingual, and a fifth grade classroom (that the professor specifically moved me into from a second grade classroom) when I was an early childhood person). My early childhood education experiences were wonderful; the teachers in field work, the professors, and the classes. However, I was not treated well by the regular elementary education faculty and am greatly disappointed in the UNT COE after that experience. Had I not gotten wonderful mentors and a great student teaching supervisor when I re-did my student teaching, I never would have become a teacher, and numerous children would have lost out on the opportunity to have me as their very caring teacher."

Other negative comments provided by native students discussed their experiences with advising or advisors in the College of Education. One native student stated, “At the time I attended, my advisor put me into the wrong certification program. I wanted to teach middle school math, but I ended up in all these classes that were teaching me to teach children to read. I got very frustrated with that, and I opted out of student teaching and left that path for a while. I attended TWU to get my certification in math so I could teach high school. Certification ranges have changed since then, so I believe my experience would not be repeated now.” Another native student stated, “Not being able to complete my degree program due to the change in requirements brought forth by the college and the state. Not having a consistent group of advisers for the College of Education. I never could get a straight answer from anyone. I was told several times to take classes from one adviser then at the next semester have a
completely new adviser ask me why I took them classes, that I didn't need. Very frustrating.” It is important to note that both of these native students graduated from UNT in 1997 or earlier. This information is of interest because the College of Education established a centralized Student Advising Office (SAO) in 1997 as a result of a college-wide study on advising. The SAO educates students about core requirements, programs of the college, and educator certification (Keller et al., 2002).

Other Comments

A few participants provided general comments in response to this question (1 transfer, 2 native). One transfer student offered the following information, “not teaching, but still in schools.” One native student stated, “I don't regret teaching for three years, but it was not for me. I would pick another major if I had it to do over again. Education classes were a waste of time and money.” Another native student commented, “Working at daycare helped.”

Summary of Findings for Research Question 1

The first research question looked at differences and commonalities in perception of the university experience as reported by transfer and native students.

After analysis of the survey question, I found that transfer and native students reported university experiences that were more common than different. Both native and transfer students reported that student teaching was the “most helpful” course or service in the context of their careers. This experience is echoed in the positive comments that were written regarding student teaching. Specifically one native student stated, “The
student teaching that UNT provides definitely helped me more than anything. It helped me solidify what grade I wanted to teach and allowed me to see how schools truly work from the inside out.” And a transfer student stated, “UNT prepared me completely. I had a wonderful experience and remain proud to have attended your school. I like how the semester before student teaching we spent 3 days a week in the classroom. This was a great learning experience. I also like how the university had off site classes 2 days a week where all of the Richardson cluster met to have class.” Native and transfer students reported that reading education courses were “very helpful” and methods courses were “helpful.”

Another common perception of the university experience as reported by both native and transfer students was the lack of preparation for the real world of teaching. Students made specific comments that they wanted to know more about classroom management, working with parents, and writing lesson plans for the real world. One native student commented, “even though I went through my student teaching, many semesters of observations, and completed all my courses, I still felt very unprepared when I became a teacher and had a classroom of my own. I feel like my real learning came after I graduated from other more experienced teachers.” And one transfer student commented, “I didn't feel that what I was taught prepared me for the ‘real world' of teaching. The courses tended to lean toward the ‘ideal world,’ not reality.”

The only difference in university experiences reported by native and transfer students was very minor. In regards to being prepared for the real world: only native students commented about the first day of school and only transfer students commented about employment. Specifically one native student commented, “There is a
need for more relevant teaching experiences as a student before beginning to teach as a professional. More guidance on how to prepare for the first day of school. What should be done on that first day the students arrive? Where to find resources on the internet, associations that you can join, and local resources?” And one transfer student commented, “There was not enough help provided regarding how to land a teaching position - how to get through the interview/how to interview.”

Research Question 2

What particular supports and obstacles did transfer students encounter throughout the transition from the community college to the university as perceived retrospectively by students? To answer this research question the responses of two survey questions were examined.

Supports Reported by Transfer Students

The first question, “What supports, if any, did you encounter in the transition from community college to university?” The respondent could list up to three responses in no particular order. Of the 143 (73 native, 70 transfer) completed surveys, 20 transfer students responded to this question. The responses are categorized into the four areas: academic advising, finances, support network, and the university.

Academic advising and counseling provided transfer students with support throughout their transition from community college to university. One student mentioned, “Counselors were great.” Another student mentioned, “Had an awesome counselor in the College of Education that helped me change my major and finish my
degree.” Transfer students also discussed the financial supports of attending the university. One student mentioned, “Employer flexibility.” Another student mentioned, “Financial aid.” And other students were more specific, such as, “loans to help with school costs” and “Texas transfer scholarship.” In addition to advising and finances, transfer students discussed their own support networks. “Family,” “parents,” “friends,” “other students,” were common responses as supports for the transition from community college to university. Other students mentioned, “Study groups,” “sorority,” and “student organizations.” Last, students mentioned various elements of the university as supports in the transition from community college to university. One student said, “A class to decide major.” Other students mentioned, “Administration,” “College of Education,” and “professors in education department.” Specifically, one student mentioned the “relationship between the community college and university.”

Obstacles Reported by Transfer Students

The second question, “What obstacles, if any, did you encounter in the transition from community college to university?” The respondent could list up to three responses in no particular order. Of the 143 (73 native, 70 transfer) completed surveys, 32 transfer students responded to this question. The responses are categorized into four areas: university bureaucracy, credit transfer, expenses, and adapting to campus.

Transfer students mentioned many obstacles that were encountered during the transition from community college to university. The obstacles began with the bureaucracy of the university and acceptance to the university. One student mentioned, “Not having a representative from UNT show up when scheduled to be on
community college campus.” Another student commented, “Getting through the admittance process.” And other students stated, “Getting answers and responses from UNT” and “having to keep getting all my transcripts.” Once admitted into the university, transfer students struggled with the transfer of credits from the community college. Repeatedly, students commented that an obstacle was “loss of credits” or “not all courses transferred.” Specifically one student stated, “I lost 30 hours of credits because they didn’t match up with what I needed for my degree.” Another student stated, “Credits were not transferred that I was told would.” The expense of the university was another obstacle for transfer students. One student mentioned, “Cost of education went up.” Other students commented, “Was not easy to work part-time at UNT” and had to take “time off work.” General comments were made about “cost,” “loans,” and “no scholarship.” Once transfer students managed the bureaucracy of the university, transfer of credits, and expenses they still had to adapt to the campus. Transitioning from the community college environment to the university was an obstacle for students in various capacities. Students commented on issues from the “commute” to “parking” and “living on campus away from home for the first time.” Comments were made regarding the classes, such as “larger classes,” “scheduling class times,” “courses unavailable,” “heavier load of classes per semester,” and “work was harder.” Students also mentioned, “lack of community feel at university,” “less personal attention,” “lack of friends,” “bigger campus,” “campus life,” and “faster pace.”
Summary of Findings for Research Question 2

What particular supports and obstacles did transfer students encounter throughout the transition from the community college to the university as perceived retrospectively by students?

The supports were: academic advising, finances, support network, and the university. Specifically one student stated, “Had an awesome counselor in the Education College that helped me change my major and finish my degree.” Another student stated, “Relationship and partnership between the community college and UNT.” One student commented, “I had a great transition the drive was long, but the education was great. I felt like I still had small classes and most instructors knew my name.”

The obstacles were: university bureaucracy, credit transfer, expenses, and adapting to campus. One student stated, “Not much of a welcoming committee when you come in after doing core classes somewhere else.” Another student stated, “Lack of community feel at university.” Other students made comments regarding “loss of credits,” “cost,” and “the size of the campus.”

Research Question 3

(a) Is there a significant difference in the retention rate of transfer students and native students who enter the teaching profession?

To answer this research question the following two survey questions “Are you currently teaching?” and “Have you taught five months or more since completing your degree?” are analyzed.
Who is Currently Teaching?

Quantitative analysis in the form of a chi-square test of independence was run to see if a relationship existed between the student (native or transfer) and current teaching status (yes or no). A chi-square for independence test indicated that there is no significant relationship between student status (native or transfer) and current teaching status, $\chi^2 (1, N = 142) = 0.25$, $p > .05$, Cramer’s $V = .042$. Native students and transfer students reported almost identical results. Of the respondents 78.6% (55) of transfer students reported to be currently teaching at the time of completing the survey compared to 75% (54) of native students. Fewer transfer students reported that they were not currently teaching 21.4% (15) compared to 25% (18) native students.

Who Taught Five Months or More since Graduation?

A chi-square test of independence was run to see if a relationship existed between the student (native or transfer) and if the respondent taught five months or more since completing their degree (yes or no). A chi-square for independence test indicated that there is no significant relationship between student status (native or transfer) and if the graduate taught five months are more since completing their degree, $\chi^2 (1, N = 32) = 0.30$, $p > .05$, Cramer’s $V = .030$. Again the data reported here is very similar for both groups. Transfer students taught five months or more since graduation at a slightly lower rate 80% (12) compared to native students 82.4% (14). An equal amount of respondents (3) for transfer and native students reported not teaching five months or more since graduation, but the percentage of transfer students is higher at 20% than native students at 17.6%.
(b) Is there a significant difference between the intention to retain in teaching of transfer students and native students who enter the teaching profession?

The survey question, "How likely are you to finish out your career as an educator?" was used to answer to this research question.

**Who Plans to Stay in Education?**

An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the intent to retain in teaching for transfer and native students. The results indicated that there is no significant difference in scores for transfer students (\(M = 2.69, SD = 0.65\)) and native students (\(M = 2.52, SD = 0.79\)); \(t(99) = 1.16, p = 0.25\) (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 0.17, 95% CI: -0.12 to 0.45) was very small (eta squared = 0.013).

**Summary of Findings for Research Question 3**

There is no significant difference in the retention rate of transfer students and native students who enter the teaching profession. Of respondents, a slightly higher percentage of transfer students (78.6%, 55) reported to be currently teaching compared to native students (75%, 54). However, native students entered the teaching profession at a slightly higher percentage (82.4%, 14) than transfer students (80%, 12). There is no significant difference between the intention to retain in teaching for transfer and native students.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The goal of this study was to identify similarities and differences in the experiences of native and transfer students as graduates of a teacher education program. The sample for this study was UNT College of Education graduates from 1995-2005 who majored in elementary education (Interdisciplinary Studies). Data were collected through submission of a survey by electronic and postal mail. Qualitative and quantitative analysis was used to answer the research questions. In general, the findings suggest that there were no differences in the experiences of native and transfer students.

Discussion and Findings

Astin's I-E-O model is the conceptual and theoretical framework for this study. The sample population for the study automatically created different student inputs when the choice was made to study the experiences of native and transfer students. Although the student inputs (native or transfer student) were different, the same college experiences were reported by both native and transfer students (research question 1). Transfer students (student inputs) were given the opportunity to discuss their college experience more in-depth by providing supports and obstacles they encountered in the transition from community college to university (research question 2). Student outputs were also the same with no significant difference in retention in teaching or intent to retain in teaching for native and transfer students (research question 3). Specific
findings and discussions are presented by research question.

1. What differences and commonalities in perception of the university experience are reported by transfer and native students?

Native and transfer students considered student teaching to be the “most helpful” course or service during their time at UNT, yet both native and transfer students felt they lacked elements of preparation for teaching in the real world.

In 2010, NCATE released a report on transforming teacher education.

_Transforming Teacher Education through Clinical Practice: A National Strategy to Prepare Effective Teachers_ provides specific recommendations for teacher education programs without lengthening the time of student teaching. These recommendations include: “more rigorous accountability; strengthening candidate selection and placement; revamping curricula, incentives, and staffing; supporting partnerships; and expanding the knowledge base to identify what works and support continuous improvement” (NCATE, 2010, p. iv). Specifically, the idea of clinical practice in teacher education is similar to the medical field. According to NCATE,

> Teacher education has too often been segmented with subject-matter preparation, theory, and pedagogy taught in isolated intervals and too far removed from clinical practice. But teaching, like medicine, is a profession of practice, and prospective teachers must be prepared to become expert practitioners who know how to use the knowledge of their profession to advance student learning and how to build their professional knowledge through practice. In order to achieve this we must place practice at the center of teaching preparation. (2010, p. 2)

The report provides design principles for clinically based preparation. New teachers need more than basic content knowledge and technical skills. A combination lab experiences and time in the classroom will give the students time to reflect on their teaching and improve their teaching skills.
The National Council on Teacher Quality completed a study in 2011 on *Student Teaching in the United States*. The study described student teaching as an, “intellectually and physically taxing apprenticeship... and also perhaps the most complex undertaking of any aspect of the institution’s teacher preparation program” (Greenberg, Pomerance, Walsh, & National Council on, T. Q., 2011, p. 22). In 2008, Spooner, Flowers, Lambert, and Algozzine compared the experiences of student teachers with a one year assignment to student teachers with a semester assignment. They found, “the extended student-teaching experience reported higher scores on adequacy of time spent in the schools, relationship with supervising teacher, and knowledge of school policies and procedures, and the difference in scores from their traditional-internship peers was statistically significant” (p. 268). Greenberg et al. recommend that student teachers experience all responsibilities related to the teaching profession, especially the beginning of the school year and establishing routines (2011). The authors also suggest, “Institutions should require, as the University of Central Florida does, that student teachers participate in staff meetings, parent-teacher conferences, student support meetings, lunch duty and every other part of a teacher’s day” (2011, p. 23). These were common elements reported by the respondents, how to approach the beginning of school and how to handle a parent-teacher conference are items that UNT graduates wish they knew better as teachers. Spooner et al. describe this holistic concept:

Teaching is more than knowledge of the content area and planning and delivering instruction. It involves reteaching, providing multiple meaningful activities for diverse groups of students, managing behaviors, bookkeeping, management, organization, traffic flow, collecting and distributing materials, and more. In the internship experience, these dimensions come to life and take on new meaning for the preservice teachers....Time and experience provide more
opportunities to identify areas in need of growth and development and to hone skills the novice teacher identifies as lacking. (Spooner et al., 2008, p. 268)

In 2009, Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff, found “Teacher preparation that focuses more on the work of the classroom and provides opportunities for teachers to study what they will be doing as 1st-year teachers seems to produce teachers who, on average, are more effective during their 1st year of teaching” (p. 434). The study suggested that while content knowledge is important, teachers need time to become comfortable with teaching before they can be effective teachers. In general they found, “inexperienced teachers may make use of their preparation sequentially. Teachers with stronger preparation in day-to-day issues are relatively more effective in their 1st year, whereas those with stronger content knowledge are able to make use of that knowledge by their 2nd year” (Boyd et al., 2009, p. 435).

It is important to note that the Deans of Education in the State of Texas, specifically, the members of the Texas Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (TACTE) did not participate in the 2011 National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) study. John Miazga, TACTE President, stated the following reasons in a March 2011 letter to Brian Kelly, Editor of U.S. News & World Report: (1) not all teacher preparation programs are included, (2) resource restrictions, (3) questionable methodology, and (4) and lacks beneficial “outcome” (Miazga, 2011). William Powers, Jr., President of the University of Texas at Austin, also sent a letter to Brian Kelly, Editor of U.S. News & World Report in February 2011. His letter states that previous concerns were expressed regarding the methodology used by NCTQ and since the methods were not changed the University of Texas at Austin would not be participating (Powers, 2011).
Nancy Zimpher, Chancellor of the State University of New York system and Co-chair of the NCATE report on transforming teacher education, discussed the flawed methodology of the NCTQ study. Zimpher states, “the methodology used by NCTQ failed to effectively incorporate significant input from the community of the university and practicing professionals with a history of successful teacher preparation, and it ignored tired-and-true assessment measures” (Grasgreen, 2011).

2. What particular supports and obstacles did transfer students encounter throughout the transition from the community college to the university as perceived retrospectively by students?

Transfer students reported the following as supports during their transition from community college to university: academic advising, finances, support network, and the university; and obstacles: university bureaucracy, credit transfer, expenses, and adapting to campus.

Ironically, what some students considered supports were reported as obstacles by other students. Berger and Malaney summarized this in their study, “one of the most important findings of this study appears to be that adjustment to 4-year universities, in terms of satisfaction and academic performance, is most strongly influenced by how well transfer students have prepared for the transfer process” (2001, p.13). Considering this, the student can be a support or obstacle to themselves.

Academic advising was reported as a support by many transfer students, but the lack of credits that transferred was an obstacle. Flaga found, “Meeting with an academic advisor prior to transferring is of special importance. Many of the students who were not in touch with advisors ahead of time were very disappointed with how their courses transferred” (2006, p.11). Students should be encouraged to plan ahead if
they are considering transferring to a university; however, taking the initiative to meet with an advisor at the university is one the student has to make. As an undergraduate student, I took classes at a community college in the summers, and every year I would get the list courses that would transfer to my university. This information was not available online then, but I knew I did not want to waste my time, money, or energy. At some point the student has to plan ahead and start taking the initiative.

Financial assistance was a support to many transfer students, yet the expense of attending a university was an obstacle also reported by transfer students. Duggan and Pickering found similar extremes in their study, “financial aid was moderately important or very important as a reason to attend the university, and the response to the cost of attending college covered both extremes: from very important to not important” (2008, p. 450). I would think this variation in response is likely connected to personal values about finances. If one is comfortable with having loans and credit, then he or she would answer these questions differently from one who likes to pay cash for everything.

In Flaga’s 2006 study, “Many of the students in the study concurred with Astin’s (1984) findings and advocated involvement in campus activities as a way to connect and feel a part of the university” (p.15). Although not listed as a direct support or obstacle, Astin’s theory of student involvement addresses the remaining the supports and obstacles reported by transfer students. In this theory, “student involvement refers to the quantity and quality of the physical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience” (Astin, 1984, p. 307). The final supports mentioned by transfer students are having a support network and various aspects of the university, and the obstacles are dealing with the bureaucracy of the university and adapting to
campus. According to Astin’s theory, “the greater the student’s involvement in college, the greater will be the amount of student learning and personal development” (1984, p. 307). Yet again the student themself appears to be his/her own support or obstacle. One who learns how to navigate the university will not see it as an obstacle, but will use the many resources as supports during this transition from community college. Astin said, “the principal advantage of the student involvement theory over traditional pedagogical approaches…is that it directs attention away from the subject matter and technique and toward the motivation and behavior of the student” (1984, p. 307).

3. (a) Is there a significant difference in the retention rate of transfer students and native students who enter the teaching profession?

(b) Is there a significant difference between the intention to retain in teaching of transfer students and native students who enter the teaching profession?

Although not significant, a slightly higher percentage of transfer students reported that they were teaching at the time of completing the survey. Conversely, a slightly higher percentage of native students entered the teaching profession upon graduation than transfer students. There was no significant difference between the intent to be retained in teaching for native and transfer students.

In 2010, King and Minchew also found that “university native students were more likely to be teaching following graduation” (p. 271). Pigge and Marso found that as a whole, transfer students saw “teaching as a stepping stone to other careers which might suggest a potentially higher attrition rate from the field of teaching either prior to or following graduation” (1988, p. 26).
Implications for Further Research

This information is beneficial to practitioners and researchers of teacher educator programs. Overwhelmingly native and transfer students reported that student teaching was the “most helpful” course or service during their time at UNT. Boyd et al. (2009), Greenberg et al. (2011), and Spooner et al. (2008), discuss the various benefits of student teaching in their studies. While UNT students reported that student teaching was the “most helpful” course or service, their comments reflected that they did not feel prepared for the real world of teaching when they entered the classroom. The following recommendations are potential implications for practice:

• Ensure that the student teaching experience includes the logistics of teaching, such as: the beginning of school, establishing routines, staff meetings, parent-teacher conferences, student support meetings, lunch duty, taking up money, grading, state testing, report cards, disciplining students, and overall classroom management (Boyd et al., 2009; Greenberg et al., 2011; Spooner et al., 2008).

Since the teacher education program at UNT incorporates these tasks into student teaching, additional research on this subject is required for better understanding.

Additional findings are valuable to practitioners in all aspects of education. Faculty, staff, student affairs, academic affairs, K-12 educators, community college, and university officials can benefit from knowing there is only so much that one can do to help a student be successful; the student has to take steps in the right direction. The following recommendations are potential implications for practice:
• Universities need to continue programming specifically for transfer students during orientations and in admissions. These programs should focus on educating the students about the university and what is available to help the student successfully transition from community college. Financial aid and scholarships, advising, student organizations, and counseling are a few services that will help students make this transition. Many other services are available to students, but it is important to give students crucial information when you have their attention in case they do not take the initiative to seek this information out.

• Community colleges need to educate students on what is available for them to be successful at a university, such as, financial aid, availability to meet with advisors prior to being accepted, personal counseling, health centers, housing, student organizations, and etc…

• Educators need to encourage students to take charge of their careers; beginning with planning for their education academically and financially. Students should be reminded of this responsibility throughout their education to establish an internal self-motivation.

Potential Improvements for Future Studies

A limitation of the study is a low response rate. Attempts were made to increase the response rate through multiple means of contact. Several factors may have contributed to the low response rate. First, the university from which the participants graduated updated the email services provided to students. Many graduates did not
update their university email address; in addition, they did not update their personal email addresses with the university resulting in no electronic means of communication with many of the graduates. Second, the survey was administered during the summer of 2009. The sample population consisted of graduates from 1995 – 2005. The lapse in time not only affected electronic communication, but many letters were returned marked “undeliverable” or “bad address.” Graduates did not always keep a current mailing address on file with the university either.

Respondents were not asked, “What are you currently doing?” Initially, I did not think to ask this question because my research focuses on the similarities and differences of the native and transfer student experiences in a teacher education program. I think it is important to study not only whether the individual is teaching, but what they currently doing.

Last, open-ended boxes were provided in the response section for some of the survey questions. While open-ended boxes provide the ability for the respondents to answer without bias, not be limited to set responses, and not be limited to a set character length, they can also be difficult for research. Through data analysis, I found that participants tended to use different words for the same item. An example of this would be if one student stated “reading education courses” and another student stated “literacy education courses.” Another example would be if one student used the word “commute” and another student used the word “drive.” Some of this could have been avoided with the use of drop-down boxes in place of open-ended boxes in the survey. In addition, to the drop-down boxes, a section entitled “other” could have been added where respondents could write in additional texts.
Implications for Research

This study focuses on the similarities and differences between experiences as reported by native and transfer students. Two populations of students are not represented in this study: (1) students that wanted to transfer, but did not, and (2) students that transferred, but did not complete their bachelor’s degree. If a future study could capture these student populations, it is possible that different perspectives of supports and obstacles might be unraveled. However, it is also possible that current findings would continue to appear, and if so, the role of self-motivation and Astin’s theory of student involvement could be an area for future research.

Another area for future research is a study of respondents by feeder school. Do experiences differ based on community college attended? Does retention in teaching differ based on community college attended? Does experience in student teaching differ based on community college attended? For a university like UNT, a majority of the transfer students come from four community colleges. This information is beneficial to UNT knowing its students and their abilities. This information is also beneficial to the community colleges.

The university and the college have experienced many changes over years. One area for future research would be to look at current data over the years. Do the comments look different from one year to the next? Do the supports and obstacles vary by year? Does retention in teaching differ by graduation year?

An additional area for future research is to ask those who are no longer teaching “where are you now?” We know that teacher turnover is a problem, but are we acknowledging those that are still in education? In my research on teacher turnover, I
continually read about stayers, movers, and leavers, but I did not read about those that
advanced in the field or moved into other areas of education. Where do these
educators fall into the research? In completing this survey some respondents would
answer “yes” they are currently teaching, while others answer “no” they are not currently
teaching. This confusion is understandable since some positions, such as, reading
specialist, librarians, and others still teach students. Administrators, such as,
counselors and principals do not teach students on a daily basis.
APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL
May 8, 2009

Mary Harris
Department of Teacher Education and Administration
University of North Texas

RE: Human Subjects Application No. 09197

Dear Dr. Harris:

In accordance with 45 CFR Part 46 Section 46.101, your study titled “Transfer Effects on Teacher Education Program Graduates” has been determined to qualify for an exemption from further review by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Enclosed is the consent document with stamped IRB approval. Please copy and use this form only for your study subjects.

No changes may be made to your study’s procedures or forms without prior written approval from the UNT IRB. Please contact Shelia Bourns, Research Compliance Administrator, ext. 3940, if you wish to make any such changes.

We wish you success with your study.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Patricia L. Kaminski, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Chair, Institutional Review Board

PK: sb
Dear UNT Teacher Education Graduate:

You are invited to participate voluntarily in a survey that has the potential to improve teacher education. You were selected to receive this Invitation because of your year of graduation from a program leading to certification in elementary education at UNT and your transfer or non-transfer student status.

The survey is part of a research study that compares transfer student status to non-transfer student status on time and ease of program completion, financial aid status, retention in teaching, and other variables. Recognized as one of the top universities for serving transfer students in the nation, UNT is a leader for research in this field.

Here is a link to the survey: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/aspx?sm=nZoAvMMXbVqTAhUqQ04g 3d 3d

The survey will take approximately 15 – 30 minutes of your time.

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this survey. In addition, there are no potential benefits to survey participants. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may stop at any time without penalty.

The submission of your responses will be considered your consent to participation in this survey.

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (940) 565-3940. Contact the UNT IRB with any questions regarding your rights as a research subject.

To learn more about this study, you may contact Mary Harris or Tami Tucker at (940) 369 – 8355, or through email at mary.harris@unt.edu or tami.tucker@unt.edu.

Thanks for your participation!

Mary M. Harris, Ph. D
Regents Professor, Teacher Education and Administration
Meadows Chair for Excellence in Education

Tami L. Tucker, M. Ed.
Graduate Research Assistant, Teacher Education and Administration
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Program

Please note: If you wish not to receive further emails from us, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from our mailing list.
http://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx?sm=nZoAvMMXbVqTAhUqQ04g 3d 3d

APPROVED BY THE UNT IRB

DATE: 5/14/09

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APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHICS SURVEY
1. Default Section

1. Your name (for research purposes only, we are tracking responses based on transfer and non-transfer status)

2. Are you currently teaching?
   - Yes
   - No

2. Current Teachers

1. If so, where are you currently teaching?
   - Name of School (e.g., Ruby Young Elementary)
   - School District (e.g., DeSoto I.S.D.)

2. What grade(s) are you currently teaching? (Please select all that apply)
   - pre-K
   - Kindergarten
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5
   - 6
   - 7
   - 8
   - 9
   - 10
   - 11
   - 12

   Other (please specify)


3. What subjects are you currently teaching? (Please select all that apply)

- Art
- Computer
- Generalist (all subjects)
- Language Arts
- Math
- Music
- Physical Education
- Reading
- Science
- Social Studies
- Special Education
- Other (please specify)

3. Teaching History

1. Have you taught 5 months or more since completing your degree?
   - Yes
   - No

2. If so, where did you teach?
   
   Name of School (e.g. Ruby Young Elementary)
   School District (e.g. Daeuto I.S.D.)
3. What grade(s) did you teach? (Please select all that apply)

- pre-K
- Kindergarten
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12

Other (please specify) ________________________________

4. What subjects did you teach? (Please select all that apply)

- Art
- Computer
- Generalist (all subjects)
- Language Arts
- Math
- Music
- Physical Education
- Reading
- Science
- Social Studies
- Special Education

Other (please specify) ________________________________

4. Education
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