

TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS: A CRITICAL VIEW

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Individuals who desire to pursue the teaching profession have two primary paths for preparation: either completing a traditional college-based program or an alternative program. A generic qualitative inquiry methodology was used to explore the perspective of novice teacher participants on how prepared they felt based on the preparation program they participated in. Data gathering was accomplished through a novice teacher survey and seven one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The data from the novice teacher survey revealed that college-based preparation participants felt sufficiently prepared 33% of the time, while the alternative preparation participants felt adequately prepared 59% of the time. College-based preparation participants in the semi-structured interviews reported that observing veteran teachers was invaluable in preparing for the first year of teaching. The alternative certification program participants revealed that teaching was significantly more demanding and that teachers face challenges beyond delivering effective lessons. The alternative preparation program offered an extensive library of lessons and learning modules; however, there was little to no guidance on selecting which lessons and learning modules to review. Participants indicated that improvement in the support provided to the novice teacher during the first year is vital when transitioning from theory to practice. Continued examination of teacher preparation programs is imperative for improving the novice teacher experience. As the teacher preparation process continues to evolve, leaders must look no further than current novice teachers to determine where to improve.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Every child deserves a champion—an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.

~Rita Pierson

Over time, numerous changes have taken place, particularly since the onset of alternative certification programs beginning as early as the 1980s (Fenstermacher, 1990; Hawley, 1990). The recruitment and retention of teachers in schools across America has been a topic of discussion among educators for some time. In the article “A Coming Crisis in Teaching,” Sutcher et al. (2016) pointed to the recent decline in college students entering teacher education programs. According to calculations, teacher recruitment decreased by 35%, along with a teacher attrition rate of 8%. Camera (2016) suggested that with this trend, the annual shortfall of teachers due to many leaving the profession could reach nearly 112,000 per year (Camera, 2016).

Teachers have been charged with helping to shape the futures of students within an ever-increasing global society (Futrell, 2010; Zhao, 2010). Jim Collins (2001), in *Good to Great*, coined the phrase, “First who, then what” (p. 87). In the field of education, however, a significant amount of time and effort appears to be spent on the who with little to no thought of the what. The “what” question refers to the acquisition of specific content knowledge in specific subject areas, in addition to (a) pedagogical content knowledge, (b) knowledge of the learner and how to work with students with different abilities and learning preferences, and (c) professional and pedagogical knowledge and skills. Each of these components has been embedded in the certification, licensure, and accreditation standards for most teacher education preparation programs (Kraft, 2001). The amount of time that preservice teachers are exposed to instructional and non-instructional content knowledge throughout their teacher preparation program can

determine the level of success they will experience during their first few years within the teaching profession.

Beyond the question of what in teacher preparation programs, the words of Herb Kelleher, former chairman of Southwest Airlines, concerning hiring the right attitude ring true concerning a teacher's attitude. It is imperative to hire teachers with the right attitude, regardless of the knowledge and skill levels they possess. By hiring individuals with the right attitude, the organization may be able to provide the type of training they need to meet the goals of the organization (Glazer, 2019; Sanfelippo et al., 2016; Free Enterprise, 2014). In making such employment decisions, school administrators should consider the advantages and disadvantages of hiring teachers who received their training via a traditional teacher preparation program as opposed to an alternative program. They must also weigh the importance of how the new teacher fits within the organization. In some cases, the pool of teacher candidates who are available may be limited for filling the district's needs. Thus, selecting the best candidate who is most likely to adopt the attitude and dispositional approach toward teaching and learning that most closely aligns with that of the organization can present additional challenges.

As leaders in the field of education, it is important to develop a more comprehensive teacher preparation program that includes the opportunity to experience the reality of the classroom and all the expectations inherent in a full-time teaching position (Zeichner, 2010). Individuals seeking to obtain their teacher certification through an alternative teacher preparation program rather than a traditional college-based program should seek out alternative programs that provide field experiences centered on the day-to-day operations of a school. These field experiences provide a window into the commitment it takes to become a successful teacher and future teacher-leader. Such a training program could (a) include the active recruitment of talented

young professionals, (b) involve the development of a robust education program that prepares them to enter the workforce, and (c) ensure they recognize the necessity of seeking opportunities to continue professional development after being hired. Each of these elements plays a key role in the development of the next generation of teachers and teacher-leaders (Hollings & Warner, 2021; Ingersoll et al.; 2018, Ingersoll & May, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

The problem of practice that called for a study about teacher preparation programs is the necessity for novice teachers to enter the classroom environment with the skill set to be a successful educator. For this study, I examined the perceptions of novice teachers as to whether they believed their teacher preparation program adequately prepared them for a career in teaching. Based on their enrollment in teacher education preparation programs that currently exist, teachers can be classified into one of two groups: (a) one that completed a college-based four-year teacher preparation program, or (b) one that completed an alternative teacher preparation program. Each program long has been linked with positive aspects along with areas of concern, particularly in the provision of real-world experience (Hawk et al., 1989).

In most post-career fields, the amount of time and training spent on new employees throughout the first year is extensive (Jurgensen, 2016); however, customary education practice, regardless of the years of experience in education, is to send teachers through a gauntlet of training exercises in the days leading up to the start of school each year. Following this flurry of initial training programs, it is typical for district officials to wish them well. Even though these novice teachers will be taking charge of a classroom, full of eager and not-so-eager students, the district often provides little to no follow-up training.

Hawk and Schmidt (1989) pointed to the impact that education reforms had on the

profession and how those reforms emphasized the need for teacher preparation programs to focus more on a teacher's knowledge of content in a particular subject area rather than on pedagogical content knowledge and professional pedagogical knowledge and skills, both of which help teachers relate the subject matter at the level required to impact instruction. Those elements include specific knowledge about the students and how they learn as well as professional rules and regulations regarding teachers' interactions with peers, students, parents, and the community. However, these authors noted that the total training time offered by traditional teacher preparation programs exceeded alternative teacher preparation programs by approximately 45 hours of training on these essential skills. Both program types addressed topics related to time management, student behavior, presentation skills, monitoring instruction, and feedback. Yet, while alternative teacher preparation programs delivered the same amount of training in the areas of learning preferences, professional and pedagogical knowledge and skills, and student-teacher interactions, teachers in alternative education programs completed less hours in the field experience and internship aspects of the preparation program.

Another area in which novice teachers need additional training includes classroom management (Spoon et al., 2018; Thompson, 2010). Classroom management extends beyond student discipline and encompasses areas of policy, procedures for student-led discussions, cooperative learning environments, and building relations with students. Each of these components, taken individually, may be simple to master; however, when taken as a whole, they can determine the success or failure of a novice teacher (Uriegas et al., 2014).

In a more recent study, Redding and Smith (2016) evaluated alternative certification standards utilizing the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS) conducted between 1999 and 2012. They found that 85% of alternative preparation

programs had low admissions standards, failed to ensure program participants were adequately prepared, and offered little to no real-world field experiences. These oversight issues contributed to an increased teacher shortage, creating an avenue for potential long-term educators to feel lost within the initial years of teaching due to the lack of preparation for and exposure to the types of experiences they would likely face as full-time teachers.

Traditional teacher preparation programs moved to strengthen their programs by requiring additional subject matter course work, pedagogical strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners, and additional clinical experiences. In some instances, these changes lengthened the traditional route to teacher certification by one additional year. The additional year allowed students to major in a specific discipline and minor in education. The process also allowed students to develop significant pedagogical knowledge, skills, and experience in dealing with student behavior, technology in the classroom, and English language learners. Providing perspective teachers with opportunities for real world experiences that help prepare them for developing and delivering quality lessons and establishing quality relationships with students is an emerging aspect of teacher preparation (Darling-Hammond & Oaks, 2019).

Teacher preparation programs also restrict the number of schools where they place interns to ensure an “extensive, carefully supervised” experience with “significant attention on the development of content-based pedagogy” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002, p. 293). Accordingly, these carefully orchestrated changes lead to the development of cadres of new teachers who are profoundly better qualified and better prepared to enter the education profession (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate and examine the

perspectives that novice teachers have towards the type of teacher preparation program in which they participated. More specifically, the intent for this study was to explore novice teachers' perspectives regarding the impact that a traditional college-based teacher preparation program versus an alternative teacher preparation program had on preparedness for success in the initial year of teaching.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this qualitative case study:

1. What impact did a traditional college-based teacher preparation program have on teachers' preparedness for success in the initial year of teaching, as told from the perspective of the novice teacher?
2. What impact did an alternative teacher preparation program have on teachers' preparedness for success in the initial year of teaching, as told from the perspective of the novice teacher?

Conceptual Framework

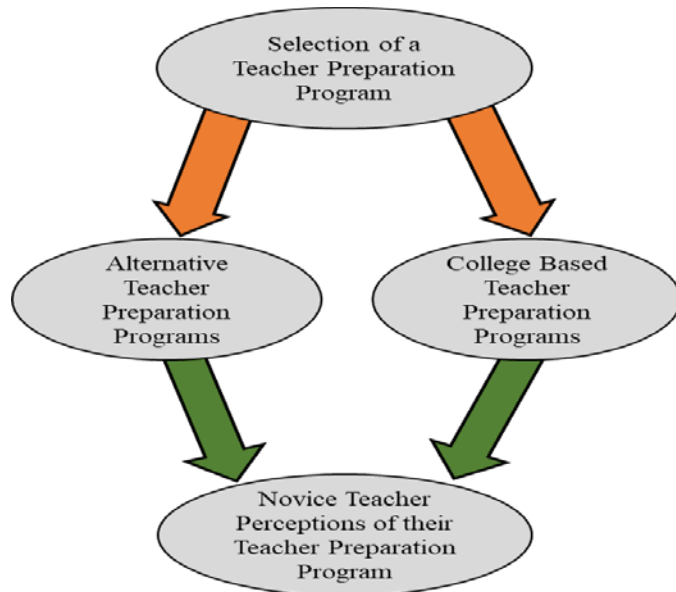
The conceptual framework (Figure 1) that was designed to guide this study is comprised of three components. The first component deals with the determination of which type of preparation program the participants in this study selected to complete their teacher training. The second component aligns with the first research question (RQ1), which focused on the elements of a traditional college teacher preparation program and the perceptions of the novice teachers regarding their level of preparedness for success to enter their first year of teaching. For this part of the study, the program elements of the college-based teacher program were examined. The third component aligns with RQ2 which focused on the elements of alternative teacher preparation programs and the perceptions of novice teachers regarding their level of preparedness for success to enter their first year of teaching.

The conceptual framework depicts the relationship between college-based teacher

preparation programs, alternative teacher preparation programs, and the perceptions of novice teachers of those preparation programs.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework: Perceptions of Teacher Preparation Programs



Significance of the Study

This study centered around the type of teacher preparation programs that prepare teachers for the teaching profession. In previous studies, Sutcher et al. (2016) conducted a quantitative study that focused on how the significant shortfall of teacher candidates might affect standards while Hollins (2011) conducted a holistic study of the practice-based teacher preparation programs. Uiregas et al. (2014) compared classroom management techniques utilized by college-based and alternative program certified teachers in a quantitative study. Based on the results of their study of high school and middle school teachers from both college-based and alternative preparation programs, the findings showed no advantage or disadvantage when dealing with student discipline in the classroom. These studies represent a trend in research where the

perceptions of novice teachers were not examined. Rather, the knowledge required for effective teaching and the factors that prevented young professionals from choosing teaching as a career were the primary focus of the studies. Additional researchers have focused more on specific content areas or specific certification areas and utilized a quantitative research approach. While this information may be helpful, having the perspective of the novice teacher provides a more authentic and comprehensive picture of the advantages or disadvantages of each type of preparation program. The findings of the current study may be useful to district and campus administrators in planning recruitment efforts as well as district-level induction programs for novice teachers as they enter the education profession. In addition, those who oversee both traditional and alternative teacher preparation programs may be better informed on how to improve the overall delivery and content of the mentoring and professional development programs designed specifically to assist novice teachers in their initial year(s) of teaching.

Delimitations

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2019), delimitations help the researcher clarify and define the boundaries of a proposed study to indicate what the researcher deliberately included in the study. For this study, I limited the size and scope to one Texas school district. Furthermore, I examined novice teachers at the elementary and secondary level in public schools. The district utilized in the study is a large urban district with an enrollment of approximately 35,000 students at 36 campuses serving students in grades prekindergarten through 12. The district also contains one alternative education campus that serves students in grades 7 through 12. Novice teachers were limited to first-year teachers teaching at one of the district's supported campuses.

Assumptions

The participants for this study were derived through a purposeful sampling method. I

assumed that the participant pool would be representative of the overall population of novice teachers in the district being studied and, potentially, for districts that are similar in terms of size and demographics within an urban setting. Additionally, I assumed the teacher participants would provide truthful feedback during the individual interviews regarding teacher preparation programs and the initial year of teaching. Identified novice teachers were informed that their identities would remain confidential and that all responses would be held in strictest confidence; therefore, I assumed that all participants would provide honest and transparent statements during the interview process.

Definitions of Terms

To provide a clear and consistent understanding of the education-related terms utilized in this case study, the following definitions were utilized for this study.

- *Alternative certification program.* Alternative certification program candidates may or may not have earned a bachelor's degree or may have significant industry or military related experience in the field for which they seek to be certified. Other state certification requirements may be modified or waived, such as the type of education coursework or the length of practice teaching.
- *College preparation program.* Traditional college certification programs provide teacher certification through completing a bachelor's or master's degree in education, observing in a PK-12 school, completing a field-based experience, taking certification tests, and completing any additional state requirements.
- *District of Innovation.* H.B. 1842 (84th Session of the Texas Legislature) in part amended Chapter 12 of the Texas Education Code (TEC) to create Districts of Innovations. Districts are eligible for designation if certain performance requirements are met and they follow

certain procedures for adoption, as outlined in the statute. The designation provides that the district will be exempt from certain sections of the TEC that inhibit the goals of the district, as outlined in the innovation plan adopted locally. The term of the designation as a district of innovation may not exceed five years.

- *Education service center.* The mission of the Texas system of education service centers is to improve student achievement in Texas by developing high quality services that enable schools to operate more efficiently and economically, and to support educators as they prepare the future workforce of Texas.

- *Novice teacher.* For the purpose of this study, novice teacher is defined as a teacher in the first year of teaching. The timeframe also represents the genesis of teacher identity construction, which affects the type of teacher someone becomes well beyond his or her beginnings.

- *Pedagogy.* The science of teaching and instructional methods utilized by teachers.

- *Pedagogical content knowledge.* The instruction methods utilized by teachers to convey context knowledge and skills to students.

- *Teacher preparation survey.* Texas campus principals who have a first-year teacher(s) on his or her campus must complete a survey to measure the effectiveness of educator preparation programs. The survey assesses relevant educator preparation programs' effectiveness in preparing teachers to succeed in the classroom. Surveys are required for all first-year teachers who may be interns in an alternative certification program or first-year teachers who are newly certified. The survey applies only to Texas educator preparation programs. TEA established partnerships with organizations like the Texas Comprehensive Center at SEDL, and WestED to develop the principal surveys.

- *Texas Education Agency (TEA)*. The Texas Education Agency is the state agency governing the activities and programs related to PK-12 Texas education. The agency is responsible for a myriad of departments overseeing the progress of student learning, ensuring plans for successful student achievement, and providing support services for professional staff in Texas school districts.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation study includes five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study and includes the statement of the problem, the conceptual framework, the purpose of the study and research questions, the significance of the study, delimitations and assumptions, the definition of key terms, and a summary of the chapter. Chapter 2 presents a review of historical and current literature on teacher preparation programs and highlights current issues surrounding the various types of training programs utilized to prepare novice teachers. Chapter 3 includes a description of the method, identification of participants and sampling techniques utilized in the study, tools utilized in data collection, data analysis plans, researcher positionality, and limitations of the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings and results from the individual novice teacher survey and novice teacher interviews. Chapter 5 includes an overall summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Summary

A decline in the number of students choosing to enter a teacher education program caused states to turn attention toward alternative certification programs to bolster eligible novice teacher candidate pools. This increase in alternative programs and the shortened amount of preservice time novice teachers receive in preparation enhances the necessity to review current practices in training and preparing the novice teacher. A first year or novice teacher has all the responsibility

of a seasoned veteran but with little to no practical experience. Vital components of all preparation programs center around pedagogical subject and professional knowledge, education-related management strategies, building quality relationships, and practical real-world field experiences.

This study was designed to examine teacher preparation programs and their effectiveness in preparing novice teachers for the first year of teaching. Aspects of the study were examined through the perceptions of the practicing novice teachers. Novice teachers selected for participation in the study are professional teachers and were on staff in an urban Texas district. Chapter 2 is a review of literature relevant to this study, focusing on teacher preparation programs and their effectiveness in preparing novice teachers.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people.

~Chinese Proverb

Starting as early as the late 18th century, education leaders recognized the need for teacher preparation and the value of field experiences. To impact novice teacher effectiveness in the first year of teaching, the novice teacher must possess subject content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and practical knowledge of classroom management (Shulman, 1987).

In the late 1880s, teacher preparation programs that were designed to help prepare teachers for the classroom began to emerge. These programs started with simple summer conferences and, over time, evolved into college-based programs (Labaree, 2008). Although teacher preparation programs encountered numerous quandaries throughout the decades, they continued to evolve, focusing on how the field of education might be improved through the training and preparation of future teachers. Historically, teacher education programs addressed the knowledge and skills that novice teachers needed to possess to overcome the dilemmas they were expected to encounter in their daily practice (Schneider, 2018). Various field experiences and supervised internships that were designed to provide teacher candidates with effective guidance and mentoring were created to supplement the required teacher preparation coursework (Schneider, 2018; Fhaeizdhyall et al., 2017; Labaree, 2008).

Entering the 21st century, teacher preparation programs continue to address the issues of novice teachers and the difficulties they face in the first years of teaching. Current teacher preparation programs include both traditional college teacher preparation and alternative teacher preparation programs. These programs are similar, yet they also exhibit differences related to

program requirements and governmental regulations (Schneider, 2018). With the onset of alternative preparation programs, the landscape changed; however, the goals and issues inherent in preparing teachers to face the challenges of the classroom continued.

In this chapter, the literature surrounding teacher preparation programs is explored. The literature review begins with the historical background, the context of teacher preparation programs, and the challenges faced during the late 18th century through the middle of the 19th century and continued into the 20th century. The next section provides an overview of teacher education in the 21st century, followed by an explanation of college-based and alternative-based teacher preparation programs, and teacher induction and mentoring programs. Next is an analysis of the conceptual framework that guided this study. The final section provides a summary of the chapter.

Historical Background of Teacher Preparation

Prior to the 18th century and mid-19th century, teacher education and teacher preparation programs in America were overall non-existent. In general, teachers were given the opportunity to teach based on the philosophy of “take the class, teach the class” (Labaree, 2008, p. 291). Such a philosophy was evident in the selection of teachers, where most were drawn from the local community and encompassed a variety of backgrounds. Communities hired teachers based on the belief that once the individual completed a grade level of education, they could teach that grade level (Schneider, 2018; Labaree, 2008). Teachers were often appointed or hired based on their standing in the local community, with preferential treatment given to local business leaders, clergy, skilled craftsmen, or parents.

The 19th Century

Over the course of the first half of the 19th century, the shape and structure of education

started to change in America. The normal college began to serve as the foundation for the development of today's teacher education programs. Small, private institutions started offering professional courses for teachers. As the number of students in common schools grew, so did the demand for qualified teachers (Schneider, 2018). During this period, James Carter, Horace Mann, and Henry Barnard advocated for additional teacher training and education. The recommended training went beyond content knowledge and included pedagogy knowledge and skill as requirements to teach. Teachers attended a series of summer institutes where lectures and classes related to both content and pedagogy were offered. In 1837, Horace Mann defined a series of education principles, laying the foundation that education must be provided for all citizens, paid for, and administered by the public, referred to as Common Schools. To do so required the employment of a well-trained professional staff of teachers (Lynch, 2017; NYU: Steinhardt, 2018).

Common schools began to advance additional requirements for public school teachers and, as a result, began to expand. Through the advent of teacher colleges and universities, the concept of teacher education underwent a swift change, moving from a minimalist approach to a more graduated approach to teacher training (Schneider, 2018; Labaree, 2008). These changes brought about the sense that the teaching profession was a public trust that required professional certification and training whereby teachers could meet this new challenge (Labaree, 2008).

The 20th Century

Throughout the 20th century, the demand for qualified teachers continued. At the same time, bureaucratic demands surrounding the training, employment, and pay for teachers increased, and teacher preparation programs experienced significant advancement toward uniformity and standardization (Schneider, 2018). These changes ushered in the creation of a

standardized curriculum to be utilized in teacher preparation programs. Opportunities for students to gain significant field experience through student teaching were added. As these changes took effect, the teaching profession began to follow the path of other professions (Labaree, 2008).

In addition, colleges and universities developed and adopted accreditation standards to elevate the teaching profession and expand requirements for those entering the profession. Major obstacles facing teacher preparation were replaced with a standardized model of teacher preparation that required all participants to study pedagogy, gain field experience through student teaching, and understand the science behind learning (Schneider, 2018).

For the first time, teachers were required to obtain a license to teach (Schneider, 2018). Most teachers were able to obtain a teaching license following the completion of their teacher preparation program. Now, an alternative pathway also exists in most states, but those programs have fewer participants than traditional college-based preparation programs (Guthery & Bailes, 2019). As teacher preparation and licensing moved away from testing for certification, the focus turned toward completing and passing exams measuring teachers' knowledge of content and specific subjects (Labaree, 2008; Schneider, 2018). As the century ended, the rapid growth of alternative pathways to teaching and a new debate related to the volume of coursework and length of training for new teachers started to take place. New components were introduced to benefit novice teachers through mentoring programs, additional time spent in classrooms in the field, and a focused curriculum tied to student learning and achievement (Schneider, 2018).

Teacher Education Moving in the 21st Century.

The recruitment, retention, preparation, and induction of teachers in schools across America have been topics of discussion among educators for generations. Sutcher et al. (2016)

pointed to the decline in college students entering teacher education programs, moving from 35% in 2009 to 23% in 2014. Following this trend, the annual shortfall reached an average decrease of as many as 112,000 teachers per year.

Organizations need to adhere to identified core beliefs when hiring those who are new to the profession and have processes in place to ensure that those hires are well-trained and ready to be productive members of the organization (Collins, 2001). Similarly, Herb Kelleher, the former chairman of Southwest Airlines, often explained the need to hire the right person and provide the training necessary to create effective employees (Glazer, 2019). In the field of education, the demands placed on teachers who are new to the profession are incredibly high. According to Fhaeizdhyall and Kasuma (2017), many teacher preparation programs spend a significant amount of classroom time on how and why we teach rather than focusing on the vital skills novice teachers must learn to be successful in the classroom from the start of their teaching career. The purview of teacher preparation, the *what* question, refers to specific knowledge of subject content, pedagogy, curriculum, learning styles, abilities of students, and the various functions the teacher must be able to perform, in both the classroom and the education system. However, the answer to this question in education has evolved into the guiding factor in measuring the success of new teachers who ultimately impact student achievement daily. As the cost of training novice teachers continues to increase, a focus on recruitment and retention intensifies not only in selecting the best candidate but also ensuring continued student achievement and consistency in the classroom (Guthery & Bailes, 2019). By selecting the right candidate for the school from the start, schools and districts can retain teachers and provide support and training needed for novice teachers to succeed in the first years of teaching.

For the profession of educators, the development of a more comprehensive training

program that recruits, trains, and supports individuals who are interested in being teachers and future leaders in the education profession is important. Interested candidates need to be able to experience the day-to-day operations of a school and realize the commitment it takes to become a successful teacher. While teacher education programs and district-level programs may start with the training and active recruitment of talented young professionals, both programs must provide a robust education program that prepares future teachers to enter and remain in the teaching profession. Quality field-based experiences that focus on content-specific knowledge and practical applications within the school and classroom environment (Hollins, 2011) are integral to the success of a teacher preparation program. Further, school districts must offer their newly hired teachers a strong, well-developed, and comprehensive teacher induction program so they can continue their professional development, both at the start of their careers and throughout their employment with the district. Each of these elements plays a role in the development of the next generation of educators.

Hawk and Schmidt (1989) highlighted the impact of education reforms on the profession due to emphasis on the need for teacher preparation programs to be focused on a teacher's knowledge of content rather than on the actual elements related to teaching (Shulman, 1987). Specific knowledge of learners and how they learn; professional rules and regulations regarding teacher's interactions with peers, students, parents, and the community; and pedagogical and professional knowledge that helps teachers relate the subject matter at the level required to instruct students is to be gained on the job.

Teacher Preparation Programs

Within current teacher education preparation programs, teachers are classified into one of two groups: (a) one who completed a traditional college-based teacher preparation program, or

(b) one who completed an alternative teacher preparation program. Both programs contain positive aspects, yet both often provide few opportunities to gain real-world experience (Hawk & Schmidt, 1989). In most post-career fields, the amount of time and training spent on new employees throughout the first year is extensive (Jurgensen, 2016). However, novice teachers are typically sent through a gauntlet of training exercises prior to the start of school and then have classrooms filled with students who often are there under duress. The novice teacher is then wished well and sent on their way because teaching looks easy, and since they have been observing teaching for a minimum of 12 years (Labaree, 2008), they know the *what* and *how* to create a student center educational environment.

Hawk and Schmidt (1989) noted that the total training time offered by traditional teacher preparation programs exceeded alternative teacher preparation programs by approximately 45 hours of training on the essential skills. Both programs addressed topics related to time management, student behavior, presentation skills, monitoring instruction, and feedback. At that time, while alternative teacher preparation programs delivered the same amount of training in the areas of learning styles, pedagogical and professional knowledge, and student-teacher interactions, teachers trained in alternative education programs completed fewer hours regarding the field experience and internship aspects of the preparation program.

In a study conducted by Redding and Smith (2016), they evaluated alternative certification programs which utilized the standards developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS) conducted from 1999-2012. They found that 85% of alternative programs had low admissions standards, failed to ensure participants were adequately prepared, and offered little to no real-world field experiences. These oversight issues contribute to the increased teacher shortage, creating an avenue for educators to

feel lost within the initial years of teaching due to the lack of preparation for and exposure to the types of experiences they most likely face as full-time teachers.

In “Assessing the Assessments of Teacher Preparation,” Brabeck et al. (2016) published an article focusing on the procedures that are utilized to evaluate teacher preparation programs. The study focused on three primary indicators for which data were gathered and then assessed. Indicator one focused on student achievement, using value-added assessments. Gains were tracked over a period of the school year to determine the growth of students taught by first-year teachers. Brabeck et al. also identified significant components that must be present when utilizing value-added assessments. The instruments used were aligned to what is taught, vertically aligned over a period of years, and psychometrically sound. Indicator 2 focused on a standard teacher evaluation model. A standardized model allows for data to be extracted and shows growth or areas of concern over a period of a year. However, most teacher preparation programs do not utilize a standardized evaluation process, and of those programs that do employ a standardized evaluation model, only 15% of the instruments meet the standards for reliability and validity. The third indicator is a combination of surveys that use survey data collected from students, teachers, and supervisors. Student surveys focus on the effectiveness of instruction and expectations set by the teacher in the classroom. Teacher preparation surveys have novice teachers evaluating preparation programs on how well a teacher preparation program prepared them for the first year of teaching, while surveys for administrators often focus on novice teacher job performance, not on how prepared the novice teacher was for the first year of teaching. This disconnect in evaluation methodology allows for a greater variance in the evaluation of teacher preparation program effectiveness regarding novice teachers’ preparedness for the first year of teaching. Brabeck et al. (2016) identified areas of potential error that could ultimately affect the

overall results. They pointed to the quality of instruction and training for those conducting teacher observation and recommended that multiple sources of data be utilized when forming their conclusions. Overall, in the final analysis, the authors contended that we should not let “perfect be the enemy of the good” (p. 162) and suggested areas for future research: (a) the use of newly developed standardized end-of-course exams to track student achievement, and (b) a unified evaluation instrument with quality training and instruction for those utilizing the survey.

According to Kee (2012), in the United States, at that time, teachers were drawn from the ranks of alternative certification routes as opposed to traditional ways at a rate of 20-30%. Surprisingly, in Texas, 48% of initial teaching certificates for 2017-2018 were issued to individuals trained through an alternative preparation program (Texas Education Agency, 2019). The increasing percentage of teachers certifying under the umbrellas of alternative certification brings the type of program and training of these alternatively certified teachers to the forefront of discussion.

There are three components that relate to the confidence level of alternatively certified teachers, based on the type of program: the person, the program, and the school. A direct-level relationship with the programs can positively contribute to these three components and the participants’ feeling of preparedness for the job. Alternative certification programs focus on more of the practical aspects of teaching and less on the theoretical issues and leaders of those programs believe in a significant amount of on-the-job training in a real classroom (Kee, 2012).

College-Based Preparation Programs

Early in this century, university-based teacher preparation programs moved to strengthen their programs by requiring additional subject matter coursework, pedagogical strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners, and other clinical experiences (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002). In

some instances, these changes lengthened the traditional route to teacher certification by one additional year. The extra year allowed students to major in a specific discipline and minor in education. The process allowed students to develop significant teaching skills and pedagogy in dealing with student behavior, technology in the classroom, and English language learners. Teacher education preparation programs also restricted the number of schools where they placed interns to ensure an “extensive, carefully supervised” experience with “significant attention on the development of content-based pedagogy” (p. 293). Each of these carefully orchestrated changes led to the development of a cadre of new teachers who are more qualified and better prepared to enter the education workforce.

The traditional college teacher preparation programs provide a focus for those seeking to earn teacher’s certification and a bachelor’s degree. College-based teacher preparation programs differ from alternative teacher preparation programs based on the methodology utilized to prepare novice teachers for the field. Notable differences appear in the beginning stages of the program, where teachers in college-based programs spend more time developing academic and field experience in teaching. Additional time is spent on curriculum development and preparation to meet the needs of diverse learners in the classroom. Overall, the goal of college-based teacher preparation programs is to prepare novice teachers to teach in a variety of situations and classrooms while also providing field observations and experience for aspiring teachers (Matsko et al., 2018).

Alternative Preparation Programs

Kee (2012) published a study focused on three aspects: personal characteristics of first-year teachers, feeling of preparedness, and types of coursework in which candidates participated. Through a survey method, data were gathered regarding demographics, instruction in classroom

management, instruction in pedagogy, and exposure to a curriculum. The following factors were found to contribute to the feeling of preparedness: a common planning period with peers, principal-to-teacher communication regarding instruction, and vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum. The data provided a look into what the typical alternatively certified teacher looks like 58% of the time: they were over the age of 57; 70% of the time, they were Anglo; 60% of the time, they had a degree in an area other than education; and 38% of the time, they were making a career change. In addition, 71% of participating alternative certified teachers indicated they would feel better prepared when being part of programs with varying lengths of practical field teaching experiences. Fifty-six percent of the participants identified three areas where extensive coursework would improve a novice teacher's ability and confidence in being prepared: pedagogy, learning theory, and curriculum adaptation. The authors confirmed there was a difference in the preparedness and confidence of teachers based on the type of teacher certification program. They recommended that additional research be conducted to determine whether alternative certification teachers might identify their concerns and suggestions as a long-term or short-term change in the profession.

Housed in the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) tracks the number of candidates for alternative certification. Between 2013 and 2018, more than 60,000 initial certifications were issued through alternative education programs (Texas Education Agency, 2019). As the number of participants in alternative certification programs increases, the program requirements for such alternative teacher certification must be reexamined to ensure the novice teacher is prepared to meet the challenges of the classroom.

Teacher Induction

In 2017, Bastian and Marks published a study focusing on a federally funded teacher induction program that involved school districts and regionally based universities. The study was focused on first- and second-year teachers at designated low-performing schools in the state of North Carolina. The authors determined that nearly 25% of the teacher workforce had less than five years of experience, and those with the least amount of experience were concentrated at low-performing schools. A more comprehensive induction program would focus on improving teacher performance and would allow districts with shrinking budgets the opportunity to provide support for teachers new to the profession.

The North Carolina program provided support through instructional coaching, both virtually and in person, continual professional development, and multiple college campus-based training sessions before the start of school each year. The universities hired and trained practicing and retired master teachers to deliver instructional coaching and content for staff development. The program was designed to connect professional development, instructional coaching, and classroom practices to make changes in teachers' abilities and classroom outcomes. The study targeted 5% of the lowest-performing schools, which showed a graduation rate below 60%. The sample included first- and second-year teachers from these campuses. In collecting the data, Bastian and Marks (2017) utilized the "Education Value-Added Assessment System" (p. 370) that was developed to evaluate teachers in North Carolina. The study included 377 teachers on 59 campuses, in 16 school districts. The teachers represented 68% of the staff on the selected campuses with one year or less of experience, and 77% of the teachers were female. The students on these campuses received instruction from novice teachers 33% of the time and were identified as students who received free and reduced lunches at a rate of 93%. The results

showed that 72% of first-year teachers returned the following year to the same campus. The authors argued that universities and local districts should look for ways to work together and create teacher induction programs to the mutual benefit of both institutions. Identified areas of future research included a focus on the field of induction programs and how to best meet the needs of low-performing districts in rural communities where resources and funding are limited.

With the number of new teachers leaving the profession growing to 40-50% in the first five years, Richard Ingersoll and Michael Strong published a 2011 study on mentoring and induction programs and the impact these programs have on novice teachers. This study gathered information and data from previous research that focused on induction programs with three positive aspects of mentoring programs. The focus of the studies were teachers' classroom instructional practices, student achievement on standardized testing, and retention rates of teachers in current positions (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The research findings showed that the most frequent reason why teachers left the profession was a lack of support. With an efficient induction program, schools can reduce the teacher turnover rate and increase teacher satisfaction and retention.

The authors reported that one objective of the induction program was to help acclimate new teachers to the community and guide the teachers to understand the expectations of the local district. After reviewing more than 500 documents, the researchers settled on 15 studies to examine. These 15 studies included questionnaires, surveys, classroom observations, student achievement data, and individual interviews (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). By eliminating studies that did not use both quantitative and qualitative data and studies that did not compare both participants and non-participants, the reviewed studies were narrowed to the selected few. The data analysis examined three measurement indicators, including new teacher involvement with

mentors, professional development, and transition to teaching. A key factor discovered was that very rarely did induction, mentoring, or additional training happen alone. The authors did point to factors that impact the retention of teachers, which include involvement in an induction program for more than one year and that it takes a minimum of a half-year to improve instruction in a teacher's classroom. Ingersoll and Strong pointed out that to determine what an effective teacher is, you must first have a consistent definition of an effective teacher. The authors also suggested future research "to clarify and sort out which element, supports, and the kinds of assistance are best and why" (p. 227).

Teachers new to the profession often relate how unprepared and challenging the first year of teaching is. Typically, novice teachers are assigned courses where students struggle the most and these novice teachers have extra duties attached to them (Bauer, 2019). In a case study, Kearney (2017) examined the induction programs of new teachers in Sydney, Australia. The study was conducted to determine which of six programs utilized in the Sydney area were most useful and could be used by other schools as a model. The overarching purpose of the Kearney study was to determine what standard aspects of induction programs are and how they might be duplicated for other institutions. To gather data for the case study, Kearney completed a series of teacher surveys, interviews, and data documents to identify specifics regarding the institution's induction program. The process started with surveys sent to more than 100 teachers. After distributing the surveys, schools that responded were invited to join the case study. The campus-based research began with the researcher working with local schools to encourage first-year teachers and mentors to be involved in the case study. The meetings were structured with open-ended questions to allow for probing and follow-up questions. The evidence suggested that induction programs for the novice teacher are a valuable component of teacher training and

pairing the novice teacher with trained mentors enables provided additional support during the first years of teaching.

Teacher Mentors

Districts have turned to a mentoring program to stem the tide of nearly 17% of teachers leaving the profession in the first five years of their careers. These mentoring programs start at the instance novice teachers are hired and continue long after the first day of school. Effective mentoring starts with administrators and mentors as willing participants in developing novice teachers into experienced educators. Mentoring novice teachers requires mentors to possess more than the skill of an exceptional teacher; it requires the ability to support, assist, guide, and coach the novice teacher. Effective mentoring requires mentors to be a confidant, best friend, and wise and compassionate colleague to the novice teacher. Competent mentors exhibit exceptional classroom management techniques; effective communication techniques with students, parents, and colleagues; and are known for meeting deadlines and taking care of the tasks at hand. At the outset of the mentoring process, the mentor is responsible for transferring their passion for teaching to the novice teacher and building a secure link between teammates (Richardson et al., 2018; Dell'Angelo, 2016; Fairbanks et al., 2000).

A case study centered on secondary schools with an enrollment of 1,550 to 2,000 students spotlighted the mentoring of novice teachers. The case study's central focus was exemplified as a "pillar of best practice" from the teacher's perspective (Kearney, 2017, p. 784). The school focused on the ability of all members of the community to learn from each other. The school created an environment of shared leadership among the staff and developed procedures and committees of teachers to help in guiding the school's policies. All the components of the mentoring program were enforced through adopted policies to ensure that the fidelity of the

program was maintained during implementation. The school developed an induction program that placed participants in the program for two years and allowed for release time so the mentor could observe the new teacher and the new teacher observe the mentor. The mentoring program consisted of structured lessons, observations, and a weekly scheduled meeting between the mentor and the new teacher. The one negative aspect revealed during the interviews was a need for a system that would supervise the mentors more closely. The new teachers interviewed felt the dominant aspect of making the first year successful was the involvement of a quality mentor. The program evaluation conducted every year allowed adjustments to be made based on the feedback from teachers, mentors, and administrators.

Without a quality mentoring program, novice teachers are likely to be inducted in the “sink or swim induction” program that creates an environment where the novice teacher will utilize survival skills versus practices that best fit the situation (Wexler, 2019, p. 4). To help stem the tide of attrition and provide the needed support for novice teachers, districts are developing and utilizing mentoring programs to support teachers in setting and maintaining high expectations for all, creating environments where behavior is effectively managed, and focusing on mastery of all students (Wexler, 2019; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Richardson et al., 2019). An additional study was recommended around mentoring following a selected group of teachers through the first five years of their professional teaching career to determine if mentoring nurtures novice teachers and reduces the number of novice teachers departing the profession.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided the current study is comprised of two components. The first component focuses on the elements of a traditional college-based teacher preparation program and how participants are prepared to enter their first year of teaching. For that part of

the study, elements of college-based teacher preparation programs were examined, specifically elements of classroom management, curriculum, and lesson plan development, and technology training for online resources and learning management systems (LMS). The type and amount of field-based experience the participants received were examined, as well as how those experiences related later to their success or lack of success in the first year of teaching.

The second component of the study framework focuses on the elements of alternative teacher preparation programs and how participants were prepared to enter the classroom in their first year of teaching. The second part of this study was focused on program elements of an alternative preparation program, specifically the type of instruction the participants received in classroom management, curriculum and lesson development, and special program awareness, and what type of field-based experiences were part of the program. Finally, the last element examined was the use of technology and how it was utilized in education, from lesson planning to managing curriculum through an LMS program.

Thus, the two areas of focus were (a) traditional college-based teacher preparation programs and (b) alternative teacher preparation programs, including for-profit programs. The components led to an examination of each teacher preparation program and how each program influenced the novice teacher's ability to succeed in the first year of teaching in a public school and contribute to the campus and district in meeting their educational goals.

Summary

Teacher preparation programs have evolved over the past years with the onset of education reform and alternative preparation programs. Districts annually allocate significant resources toward induction and mentoring programs, which provide resources and support for the novice teacher. Starting early with attempts to improve teacher pedagogy and content

knowledge through a summer lecture series to the advent of teacher preparation programs at the university level, then with the onset of alternative certification programs, the focus on preparing the novice teacher has undergone many transformations. With the onset of education reform in 1980 and now with the decrease in student enrollment in college teacher education programs, the microscope has again focused on the preparation of novice teachers.

In addition to college and alternative preparation preservice programs, districts annually allocate significant resources towards induction and mentoring programs to provide resources and support for the novice teacher. These resources vary significantly based on the size and location of the district. District and campus environments where novice teachers are considered a valued part of the team and are expected to actively participate in the campus decision-making process have a consistently higher rate of retaining novice teachers than those who do dismiss or ignore the voice of novice teachers.

For this study, I explored the influences and impact that an alternative versus traditional college-based teacher preparation program had on the success of novice teachers in their first year of teaching, particularly their ability to effectively manage and provide instruction to students in their classrooms. In the period between 2013 and 2018, the State of Texas issued 105,000 initial teaching certificates, with 55% being issued to individuals in alternative certification programs, 40% issued to undergraduate and postgraduate students, and 5% issued to out-of-state candidates (Texas Education Agency, 2019). My purpose in pursuing this study was to gain insight into novice teachers' perceptions of the type of teacher preparation program they participated in to obtain their initial teacher certification and the program's effectiveness as to how well the program prepared them for their first teaching assignment.

Chapter 3 includes an explanation of the research method and research design, as well as the processes and procedures utilized to fulfill the purpose of the study and answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.

~William A. Ward

The overarching purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine and investigate the perspectives that novice teachers have about the type of teacher preparation program in which they participated. More specifically, I explored novice teachers' perspectives regarding the impact that a traditional college-based teacher preparation program versus an alternative teacher preparation program had on preparedness for success in the initial year of teaching.

The following research questions were used to guide this qualitative case study:

1. What impact did a traditional college-based teacher preparation program have on preparedness for success in the initial year of teaching, as told from the perspective of the novice teacher?
2. What impact did an alternative teacher preparation program have on preparedness for success in the initial year of teaching, as told from the perspective of the novice teacher?

In this chapter, the qualitative research design and approach that were utilized to conduct the study is described, as well as information about the research site and the recruited participants. Next, the data collection tools and procedures, as well as the data analysis processes and strategies, are reviewed. Ethical considerations, the positionality of the researcher, and the limitations of the study are presented, followed by a summary of the chapter.

Research Design

To address the purpose of this study and answer the research questions, an exploratory, qualitative case study research design was utilized. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a case study “involves the study of a case (or cases) within a real-life, contemporary context or

setting” (p. 97). In addition, an in-depth exploration and examination of a particular subject can be useful for generating knowledge and highlighting any potential issues that may be involved (Simons, 2009). A qualitative case study research design was an appropriate research method for this study as it aided in examining the types of teacher preparation programs as they relate to novice teachers’ perspectives of those programs. For this study, the phenomenon of interest pertained to the effectiveness of two types of teacher preparation programs, college-based and alternative, as told from the perspectives of novice teachers.

The exploratory, qualitative case study research design allowed for a determination of the relationship between the different components of different teacher preparation programs and an examination of which program may prove to be most effective in preparing novice teachers. By applying the features of a case study, novice teachers’ perceptions were identified and explored.

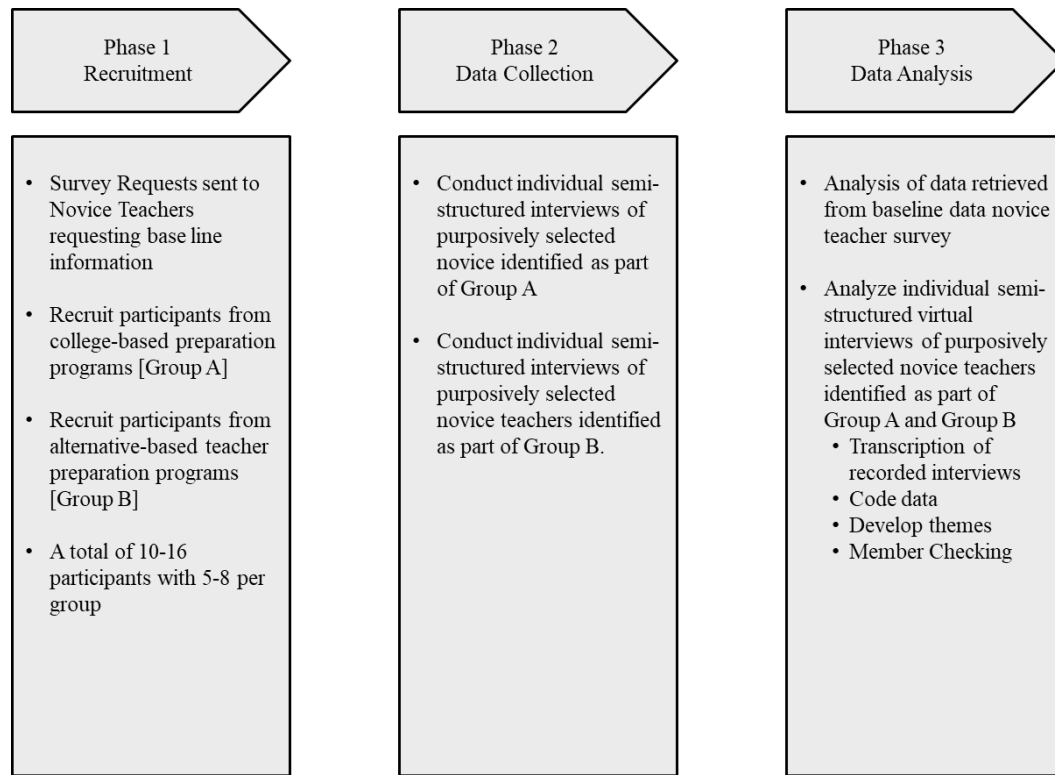
The selected research design allowed me to interact with novice teachers to gain insight into their perception of the effectiveness of two types of teacher preparation programs: traditional and alternative. By allowing the novice teachers to express their perceptions of how they were prepared for the initial years of teaching based on their own experiences, I was able to acquire a better understanding of the impact that different preparation programs have on the success of the novice teacher in their initial year of teaching. The design of the case study is represented in Figure 2, showing the elements of each phase of the case study.

By allowing the novice teachers to express their perceptions of how they were prepared for the initial years of teaching based on their own experiences, I was able to acquire a better understanding of the impact that different preparation programs have on the success of the novice teacher in their initial year of teaching. The end goal of this exploratory, qualitative case study was to gain insights into the perceptions of novice teachers in relation to the effectiveness

of teacher preparation programs and to analyze emerging questions and theoretical perspectives raised through the semi-structured interviews, as suggested by Hesse-Biber (2017).

Figure 2

Research Design



Population and Sample

The independent school district (ISD) utilized for this case study was a large urban Texas school district. This district serves as the overall population to which the sample may generalize. The district serves almost 35,000 students on 35 separate educational campuses, including early childhood centers serving PreK programs, elementary campuses serving kindergarten through fifth grade, middle school campuses serving sixth through eighth-grade students, and high schools serving students in grades 9 through 12. As shown in Table 1, the ISD has a total of

35,000 students with 35 campuses and 2310 professional staff. The data in this table are approximations.

Table 1

Student and Profession Staff Demographic Data for the ISD

	African American	Hispanic	White	American Indian	Asian	Pacific Islander	Two or More Races
Students Grades PK-12	4,000	25,000	3,500	800	1,200	100	400
Professional Staff	350	600	1,200	10	100	10	50

Source: 2019 Texas Academic Performance Report for the ISD

Table 2 displays the ISD professional staff years of service, exhibiting 200 professional staff identified as beginning teachers and 200 professional staff identified as having exceeded 20 years of professional experience while also showing that 2,000 professional employees have between 1 and 20 years of experience.

Table 2

Professional Staff Years of Experience in the ISD

	Beginning Teachers	1-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-20 Years	20+ Years
Professional Staff Experience	200	1,000	400	600	200

Source: 2019 Texas Academic Performance Report for the ISD

As represented in Table 3, the ISD has 40 professional staff identified with no degree and 30 staff identified as having earned a doctorate. According to the data in Table 3, most professional staff in the ISD have received at least a bachelor’s degree. In contrast, Table 2

indicates that half of the professional staff have between zero and five years of experience in education.

Table 3

Professional Staff Education in the ISD

	No Degree	Bachelors	Masters	Doctorate
Professional Staff Education	40	1,600	600	30

Source: 2019 Texas Academic Performance Report for the ISD

Description and Selection of the Participant Sample

After receiving approval for the study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of North Texas (UNT), I established communication with the ISD's human resources department to obtain information about first-year teachers employed in the ISD. The ISD human resource department provided a list of novice teachers through a public information request (PIR). A novice teacher survey was designed to collect preliminary information and to assist in the identification of potential novice teachers qualified to participate in this study. The survey was sent to all listed novice teachers, requesting that they consider participating in the survey. The survey questions asked the novice teachers to (a) identify which type of teacher preparation program they completed to earn their teacher certification and (b) indicate whether they would be willing to participate in the study. Information provided through the survey was utilized to establish a pool of potential participants. From the established pool of potential participants, teachers were purposively selected. Once recruited participants confirmed their willingness to participate in the study, they were informed that they would receive an invitation (Appendix A) to participate in the semi-structured interview process.

Data Collection Sources and Procedures

Initially, with assistance provided by the ISD, first-year teachers were contacted via email to inform them about the purpose of the study and ascertain their willingness to participate in the study. Those who agreed to participate completed a survey to determine the type of teacher preparation program in which they participated, the grade level they taught at that time, the subject(s) they taught, demographic data relating specifically to the participant, and background information relating to teacher preparation programs. Participants for the individual semi-structured interviews were identified based on the results of this novice teacher survey.

Data collection consisted of two data sources: (1) the novice teacher survey (Appendix B) and (2) the novice teacher semi-structured individual interview (Appendix C) with teachers who participated in each type of teacher preparation program.

Novice teachers who identified a willingness to participate in the study and represented the preparation programs were interviewed according to the semi-structured interview protocol. Individual interviews for the novice teachers purposefully selected from the available pool were utilized to gain insight into the teachers' perception of the teacher preparation programs and novice teacher preparedness for the first year of teaching. Prior to the individual interview, the purpose of the study and the process for maintaining participant confidentiality were explained, and any questions or concerns were answered. Prior to the start of the semi-structured interviews, the COVID-19 pandemic restricted the ability to conduct in-person interviews and resulted in the utilization of an online video conference system to conduct the interviews. The semi-structured interviews were scheduled with participants and conducted utilizing Zoom™, an online video conferencing communication platform that allowed me to record the semi-structured interviews.

Each of the questions utilized during the interview were designed to elicit insight into the

perceptions of how prepared or unprepared novice teachers felt they were to meet the challenges of the first years of teaching. Probing questions were utilized to expand on responses and gain clarification as needed. The last step in this semi-structured interview process was to ask the novice teacher if there was any area they believed should be covered or discussed that was not previously covered. Participants were encouraged to provide additional thoughts and insights into their teacher preparation program to aid in determining their perceptions of teacher preparation programs. All selected participant interviews were conducted with the participant's permission, and participants were advised that they would be asked to review and validate their responses after transcription of the audio-recorded interview.

Data Analysis Plan

Novice semi-structured individual interviews were audio recorded, with participant permission. All recorded sessions were transcribed utilizing the transcription service Rev.com™. Security of the transcribed documents began with the recording itself being stored on a secured server and transmitted to Rev.com via a transport layer security (TLS) encryption platform (Myers, 2017). TLS is a standard security layered system utilized to move data between sources and ensures that all data are kept secure and confidential.

After completing the initial transcription, all interview participants were given the opportunity to fact-check the transcription for accuracy. This member checking allowed the interview participants to review the interview transcription and add additional comments or explanations to clarify responses. Once the review process was completed and checked for accuracy, the transcripts were analyzed to identify keywords and phrases and grouped based on similar meanings.

Data analysis was conducted to formulate meaningful themes from semi-structured

interviews according to the steps outlined by Hesse-Biber's (2017) model consisting of data preparation, data exploration, data coding, and the last step of data interpretation. Through the initial coding process, common themes were identified that were consistent among the semi-structured interviews. By allowing the findings to emerge naturally, connections between novice teacher perceptions and teacher preparation programs naturally emerged. As the researcher, I examined each of the individual novice teacher interviews to identify areas of commonality in teacher preparation, pedagogy, classroom management, and overall teaching effectiveness and how that knowledge was exemplified in the first year of teaching. I reviewed the data independently to check for reliability and accuracy in connection with the data coding process. Each data portion was reviewed and analyzed to identify common words, phrases, and themes. Triangulation was accomplished using data collected via the novice teacher survey and analyzed results from the transcribed interviews after interview themes were identified. After completing the coding and analysis processes outlined above, a narrative was developed that reflects all the participants' responses and the overall findings.

Positionality

As the primary researcher in a qualitative case study, the researcher needs to conduct the aspects of the study with an open mind and ethically. Researchers must also remain transparent during data collection and analysis and acknowledge any potential for bias concerning the study's purpose and intent. It was equally important for me, as the researcher, to recognize that knowledge of the ISD and teachers is a possible area of bias and that being aware of this relationship should aid in the elimination of any undue influence on the results of the case study, as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018).

As a practicing administrator for over 20 years in the public-school setting, it is

imperative to note that I previously served as a central office administrator and classroom teacher in the district but did not participate in the hiring or assigning personnel in the district.

Nevertheless, prior to my employment with the district involved in this study, I was directly involved in hiring and evaluating teachers during their initial years of service. While these experiences posed the possibility of bias on my part, they also provided me with knowledge regarding the hiring process for novice teachers. This knowledge aided in the opportunity to interact more freely with the participants and to facilitate my efforts to obtain relevant and authentic data regarding the type of teacher preparation programs that are most successful in preparing teachers for their initial years in the profession. The credibility of this case study lies within the researcher because the researcher serves as the primary research instrument; therefore, the skill and competence of the instrument must be consistent and maintain a predisposition that limits their own bias throughout the study. It should also be noted that in my experiences working with novice teachers as a campus and district administrator, I worked with teachers who participated in both college-based and alternative teacher preparation programs.

Utilizing reflexivity during this qualitative case study limited my personal experiences and background from influencing and shaping the interpretation of collected data, as stressed by Creswell (2014). Remaining vigilant during the data analysis of my experiences as a teacher and administrator to bracket and nullify preconceived outcomes of the interview responses allowed for accurate and meaningful interpretations of collected data. Each novice teacher participant provided their perceptions regarding how prepared they felt for the first year of teaching. At the same time, I resisted any inclination to rely on personal experiences to influence the outcomes of the case study.

Limitations of the Study

The primary limitation to the case study stemmed from the need to identify and recruit a pool of novice teachers to participate in the study and gain their trust and commitment to continue their participation. In relation to the timeline to collect survey data, select interview participants, and conduct the interview of novice teachers, consideration was given to schedule interviews towards the end of the first year of teaching. With full realization of the demands placed on teachers to establish the culture and norms in classrooms, it was necessary to schedule the interviews outside of the initial first weeks of a new semester and prior to a significant holiday or break. To aid in recruiting novice teachers to participate in the novice teacher survey and semi-structured interviews, all participants were provided with an Amazon gift card after completing the activities. The amount of a gift card was increased to help in the recruiting process; however, it failed to entice any additional participants. Gaining the trust of all participants was vital to acquiring quality responses and gaining an in-depth understanding of the barriers and constraints associated with the initial year of teaching and the preparation program novice teachers utilized to gain teacher certification. Every effort was made to gain the trust of the participants. Throughout the study, participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and the way data would be maintained.

Ethical Considerations

Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the study was conducted virtually to ensure the participants' safety and confidentiality. I utilized a purposive sample to identify novice year teachers based on the type of teacher preparation program utilized to pursue teacher certification. Each novice teacher was asked to read and sign an informed consent form prior to participating, with the assurance of confidentiality in their responses.

In conducting this qualitative case study research, it was essential to recognize and determine the ethical questions and considerations that must be addressed in any case study. Mandated review and approval of the case study by the IRB ensured that the study adhered to ethical standards and that all participants were aware of the purpose behind the case study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to beginning any session related to the case study. Hesse-Biber (2017) argued that “informed consent is a question of basic human rights” (p. 74) and is intended to ensure that participants are free from any mental or physical harm. Processes for the novice teacher individual interview sessions were shared and explained to all participants prior to the session. Pseudonyms were used in place of the school district, the schools, and participants to assure confidentiality. The identity of the participants and any individuals named by the students was kept confidential. A key to maintaining the specific identities of the participants was developed to assist with the data analysis of the study; however, I was the only person holding the key that signified the actual identification of participants. Participants were informed that at any point in the study, they were able to discontinue their participation in the study.

Summary

The purpose of this exploratory, qualitative case study was to analyze the impact on novice teachers of different avenues utilized to obtain initial teacher certification in Texas. The comparison between college-based and alternative teacher preparation programs was analyzed to determine the effect on novice teachers’ success. The intention of the case study was to collect data from novice teachers in or completing the first year of teaching and the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. Identification and exploration of identified themes began after the initial novice teacher survey and individual novice teacher semi-structured interviews. The

survey results and transcriptions of interviews were reviewed, categorized, and emergent themes were identified. These themes then led to the detailed report of the findings from the novice teacher survey and semi-structured individual interviews, as provided in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.

~William A. Ward

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine and investigate the perspectives that novice teachers have towards the type of teacher preparation program in which they participated. More specifically, the intent of this study was to explore novice teachers' perspectives regarding the impact that a traditional college-based teacher preparation program versus an alternative teacher preparation program had on preparedness for success in the initial year of teaching. The study examined the perspectives of novice teachers and how prepared they felt for their first year of teaching. Therefore, this study focused on the experiences of novice teachers. The following research questions guided this qualitative case study:

1. What impact did a traditional college-based teacher preparation program have on teachers' preparedness for success in the initial year of teaching, as told from the perspective of the novice teacher?
2. What impact did an alternative teacher preparation program have on teachers' preparedness for success in the initial year of teaching, as told from the perspective of the novice teacher?

This chapter includes the findings from the qualitative case study. To answer the research questions, the study's findings are organized first by the survey responses and then by participant responses from each of the two groups (college-based and alternative preparation programs). Findings are related to the research question, and themes are identified as determined by the survey and individual interview responses. Two different data collection methods were utilized in the case study: (a) a novice teacher survey was conducted with a total of 19 participant responses, then (b) seven semi-structured, virtual interviews were conducted with representatives from each type of teacher preparation program represented in the study. The questions contained

in the novice teacher survey and the individual virtual interview protocol centered around the perceptions of the novice teacher about the teacher preparation program in which they participated. The questions contained in the novice teacher survey gathered general demographic and background information from the participants, while the interview questions centered on individual experiences in their first year of teaching. In the initial stages of the data analysis process, survey data and interview responses were analyzed and grouped according to the type of teacher preparation program the respondent identified.

Overview of the Study

Qualitative data were collected from two separate data collection instruments: (a) a novice teacher survey and (b) individual virtual face-to-face interviews. Qualtrics was utilized to collect responses to the novice teacher survey, and the virtual interviews were conducted using Zoom™, an online virtual communication platform. Prospective novice teachers were identified from the ISD's employment records for the 2019-2020 school year through a public information request. The online novice teacher survey link was sent to a total of 92 novice teachers. A total of 19 participants responded to the 18 novice teacher survey questions, for a response rate of 21%. The questions allowed the respondent to supply demographic information, respond to two open-ended questions, and choose to rate their perspective on broad general questions regarding teacher preparation. The survey also provided individual perceptions towards classroom management, lesson planning, distance learning, meeting the needs of special populations, and the creation of content-based lessons. Two questions asked the respondent to identify the subject(s) currently taught and describe the factors influencing their choice of teacher preparation programs. Survey data also provided insight into the respondent's age, gender, ethnicity, and teacher preparation program type. Respondents also self-identified for the interview process.

Eleven respondents indicated their willingness to participate in the interview phase of the qualitative case study. The interview provided qualitative data from three categories of pedagogy, classroom management and organization, and teacher program effectiveness.

Survey Findings

To analyze data from the novice teacher survey, I examined the responses from the study participants regarding what influenced their choice of teacher preparation programs.

Respondents identified that the major factors that influenced their choice of the program were flexibility, ease of the program, master's program included as part of the program, online program, independent work, and self-paced program. A key factor for all respondents when considering alternative certification was the benefit of working and studying at the same time. For college-based programs, a key concept was the ability to study both in a core content area and participate in teacher education at the same time.

The survey was sent to 92 recruited participants; of those, 19 responded. Multiple attempts were made to solicit additional responses with no additional participation from the original potential pool of participants. Responses were gathered from 6 males and 13 females for a total of 19 responses. Of those, 9 participated in a college-based teacher preparation program and 10 participated in an alternative teacher preparation program (See Table 4). Twelve respondents' ages ranged from 20 to 28 with the 7 additional respondents' ages spread between four other age ranges. Of the 19 respondents, 11 had earned a minimum of a bachelor's degree, 6 had earned a master's degree, and 2 had earned doctorate degrees (see Table 5). Respondents who identified as participating in a college-based preparation program had goals of becoming teachers when entering college, while those who participated in an alternative preparation program took a different path to teaching by first working in industry and then later pursuing the teaching

profession. Two respondents identified as having had previous experience in higher education and private sector industry careers. The responses to the survey identified 13 teachers who taught in core subject areas and 6 teachers who taught in elective areas.

Table 4

Gender and Ethnicity Data

Program Type	Gender		Ethnicity			
	Male	Female	Caucasian	Hispanic	African American	Multi-Racial
College Preparation	1	8	5	3	0	1
Alternative Preparation	5	5	7	2	1	0

Table 5

Age Range and Degree Data

Program Type	Age Range					Degree Type		
	20-28	29-34	35-40	41-46	50 +	B	M	D
College Preparation	7	0	0	0	2	7	2	0
Alternative Preparation	5	3	1	1	0	4	4	2

B = bachelor, M = masters, D = doctorate

Surveyed teachers responded to eight questions regarding how well they were prepared for general teaching concepts. As seen in Table 6, these concepts centered around (A) classroom management and organization, (B) the use of technology, (C) the creation of effective lessons, (D) meeting the needs of diverse student populations, (E) learning management systems, (F) online learning platforms, (G) special education, (H) and creation of spiraling lessons. The overall results of the responses are represented in Table 6 for both alternative preparation and college preparation participants.

Survey participants responded that 45% of the time, they felt sufficiently prepared, and

28% of the time, they were either not at all prepared or not sufficiently prepared. Survey responses show the areas of least preparation were in meeting the needs of diverse learners and special education while being best prepared to create effective lessons, learning management systems, and online learning platforms.

Table 6

Respondents' Ratings of Preparedness

Preparedness Level/Concept	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Not at All Prepared	1	0	1	2	3	6	4	0
Not Sufficiently Prepared	4	4	2	3	1	3	5	4
Sufficiently Prepared	11	7	9	6	10	5	8	12
Well Prepared	3	8	7	8	5	5	2	3

Overall, the survey responses indicated that 27% of the time, survey participants felt well prepared; 45% of the time the time, they felt sufficiently prepared; 26% of the time, not sufficiently prepared; and 11% of the time, not at all prepared. Respondents indicated that they felt least prepared in online learning platforms and special education and best prepared in creating effective lesson plans. As indicated in Table 6, other areas where survey participants felt least prepared were classroom management and differentiation of lesson plans. Additional areas of being sufficiently and well prepared were utilizing technology in instruction, managing curriculum resources, and creating spiraling lesson plans to improve student mastery. Survey participants responded to two open-ended questions, one asked what influenced their decision when deciding on what type of teacher preparation program to participate in and the other asked what subject(s) they were currently teaching. As indicated in Table 7, 10 participants taught at the high school level (9th through 12th grades), four at the middle school level (6th through 8th grade), four at the elementary level (Kindergarten through 5th grades), and one at the

prekindergarten level.

Table 7

Grade Levels Taught

Program Type	9-12	6-8	K-5	Pre-K
College Preparation	4	1	3	1
Alternative Preparation	6	3	1	0

Five teachers indicated they taught in a self-contained classroom and taught all core subject areas, while four teachers were teaching in the career and technical education (CTE) program. The remaining 10 teachers taught various middle school and high school core subject courses. Teachers taught various subjects and grade levels, as detailed in Table 8.

Table 8

Subject Areas Taught

Program Type	9-12 Core Subject	6-8 Core Subject	K-5 Self-Contained	Pre-K Self-Contained	CTE
College Preparation	3	1	3	1	1
Alternative Preparation	4	2	1	0	3

The survey gathered teachers’ responses regarding what influenced their choice of an alternative or college-based preparation program. Ten survey respondents participated in an alternative preparation program, and nine participated in a college-based program. Reasons varied regarding the type of program they chose, ranging from accessibility, ease of the program, college advisors’ advice, receiving degree and certification at the same time, flexibility, and family recommendations. Additionally, the influence of family and friends impacted the respondents’ choice for an alternative program while those who chose to enroll in a college-based preparation program indicated that receiving a degree and certification at the same time

influenced their decision. Reasons for choosing teaching as a profession ranged from wanting to teach, working with children, and the opportunity to impact children’s lives.

Interview Findings

What follows is a presentation of the findings and themes that emerged as they aligned to the contextual factors that influenced perceptions of the novice teacher and the study participants' preparation program. Overall, the individual interview participants provided the level of preparedness felt after participating in a teacher preparation program and teaching for one year. These characteristics included (a) why chose teaching and the first year, (b) program characteristics and content, (c) pedagogy and management, (d) professional development and mentoring, and (e) overall perceptions. In Table 9 are the identified themes based on the novice teacher responses and are further explained in the interview findings for each program type

Table 9

Characteristics Examined – Emergent Themes

Characteristic	College-Based Emergent Theme	Alternative Emergent Team
Why Chose Teaching – The First Year	Diversity of Teaching Staff	Family Influence
	Hometown District	Career Decision
	Impact on Students	Impacting Students
Program Characteristics - Content	Certification	Certification
	Foundations of Teaching	Online Program
	Field Experience	Foundations for Teaching
Pedagogy - Management	Content Preparedness	Lesson Preparedness
	Classroom Organization	Building Relationships
Professional Development - Mentoring	District Requirements	District Requirements
	District Expectations	Mentoring
Overall Perceptions	Building Relationships	On-the-job training
	Areas for Growth	Connecting with Students

College-Based Preparation Interview Findings

Research Question 1 was designed to gain an understanding and insight into the impact of a traditional college-based teacher preparation program on the level of preparedness participants felt after the first year of teaching. For commonality, as the researcher, I examined each of the individuals who self-identified as participating in a college-based teacher preparation program. As a result of the survey and one-on-one interviews, four primary areas emerged from the results: (a) why they chose teaching, why they chose a college-based teacher preparation program, and why they chose the current district; (b) content and pedagogy preparedness; (c) professional development; (d) mentoring and administration support. In Tables 10 and 11, a comparison of the survey and the interview responses for college-based participants is presented.

Table 10

College Preparation Novice Teacher Survey Responses

Preparedness Level/Concept	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Not at All Prepared	0	0	1	2	2	3	3	0
Not Sufficiently Prepared	2	2	1	1	0	2	2	2
Sufficiently Prepared	5	3	4	1	5	2	3	6
Well Prepared	2	4	3	5	2	2	1	1

Table 11

College Preparation Novice Teacher Interviewee Survey Responses

Preparedness Level/Concept	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Not at All Prepared	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
Not Sufficiently Prepared	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
Sufficiently Prepared	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Well Prepared	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1

Survey responses for college-based preparation program interview participants compared to the college-based survey complete group provided insight into the levels of preparedness teachers felt after completing the program and teaching for a year. Tables 10 and 11 represent survey results for college-based respondents and focused on 8 concepts: (A) classroom management and organization, (B) the use of technology, (C) the creation of effective lessons, (D) meeting the needs of diverse student populations, (E) learning management systems, (F) online learning platforms, (G) special education, (H) and creation of spiraling lessons. Table 11 represents the interviewees' breakout compared to Table 10, which represents the college-based survey group results. Of the 8 survey questions, for the college-based participants, 33% of the time, interview participants indicated they were sufficiently prepared, while 17% indicated they were not prepared. Overall, the interviewees indicated that they were sufficiently or well prepared 58% of the time, and 42% of the time were not sufficiently or not at all prepared. College preparation interview participants indicated that the areas of least preparation were the areas of differentiation of lessons to meet the needs of diverse learners and special education.

Table 12

College-Based Individual Interview Emergent Themes

Characteristic	College-Based Emergent Theme
Why Chose Teaching – The First Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity of Teaching Staff • Hometown District • Impact on Students
Program Characteristics - Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification • Foundations of Teaching • Field Experience
Pedagogy - Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Preparedness • Classroom Organization

(table continues)

Characteristic	College-Based Emergent Theme
Professional Development - Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Requirements • District Expectations
Overall Perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Relationships • Areas for Growth

When participants were asked the interview protocol questions, the responses were revealing. The protocol item concepts and themes are next presented, with participant responses that aligned with those questions. Themes identified as a result of the college-based individual semi-structured interviews are identified in Table 12.

Why Chose Teaching - The First Year

In the virtual one-on-one semi-structured interview with college-based teacher preparation participants, they indicated that the following reasons were the basis on which they chose to be a teacher and the influences for applying in their current district. Participants were able to share the reasons behind choosing a career in teaching ranging from seeing a need in their community to helping others to learn. The responses also indicated the reason for applying and working in their current district to be growing up in the district, being familiar with the district, and being alums of the campus where they currently teach. Additional factors that emerged from the interview were the need for a more significant representation of the different ethnicities in the district and teachers who love learning. One participant, CB2, stated that when applying for a position in the district, "It is harder than not, but I got lucky" to be hired not only in the district where I graduated but also on the high school campus I attended. An overarching theme was to add to the campus diversity to increase the number of teachers who look like and have familiar experiences as the students.

As the teachers took up their posts in the first year, they faced the unthinkable of the

school moving from a face-to-face to a virtual environment overnight due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. A point raised during the interviews was a challenge not only for novice teachers but also for veteran teachers. As stated by CB2, "patience, patience, and leniency" were needed as they transitioned to online work and moved towards the end of the semester while remembering their students are children, not just students with all the anxiety and uncertainty associated with a rapidly changing environment. In reflection on the first year of teaching, CB3 indicated that a lot changed from the first day of school to the last day, but the overall goal of developing leadership skills, learning the content, and supporting each other was constant. Focusing on their students' needs and changing the expectations from how to account for students' attendance virtually to keeping students on track in a virtual environment were concerns and skills each participant developed and utilized during their first year.

Program Characteristics - Content

In responding to questions regarding college-based preparation programs, the respondents provided various points of view on how the program's characteristics prepared them not only for certification tests but also for the first year of teaching. One of the respondents, CB1, stated "It was a little confusing for us" regarding the certification process and how to prepare for the certification test with little to no support. While CB 2 offered that the program would benefit significantly from "getting actual teachers" to share their experiences of teaching in an urban rather than a rural district. The interviewees also pointed to the fact that additional instruction before entering the field was needed to differentiate lessons, provide students identified in special populations with appropriate instruction, and manage a classroom of students experiencing trauma. As CB2 stated, "In a perfect world, all kids are learning at the same rates." I quickly learned that is not the case once a respondent was presented with actual scenarios.

Regarding field experience, CB3 shared that the student teacher needed to be "integrated into the classroom where the teacher is doing more than observing" and be given responsibilities and integrated as part of the instructional team presenting the lesson.

The college-based traditional program participants voiced areas of growth that included more robust planning opportunities with cooperating teachers during the field experiences to help them gain the skills needed to differentiate a lesson for the various student populations in the classroom. As CB3 stated, one of the biggest struggles was "terminology" used in the field versus the theory taught in the college classroom and that the language of education is constantly evolving and changing. Additional opportunities for these novice teachers to learn about special populations (for example, emergent bilingual students, special education students, 504 students) and how to meet their needs were identified as critical. As CB1 observed, "We learned a lot about English language learners"; however, this teacher noted that there are other groups teachers need to know about and strategies to meet their needs in a diverse classroom. These novice teachers shared that having a great mentor was the key to fulfilling a meaningful field experience during college and the first year of teaching. They also communicated the feeling of being rushed to finish the program and take the certification test; however, there were few to no opportunities to work as a cohort in preparing for the tests, and they felt that they struggled significantly during the testing process for certification.

Pedagogy - Management

When asking novice teachers who participated in college-based preparation about their perceptions of how prepared they were in teaching strategies and classroom management, they responded positively and negatively. As a collective group, they felt prepared regarding content; however, the aspects of putting that content knowledge towards instruction and management of

the classroom is where the novice teachers felt they needed additional preparation. Respondent CB1 specified that additional experience is needed "in unpacking the TEKS and in the terminology used by administration and other teachers." Areas where CB1 felt adequately prepared were in the content area of reading foundations. Respondent CB2 shared: "We learned a lot" regarding how to differentiate and be "adaptable." CB2 also stated that the support of veteran teachers who were willing to help and support the novice teacher in the first year was invaluable.

Field experience to gain practical implementation of the content and management techniques learned in courses was a common area of concern among the novice teachers interviewed. Regarding systems used for classroom management, CB2 stated, "I was not prepared on how it was going to work and how I should organize my classroom." Respondents indicated that being organized is the key to success, and it is more than just manila folders in which students turn in assignments. Using a learning management system helped with the organization of materials and assignments, even though the novice teachers indicated that they received little to no exposure to software the district used before employment.

Understanding the culture present in the classroom became a necessity for the novice teacher to ensure that all students had an equal opportunity to learn. The novice teachers interviewed indicated that the alternative program in which they participated did not include any instruction on what classroom culture is and how the effect that the culture they create in the classroom has on their overall management of a class. Additionally, the novice teachers remarked that neither the administration nor assigned mentors provided any support in developing a strong classroom culture. They were told to improve their classroom management but received little to no guidance. They recognized that knowing the classroom culture helped

them develop and implement techniques and systems utilized in different classes during the day and provided opportunities for them to improve their classroom management skills and ability to engage with students.

Professional Development - Mentoring

The district provided professional development prior to and during the first year of teaching for all new and returning staff, along with a new teacher program. In that district, all teachers must obtain 30 clock hours of professional development each year. The district provides a beginning-of-the-year professional development week where teachers can obtain up to 12 hours of the required training. Teachers must obtain an additional 18 hours during the school year at the district or campus level. The district also instituted a mentor-mentee and new teacher program to help novice teachers transition from college to the classroom. The novice teacher respondents received a variety of training that addressed gifted and talented; emergent bilingual students; behavioral, social, and emotional learning; and advancement via individual determination (AVID).

The district had instituted a new teacher program that includes a mentor-mentee program to support novice teachers in the first year of teaching. The new teacher program consisted of monthly meetings where novice teachers were provided release time from their campus to attend workshops to provide support to those new to the profession. The workshops included opportunities to manage the classroom environment, learn education vocabulary, connect to learners, and work with a mentor. Instructional coaches on each campus also supported novice teachers. These supports provided opportunities for the novice teacher to reach out for help and support along with specific training for common areas of need. As CB1 stated, "I have reached out to teachers, first-year teachers, and veteran teachers" both next door and in the district with

questions, and they have all been beneficial. Respondent CB2 commented that part of the process for professional development and new teacher program workshops was to ensure that "this is what we want from a teacher" in the district and that "it helps because it gives a different perspective" on what the district expects. According to CB2, the district established an environment "by asking questions" to ensure an understanding of how to meet expectations.

Overall, the district provided novice teachers with well-rounded professional development and support as novice teachers by providing opportunities to share successes and failures through the new teacher program and providing each novice teacher with mentors and instructional coaches. A respondent commented that the assigned mentor knew where help was needed and provided guidance throughout the first year. Other mentors were supportive; however, the approach was quite different as CB1 commented that the assigned mentor "was not smothering" but would check in to see how things were going.

Overall Perceptions

Respondents indicated that the type of program they participated in influenced campus and district administration during the selection process. However, the novice teachers accounted for this as CB1 stated that administrators have "built relationships" with college preparation field supervisors, established communication lines, and created support avenues to use when a novice teacher from that program is struggling during the first year of teaching. Knowing that the program that prepared the novice teacher for teaching is well known is also a factor that the novice teachers indicated helped in getting the first job. When administrators knew the history of the college preparation program and that the college has a history of being a "teacher's school," this provided a network of previous participants and a history of successful transition from college theory to the classroom.

Novice teachers were asked during the interview to give their overall thoughts on the college-based teacher preparation program and how it has affected novice teachers during the first year of teaching. Various responses were received, as respondent CB1 indicated the requirement for both the "observation hours and student teaching," where preservice teachers observe veteran teachers and practice what has been observed, was invaluable. The respondents identified additional factors that needed improvement in the program. Examples of areas of improvement included: (a) a realistic representation of what a teaching career looks like; (b) a more rigorous program in terms of what the transition would look like from college to the classroom; (c) less lecture and more application of theory and systems used in a classroom; (d) how to manage expectation in the classroom and choosing the battles to fight; (e) follow up by the college program after graduation during the first year; and (f) quality is more important than quantity. Additionally, the interviewees pointed to the areas of certification where more guidance and preparation are needed to ensure that the graduate knows what certifications are needed to get hired by a district. In some instances, the novice teachers believed that the process needed to be more precise and that there needed to be more guidance from the college program. Lastly, when discussing with the novice teachers why they chose the profession, CB1 indicated, "I wanted to see teachers who looked like me, that represent my community" in our district, to know that the teacher population represents other ethnicities. However, finding a teacher resembling the novice teacher took a lot of work. Others indicated that they had always wanted to teach, so they attended a college with a teacher preparation program.

Alternative Preparation Findings

Research Question 2 was designed to gain an understanding and insight into the impact of an alternative teacher preparation program on the level of preparedness participants felt after the

first year of teaching. As the researcher, I examined each of the individuals who self-identified as participating in an alternative teacher preparation program for commonality. As a result of the survey and one-on-one interviews, four primary areas emerged from the results: (a) why they chose teaching, why an alternative teacher preparation program, and why the current district, (b) content and pedagogy preparedness, (c) professional development, and (d) mentoring and administration support. Tables 13 and 14 show a comparison of the survey and interview responses for alternative teacher preparation program participants.

Table 13

Alternative Preparation Novice Teacher Survey Responses

Preparedness Level/Concept	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Not at All Prepared	1	0	0	0	1	3	1	0
Not Sufficiently Prepared	2	2	1	2	1	1	3	2
Sufficiently Prepared	6	4	5	5	5	3	5	6
Well Prepared	1	4	4	3	3	3	1	2

Table 14

Alternative Preparation Novice Teacher Interviewee Survey Responses

Preparedness Level/Concept	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Not at All Prepared	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Not Sufficiently Prepared	0	2	0	1	1	1	2	0
Sufficiently Prepared	3	2	4	2	2	0	2	4
Well Prepared	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0

Survey responses for alternative preparation programs interview participants compared to the alternative preparation survey entire group provided insight into the levels of preparedness teachers felt after completing the alternative program and teaching for a year. Tables 13 and 14

represent survey results for college-based respondents and focused on 8 concepts: (A) classroom management and organization, (B) the use of technology, (C) the creation of effective lessons, (D) meeting the needs of diverse student populations, (E) learning management systems, (F) online learning platforms, (G) special education, (H) and creation of spiraling lessons. Table 14 represents the survey results of the interviewees as compared to Table 13, which represents the alternative preparation group survey results. Of the eight survey questions, 59% of the time, interview participants indicated they were sufficiently prepared, while 22% of the time they indicated they were not sufficiently prepared. While overall, the alternative preparation participants indicated that they were sufficiently or well prepared 25% of the time and 75% of the time they felt they were not sufficiently or not at all prepared. Alternative preparation interview participants indicated that the areas of least preparation were instructional technology and online learning platforms (Canvas, Google Classroom). The area where alternative preparation program participants felt the best prepared was in creating effective lesson plans to ensure student mastery.

Table 15

Alternative Preparation Interview Emergent Themes

Characteristic	Alternative Emergent Team
Why Chose Teaching – The First Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Influence • Career Decision • Impacting Students
Program Characteristics - Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification • Online Program • Foundations for Teaching
Pedagogy - Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Preparedness • Building Relationships

(table continues)

Characteristic	Alternative Emergent Team
Professional Development - Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Requirements • Mentoring
Overall Perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-the-job training • Connecting with Students

Themes identified as a result of the alternative preparation individual semi-structured interviews are identified in Table 15. When individuals were asked the interview protocol questions, the responses were revealing. The protocol item concepts and themes are next presented, with participant responses that aligned with those questions.

Why Chose Teaching - The First Year

As part of the virtual one-on-one interviews, the interviewees who self-identified as participating in an alternative teacher preparation program indicated why they decided to pursue the teaching profession. For several participants, family and friends played an important role. A1 shared, "My sister, who had been teaching math, told me how to go apply to be an English teacher and that is how I ended up teaching." Respondent A2 stated, "Teaching is something that I had an idea that I might want to pursue," having several "friends that had taught" and liked teaching. After interviewing for a teaching position several times at different schools, A2 commented that he "just did not feel that was the best place to go," so he continued looking for a good fit. Interviewee A3 indicated that the need for employment after being laid off from industry and needing a job presented what "was a perfect storm." Entering the education profession, however, made life more manageable due to the fact that teaching had always been an interest. Participant A4 admitted, "I just signed up for a program which did not have any requirements" and passed the content area test the first time. As indicated by the alternative

certification participants, teaching was a second career. All of the interview participants had either worked in industry or post-secondary settings prior to becoming a public school teacher. However, teaching in the public school was a profession that each of the interviewees thought they might like and would be able to excel in. Influences on their decision to become a teacher were, family, friends, and necessity.

Choosing a district to pursue a career in education was equally important to the alternative certification program participants. As A3 stated, choosing a district to work in was vital when deciding to teach in the district where "I went to and grew up in." Another reason for selecting the district was how the administration communicated the values and expectations during the initial job interview and how they related to the participant's values and expectations. Additionally, having a family member as an employee in the district also influenced A4's decision to teach in the district, whose wife worked there for over 10 years. A4 also reviewed compensation and mobility in the district and working with a diverse faculty and student population when determining the appropriate district and stressed that they did not want to work with "a bunch of cookie-cutter" teachers.

The reason novice teachers join the teaching profession varies; however, a guiding factor is the ability to impact students and communities, which was an overarching aspect for these novice teachers. As A1 commented, "I found my wheelhouse" in that every day brought a feeling of belonging and additional confidence in teaching and reaching students. Regarding the first year of teaching, A4 commented, "I mean, I survived." A4 planned to return next year, putting to use what was learned in a challenging year for novice and veteran teachers. As these novice teachers voiced, the first year was ultimately rewarding, challenging, and stimulating. The district's use of a viable curriculum containing lesson plans proved to be a factor in the success

of many novice teachers. Using an established curriculum that contained objectives, vocabulary, formative assessments, and summative assessments allowed the novice teachers to focus on their lesson delivery to meet the needs of the individual students. Yet, knowing how to provide differentiated learning opportunities for students who wanted to attend college versus those who did not plan to attend college frustrated some of these novice teachers and complicated their lesson planning and lesson delivery options.

The utilization of formal and informal mentors provided additional support and guidance for the alternative certification program participants. The learning curve when starting a new job is always high; however, the novice teachers expressed that it was steeper than expected. For these novice teachers, not being prepared for the barriers and additional duties required of them as a teacher added to the stress and frustration during the first year of teaching. Being part of a functional professional team was also a key factor of success in the first year as opposed to being part of a dysfunctional team that added to the frustrations and difficulty during the first year of teaching.

Program Characteristic - Content

In responding to questions regarding the participants' alternative teacher preparation program and their level of preparedness for the first year of teaching, the novice teachers indicated that reputation, family recommendations, self-paced programs, and personable qualities influenced their decision to participate in a specific alternative preparation program. However, the interviewees also discussed areas where the different alternative programs needed to improve, such as more networking opportunities with other participants, a blended or hybrid program with a portion of face-to-face meetings, more exposure to educational language, in-classroom support, availability to answer questions, and a road map of resources. Each of the

interviewees felt that overall, the alternative program they participated in provided the basics and met their needs in preparing for certification; however, some programs provided more support in the classroom after the district hired the participant.

Positive aspects that the alternative teacher preparation program participants alluded to during the interview process provided insight into how prepared they were for teaching and the certification process. Programs primarily consisted of an online learning platform that consisted of self-paced courses where the participants were required to complete a specified number of courses and other program requirements relating to primary education concepts. Participants were exposed to the many aspects of teaching, including lesson planning, special populations, gifted and talented, modeling, differentiation, spiraling lesson objectives, and how to impact student learning to ensure mastery. Alternative certification programs providing mentors for participants gave those participants a feeling that failure was not an option. A1 felt that participating in the online program was rewarding and satisfying. As stated by A3, "The instructors are great" in guiding the novice teacher during entry-level education online modules and the in-class observations. The feedback they received after in-class observations was helpful and pointed to areas of needed growth. Alternative programs provided a vast library of online resources ranging from special education individual education plans to general classroom management. Overall, participants agreed that a significant influence in choosing a program was that it was online and self-paced. Even though the online aspect was a significant influencer, the addition of a summer institute where participants gathered face-to-face to network was also a key influencer in choosing their program.

Alternative teacher certification program participants also identified areas where the programs could strengthen the overall experience and provide novice teachers with a stronger

foundation for teaching. As stated by A4, "A quality program has a collaboration or in-person aspect" with a detailed guide to take the participant from where they are to certification. The guide would outline the areas the novice teacher would need to focus on and strategies for how to prepare for the certification exams. These novice teachers also indicated the value of communication between the program and the participant with a mentor who can answer questions and provide guidance throughout the program. The interviewees felt that having a prescriptive program with identified milestones was critical to completing the preparation program and becoming certified.

Pedagogy - Management

In responding to questions regarding pedagogy and classroom management preparation, alternative teacher preparation participants indicated they were sufficiently prepared to create effective lessons that impact student learning and mastery while differentiating lessons for diverse learners. The novice teacher's challenge was building relationships with students and engaging them in learning. Participants in the alternative programs received online module-based instruction on differentiation that addressed diverse student learning groups. Through this instruction, participants developed basic skills to develop and diversify lessons for the diverse population of students served. Receiving feedback from the program and in-class observations helped to identify additional areas for novice teachers' growth, resulting in the expectation that they complete additional modules designed to further assist them in knowing how to provide effective instruction.

In managing the classroom environment, alternative certification program novice teachers received theoretical instruction in classroom management; however, minimal opportunities to apply what they learned through actual classroom experiences led to a feeling of unpreparedness

and less confidence in managing their classrooms. Most alternative preparation participants expressed that they used the trial-by-error method in managing the classroom environment and student behavior. As participant A3 related, managing students and the classroom were generally an "addendum" to an instructional module, not the lesson's focus. The valuable feedback from the observing program representative was most helpful for the novice teacher. It often led to in-depth conversations on various strategies to utilize and infuse into the classroom routine. In developing the rules and procedures for the classroom, this novice teacher focused on being consistently firm with the expectations.

Professional Development - Mentoring

When discussing professional development and mentoring, the alternative preparation program novice teachers referenced the differences between assigned professional development versus choosing professional development and assigned formal mentors and unassigned informal mentors. The district assigned 30 hours of professional development each year, with 12 hours of prescriptive training based on teaching assignments and campus initiatives and 18 hours of individual teacher-selected professional development. Teacher-selected professional development allowed the novice teacher to zero in on teaching techniques and strategies to utilize in the classroom. These professional development sessions ranged from diversity workshops to gifted and talented training. Additional professional development for novice and veteran teachers centered on district and campus systems and initiatives. The experience for the novice teacher resulted in mixed feelings that professional development was pragmatic when they were able to choose the training.

The district required novice teachers to have mentors during the first year, while mentors were optional for the second year of teaching. The alternative certification program participants

related that mentors were often critical and varied from being very helpful to detrimental when providing any help or suggestions. When mentoring resembled coaching, the feedback was direct but helpful and provided ways for the novice teacher to adjust the classroom environment to better instruct students. When it was more formal, the feedback was often critical and condescending, with little to no help correcting the areas that needed improvement. As related by A2, "Hearing criticism was hard to hear," and it often made the novice teacher feel like a failure. Other novice teachers expressed how helpful the mentors were in addressing organization and management of the classroom, along with how to lesson plan effectively. Overall, the alternative certification program novice teachers saw the mentoring process and procedures as helpful but highly dependent on the mentor's skill.

Overall Perceptions

Alternative preparation program participants indicated that the program's reputation with the district influenced their ability to get interviewed. If the program had a great relationship with the district, it was noticeable in the interview and provided opportunities for the candidate to use the program as support. These novice teachers expressed that there are no shortcuts to teaching and that candidates make the program, the program does not make the candidate. The alternative preparation programs' staff were reported to be very knowledgeable, providing experiences relevant to teaching on a day-to-day basis. However, they acknowledged that the programs could be more efficient from both a cost and a communication perspective. While programs provided the basics of teaching and preparation for the certification, novice teachers expressed that most of the opportunities they had to practice and improve their teaching craft occurred through on-the-job training. Alternative preparation programs offered the participants a large library of lessons, learning modules, and instructional videos; however, it was often only helpful to the

novice teachers when clear directions on how to apply the information and where to find the information were provided.

During the first year of teaching, these novice teachers faced many challenges, from student complaints to connecting with students. They also expressed frustration about being called to the office for a student issue and felt a lack of support from the administration. However, these novice teachers quickly realized that teaching was more demanding than anticipated and recognized the value of the on-the-job training aspect of teaching and how that allowed them to understand and practice what they had learned. They also indicated that they felt unprepared to accommodate lessons for emergent bilingual students after realizing that the lesson needed to be modified correctly to meet the students' needs. Struggling with making connections with students, keeping students engaged, classroom management, and remediating lessons topped the responses of the biggest struggles during the first year of teaching. All of the alternative program novice teachers who were interviewed returned for their second year with the district.

Summary

The goal in conducting this study was to gain a deeper understanding of novice teachers' perceptions of teacher preparation programs and how novice teachers perceived their preparation for the first year of teaching. The following factors, as told from the novice teachers' perspective, were examined: (a) why chose teaching the first year, (b) program characteristics and content, (c) pedagogy and management, (d) professional development and mentoring, and (e) overall program perceptions. Therefore, the types of experiences the novice teachers reported provided the unique perspective of novice teachers and how prepared they felt for their first year of teaching. Participants selected to participate in the study were identified novice teachers in the

studied district. An analysis of the qualitative responses from the survey and the individual interviews provided insight into the perspectives of novice teachers regarding college-based and alternative teacher preparation programs. The data were collected and analyzed to understand the experiences and perceptions of novice teachers about the respective teacher preparation program. The use of inductive coding of interview transcripts served as research tools that provided emergent theme identification. The analysis revealed these themes relating to novice teachers' perceptions of why they chose to teach the first year: program characteristics and content, pedagogy and management, professional development and mentoring, and overall program perceptions.

Chapter 5 includes an overview of the study, including the purpose of the study, the research questions, and a review of the methodology. Following the overview is a thorough discussion of the findings. Chapter 5 ends with implications for current and future practice, recommendations for further research, researcher reflections, and a conclusion to the study.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire.

~William Butler Yates

Chapter 5 includes a summary of the qualitative study with an overview of the case study, a summary of the problem statement, the purpose of the study, research questions, and methodology. Results for this study were collected through qualitative methods and a qualitative design, as described in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the data gathered during the case study, then Chapter 5 summarizes the findings and how these findings align with the two research questions. A correlation between the findings and the literature review presented in Chapter 2 is also presented. The additional sections of this chapter include the implications for current and future practice, recommendations for further research, and researcher reflections.

Overview of the Study

The problem of practice that called for a study about teacher preparation programs is the necessity for novice teachers to enter the classroom environment with the skill set to be successful educators. This study aimed to examine novice teachers' perceptions as to whether they believed their teacher preparation program adequately prepared them for a career in teaching. Based on their enrollment in teacher education preparation programs that currently exist, novice teachers are classified into one of two groups: (a) one that completed a college-based four-year teacher preparation program, or (b) one that completed an alternative teacher preparation program. Each program has links with positive aspects and areas of concern, particularly in providing real-world experience (Hawk & Schmidt, 1989). More specifically, the purpose was to explore novice teachers' perspectives regarding the impact of a traditional

college-based teacher preparation program versus an alternative teacher preparation program on preparedness for success in the initial year of teaching.

Researchers have studied traditional versus alternative teacher preparation programs for a long time. Hawk and Schmidt (1989) pointed to the impact that education reforms had on the profession and how those reforms emphasized the need for teacher preparation programs to focus more on teachers' knowledge of content in a particular subject area rather than on pedagogical content knowledge and professional-pedagogical knowledge and skills, both of which help teachers relate the subject matter at the level required to impact instruction. Those elements include specific knowledge about the students and how they learn and professional rules and regulations regarding teachers' interactions with peers, students, parents, and the community. However, these authors noted that the total training time offered by traditional teacher preparation programs exceeded alternative teacher preparation programs by approximately 45 hours of training on these essential skills. At that time, both programs addressed time management, student behavior, presentation skills, monitoring instruction, and feedback. Nevertheless, while alternative teacher preparation programs delivered the same amount of training in learning preferences, professional and pedagogical knowledge and skills, and student-teacher interactions, participants in alternative teacher preparation programs completed fewer hours in the field experience and internship aspects of the preparation program.

In a more recent study, Redding and Smith (2016) evaluated alternative certification standards utilizing the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS) conducted between 1999 and 2012. They found that 85% of alternative preparation programs had low admissions standards, failed to ensure program participants were adequately prepared, and offered little to no real-world field experiences. These oversight issues contributed

to an increased teacher shortage, creating an avenue for potential long-term educators to feel lost within their initial years of teaching due to the lack of preparation for and exposure to the experiences they would likely face as full-time teachers.

Over time, traditional teacher preparation programs moved to strengthen their programs by requiring additional subject matter course work, pedagogical strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners, and other clinical experiences. In some instances, these changes lengthened the traditional route to teacher certification by one additional year. In the additional year they were allowed, students majored in a specific discipline and minored in education. The process also allowed students to develop significant pedagogical knowledge, skills, and experience in dealing with student behavior, technology in the classroom, and English language learners. Another change was that teacher preparation programs restricted the number of schools where they placed interns to ensure an “extensive, carefully supervised” experience with “significant attention on the development of content-based pedagogy” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002, p. 293). These carefully orchestrated changes led to cadres of new teachers who were better qualified and prepared to enter the education profession.

Research Questions

1. What impact did a traditional college-based teacher preparation program have on teachers’ preparedness for success in the initial year of teaching, as told from the perspective of the novice teacher?
2. What impact did an alternative teacher preparation program have on teachers’ preparedness for success in the initial year of teaching, as told from the perspective of the novice teacher?

Review of the Methodology

A descriptive qualitative case study design was the appropriate approach to gain novice teachers’ perspectives about the type of teacher preparation program they attended and the

perspectives of their preparedness for their first year of teaching. To gain insight into the novice teachers' perspective on teacher preparation during the first year of teaching and other constructs that influenced the choice of the teacher preparation programs and perceptions of preparedness for the first year of teaching, data were collected on participants' responses and reactions from the novice teacher survey and the individual semi-structured virtual interviews. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach, I examined the reasons novice teachers joined the profession and their perceptions of their first year of teaching. The literature review focused primarily on previous research that indicated perceptions of novice teachers on preparedness for the first year of teaching and the characteristics of college-based and alternative teacher preparation programs.

Discussion of Findings

Chapter 4 provides the emergent themes and findings of the research data obtained from the novice teacher survey and the participants' recollections in the semi-structured interviews. This section presents a comprehensive summary of those findings. Table 16 displays the characteristics and emergent themes related to the research questions. The results of the current study are aligned with the conceptual framework and apply to the research design.

The characteristics that were examined in the case study were: (a) why teaching – the first year; (b) program characteristics – content; (c) pedagogy – management; (d) professional development – mentoring; (e) and overall perceptions. Twenty-four themes emerged that coordinated with the factors examined, as shown in Table 16.

In this case study, I acknowledged, documented, and analyzed the factors connected with novice teachers' perceptions of college-based and alternative teacher preparation programs. The examined characteristics centered on why chose teaching, program characteristics, pedagogy, professional development and mentoring, and overall perceptions of the program. Within each

characteristic, common and program-specific themes emerged, allowing for the perceptions of novice teacher participants to emerge. The research data revealed the interrelated influence each component has on the overall perceptions of the novice teacher. While the findings did not reveal all of the factors contributing to the decision of which program novice teachers participated in, the findings did reveal the areas that influenced how prepared the novice teacher felt during the first year of teaching. The following sections provide a summary analysis of the research and responses from the survey and individual interviews. Each characteristic that was examined is discussed.

Table 16

Characteristics Examined - Emergent Themes

Characteristic Examined	College-Based Preparation Program Emergent Themes	Alternative Teacher Preparation Program Emergent Themes
Why Chose Teaching – The First Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity of Teaching Staff • Hometown District • Impact on Students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Influence • Career Decision • Impacting Students
Program Characteristics - Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification • Foundations of Teaching • Field Experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification • Online Program • Foundations for Teaching
Pedagogy - Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Preparedness • Classroom Organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Preparedness • Building Relationships
Professional Development - Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Requirements • District Expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Requirements • Mentoring
Overall Perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Relationships • Areas for Growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-the-job training • Connecting with Students

College-Based Preparation Programs

The first research question centered on the perspectives of the novice teacher who participated in a college-based preparation program. Beginning in the late 18th century, education

leaders recognized the need for a program of study to improve teaching. At the onset of the 20th century, the college-based teacher preparation program was the primary way teachers obtained the credentials needed to teach and consisted of content and field-based experiences (Schneider, 2018; Fhaeizdhyall et al., 2017; Labaree, 2008). Semi-structured interviews with novice teachers who participated in a college-based preparation program indicated three distinct themes of why they chose the education field as a profession. These themes identified a desire to diversify the teaching staff, to impact students, and to return to their hometown and teach where they had attended school. This is echoed by Sibanda (2022), who found that the desire to teach and contribute to their communities and society was a deciding factor for students to attend college to train to become educators. Personal motivation also plays a key role in the decision to become a teacher (Yu et al., 2023) and is related to career satisfaction and personal professional growth. Familiarity with processes and procedures also influenced future teachers to enter college and pursue a career in teaching (CD2). However, in Texas, when comparing the number of college students who obtained their initial certification after completing a college or university preparation program from 2016-2017 to 2021-2022, the number of certifications issued fell from 9800 in 2016-2017 to 7700 in 2021-2022 (TEA, 2023). This drop could partially be attributed to COVID-19 as universities and states work on rebounding from the interruption in preparing novice teachers for the first year of teaching (VanLone et al., 2022; Choate et al., 2021).

Novice teacher participants in college-based teacher preparation programs indicated that choosing where to apply when seeking the initial teaching position was influenced by several factors. Deciding factors identified by the novice teachers ranged from being alumni of the district, growing up in the district, and being familiar with the district. These teachers also indicated the need to focus on student needs during the first year, partially due to the onset of the

COVID-19 pandemic and the school's pursuit of online instruction for part of the year. Reasons for entering the teaching field varied for each interview and survey participant; however, the participants generally indicated the desire to impact young people's lives and the communities where they work. Participants indicated a love for learning, being challenged with an ever-changing environment, and the importance of being patient and lenient when working with their students.

College-based programs ensure that the participants have a strong subject matter knowledge base and that novice teachers understand the strategies to utilize with a diverse student population. College programs have relied on strong field experience activities to bring together the content and pedagogical knowledge of the novice teacher in a practical day-to-day application. Novice teacher interview participants related that the process for certification was confusing and that often the institution did not provide the guidance needed to complete all coursework and certification in an easy and understandable way. Keeping a positive mindset allowed participants to navigate through the process but not without bumps and missteps along the way. Participants reported that the field experiences in the college-based programs were beneficial to gaining insight into how a classroom works and building relationships with students. The novice teacher survey participants indicated they felt best prepared for how to create effective lesson plans and utilize online platforms. In contrast, they were least prepared to work with diverse learners and special populations.

Novice teachers found it most difficult to transfer what was taught at the university and apply it to the classroom. Additionally, the novice teacher struggled with the task of managing a classroom and understanding what teaching is and looks like on a day-to-day basis in a classroom full of eager and not-so-eager students. However, by keeping a growth mindset and

taking advantage of ISD professional development, the novice teacher could differentiate lessons to meet the learner's needs and manage the classroom. With a focus on content knowledge over practical application, a barrier to the success of the novice teacher has broadened and continues to grow. College-based teacher preparation program content is governed by state and national standards associated with accreditation and state legislative mandates. College-based preparation programs contain academic components that provide content and pedagogy knowledge while also supplying field experiences to apply the newly acquired knowledge (Hollins, et al., 2021, Brabeck et al., 2016).

During the literature review, the approach to training novice teachers in pedagogy was distinctly different. In the college-based program, the aspiring novice teacher spent the initial years of training focusing on content knowledge and experiencing the classroom environment through internships and observations (Matsko et al., 2018). The current research resulted in a distinct difference in the confidence level of novice teachers as they prepared for the first year of teaching and interacting with students. The participants indicated a need for additional instruction regarding how classrooms work through the novice teacher survey and the individual semi-structured novice teacher interviews. The novice teachers who completed the survey indicated a need for the practical application of what was learned in the program. Examples are unpacking the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) terminology utilized by the administration in the campus operation, the basics of organizing a classroom, and systems used to set expectations for behavior and student success.

College-based preparation program participants indicated a high level of preparedness in developing lessons and differentiating for learners. Still, participants needed help with building effective relationships with students. Through the novice teachers survey, the college-based

preparation program respondents indicated the feeling of being sufficiently prepared in creating lessons and navigating online learning environments while also feeling the least prepared in working with a diverse student population and meeting the needs of special population students. The pedagogy explored by students in the college-based teacher preparation program varies by institution and has changed throughout the years as the needs of students have changed (Reddig et al., 2022)

In the literature review, the connection between professional development, instructional coaching, and classroom practices directly impacted student performance and academic achievement (Bastian et al., 2017). With the number of novice teachers leaving the profession within the first five years, the importance of mentoring and continual professional development is paramount to the success of novice teachers. Leveraging the induction and mentoring programs to support beyond the first year of teaching can allow the novice teacher to develop the skills necessary to effectively manage and instruct students (Ingersoll & May, 2011). The pairing of novice teachers with carefully selected and trained mentor teachers provides an additional layer of support in the day-to-day operations of a classroom. It allows the novice teacher to have an on-campus confidant that is an experienced master teacher; thus, the novice teacher can observe how the experienced teacher develops the classroom environment regarding instruction and student management (Kearney, 2017). Successful mentoring programs allow novice teachers to ask questions, receive constructive feedback, and voice concerns in a non-threatening environment, which leads to improved effectiveness of the novice teacher.

During the interview portion of data gathering, the novice teachers identified that the district provides various professional development opportunities. These opportunities addressed the district and campus initiatives while also providing for the needs of a novice teacher new to

the district. The district has a yearly back-to-school requirement for professional development to include subject-specific content and specialized content focusing on gifted and talented training, English as a second language certification training, supporting special populations students, lesson planning, supporting the struggling learner, and data-driven decisions. The district established a new-teacher program to support novice teachers in the first year of teaching as they transition from college or the teaching workforce. A semi-structured mentor-mentee program is also present in the district; however, the program's effectiveness varies significantly between campuses and the assignment of a quality mentor. Mentors provide a range of support for novice teachers, from general campus information to classroom observation to include constructive feedback; however, the quality of the interaction is directly related to the ability of the mentor's skill and willingness to share strategies and systems with the novice teacher. Quality mentoring requires training for both the mentor and mentee and must allow for time to collaborate, model, observe, and investigate strategies that improve overall instruction and student performance (Orland-Barak et al., 2021).

Teacher preparation started as an opportunity for teachers to gather and share ideas and processes on how to teach and grew into higher education institutions whose sole purpose was to educate students to be teachers. As programs developed and colleges evolved, teacher education programs have been slow to respond to the needs of novice teachers who graduate (Schneider, 2018; Fhaeizdhyall et al., 2017; Lynch, 2017; Brabeck et al., 2016; Labaree, 2008). The novice teachers participating in a college-based preparation program had positive and negative outcomes. In situations where the administration had a relationship with the college, the novice teachers found an avenue for support from staff when struggling. These avenues also allow the novice teacher to experience a vast amount of on-the-job support from administrators and other

teachers who have participated in the same preparation program. The novice teachers interviewed provided insight into the areas where preparation programs could improve. The novice teachers echoed that there are no shortcuts to becoming an effective teacher and that the quality of the experiences during the preparation program is vital to success during the first year. Areas identified for improvement by the novice teachers were consistent follow-up after graduation, either face-to-face or by phone. Additionally, participants indicated that providing experienced teachers insight into the realistic view of teaching, which includes the transition from theory to practice, would be highly beneficial before accepting the first teaching position. Those novice teachers who participated in college-based preparation programs and the interview portion of the case study all returned for the second year of teaching with the district.

Alternative Teacher Preparation Programs

The second research question centered on the perspectives of the novice teacher who participated in an alternative preparation program. As the teaching workforce is aging and the demand for teachers increases, districts have turned to alternative teacher preparation programs to help fill hard-to-find and specialized teachers needed to fill the vacancies. In a study by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Redding and Smith (2016) evaluated the changing landscape of alternative certification, which showed that, at that time, 58% of individuals seeking alternative certification were over the age of 57; while information from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) (2019) showed that the average age of alternatively certified teachers in Texas was 32-33 years old. In the current study, the average age of alternatively certified participants was between 23 and 34. In 2023, the Texas Education Agency reported that data for initial certification obtained by teachers between 2016 and 2021, the number of novice

teachers completing certification decreased for novice teachers participating in alternative preparation programs, as shown in Table 17 (Texas Education Agency, 2023).

Table 17

Alternative Certification Data

Education Preparation Program	2016-2017	2021-2022
Alternative	12395	9270

Alternative preparation program novice teachers who participated in this case study indicated that reasons for entering the teaching field varied from the desire to impact young people’s lives and the impacts on communities where they live. Additionally, alternative program interviewee participants indicated a love for learning, being challenged with an ever-changing environment, the excitement of learning new skills and starting a new career as reasons for seeking a teaching position. These novice teachers also indicated that choosing where to apply when seeking the initial teaching position was influenced by family members who teach in the district, the authenticity of administrators, it was where they went to school, and the reputation of the district.

The first year of teaching for those who participated in alternative preparation programs were met with many challenges ranging from determining the district expectations for a teacher and realizing that teaching was more difficult than originally described. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the school’s pursuit of online instruction for part of the year was also an unexpected challenge that most alternative preparation program participants felt better prepared for due to the online nature of the program in which they participated. Alternative preparation program interview participants indicated that the district where they worked was

compensated well, had a diverse student and faculty, and was full of teachers who love to teach, love students, and work to be innovative and relevant to today's world. The novice teachers interviewed felt that the experience was rewarding while also presenting unexpected challenges simultaneously.

In Texas, alternative teacher preparation programs are mostly for-profit organizations, accounting for sixty percent of students enrolled in teacher preparation programs (Yin et al., 2020). for-profit and non-profit programs. Novice teachers indicated that an avenue for certification is online and self-paced, along with providing a solid foundation for teaching as primary deciding factors when selecting a program. Administrators who hire alternatively certified teachers also understand that additional support and professional development will be required to help these novice teachers master the art of teaching (Rose et al., 2020). Alternative teacher preparation programs provide a variety of pathways to obtain knowledge and exposure to the education profession. The content of the alternative teacher preparation program is similar to other types of programs, exposing participants to differentiation, classroom management, and differentiation for the learner; however, the missing factor in most was actual meaningful field experience to engage the participant in an actual classroom (Rose et al., 2020; Kee, 2012).

Alternative teacher preparation programs did offer participants opportunities to gain exposure to differentiation and work with diverse populations; however, participants indicated this was an area where improvement was needed as the resources had so many online options that they found it difficult to find what they needed. Areas of growth identified by the participants include the need to interact with teachers from the field, including urban and rural teachers, to gain different perspectives. Additionally, participants indicated the need for quality mentorship during the first year of teaching. Even though the novice teachers interviewed

indicated they had a mentor assigned, the amount and types of interaction with the mentor were drastically different. Interviewees indicated being well-prepared for content but drastically under-prepared for day-to-day classroom operations. A key to the success of the teacher who participates in the alternative preparation program is the support provided during the first year of teaching and the type of school, either traditional public school or charter school (Guthery et al., 2022).

The literature review revealed that the approach to training novice teachers in pedagogy was distinctly different. Alternative preparation programs focused on classroom management techniques, pedagogy, lesson planning, and curriculum (Kee, 2012). This focus resulted in a distinct difference in the confidence level of novice teachers as they prepared for teaching and interacting with students. The area identified as a concern among alternative preparation program participants was building relationships with students. With the rise in the number of novice teachers who participated in alternative preparation programs, the need for additional field experiences in alternative teacher preparation programs is paramount to the success and confidence level of the novice teacher. Alternative preparation program participants typically have spent years developing field experiences in the content; however, they have not spent years developing the aspects of what makes effective teachers (Bowen et al., 2019)

The participants indicated a need for additional instruction regarding how classrooms work through the novice teacher survey and the individual semi-structured novice teacher interviews. The novice teachers who completed the survey indicated a need for the practical application of what was learned in the program. Alternative preparation program novice teachers indicated a high level of preparedness in developing lessons and differentiating for learners. Still, participants needed help with building effective relationships with students and indicated

difficulties in managing classrooms and student behavior. Through the novice teachers survey, the respondents indicated the feeling of being sufficiently prepared to create lessons and navigate online learning environments while also feeling the least prepared to work with a diverse student population and meet the needs of special population students (Kee, 2012).

The novice teacher who participated in an alternative preparation program will require additional support during the first year of teaching. The support is necessary based on the path alternative program preparation participants typically take, where they spend time gaining technical content knowledge and very little time developing the skills necessary to prepare and guide lessons. The district's commitment to strong mentoring and continual professional development is paramount to the success of alternative preparation participation. Leveraging the induction and mentoring programs to support beyond the first year of teaching can allow the novice teacher to develop the skills necessary to effectively manage and instruct students (Rose, 2020; Ingersoll & May, 2011). Additionally, pairing novice teachers with carefully selected and trained mentor teachers provides an additional layer of support in the day-to-day operations of a classroom. It allows the novice teacher to have an on-campus confidant who is an experienced master teacher to whom the novice teacher can observe in the classroom environment regarding instruction and student management (Kearney, 2017). Successful mentoring programs allow novice teachers to ask questions, receive constructive feedback, and voice concerns in a non-threatening environment, which leads to improved effectiveness of the novice teacher.

During the interview portion of data gathering, the alternative preparation program novice teachers identified that the district provided a large variety of professional development opportunities. These opportunities addressed district and campus initiatives while also providing for the needs of a novice teacher new to the profession and district. The district has a yearly

back-to-school requirement for professional development to include subject-specific content and specialized content focusing on gifted and talented training, English as a second language certification training, supporting special populations students, lesson planning, supporting the struggling learner, and data-driven decisions. The district established a new-teacher program to support novice teachers in the first year of teaching as they transition from college to the teaching workforce. A semi-structured mentor-mentee program is also present in the district; however, the program's effectiveness varies significantly between campuses and the assignment of a quality mentor. Mentors provide a range of support for novice teachers, from general campus information to classroom observation to include constructive feedback; however, the quality of the interaction is directly related to the ability of the mentor's skill and willingness to share strategies and systems with the novice teacher. Mentoring is a crucial part of the success of a novice teacher and can make a difference in success and failure in the classroom (Ellis et al., 2020).

The content and availability of support during the first-year type of program the novice teacher participated in, either a college-based or alternative preparation program, directly impacted whether the first-year teacher was either successful or a disaster. In those situations where the administration had a relationship with either the college or the alternative preparation program, novice teachers found an avenue for support from staff when struggling. These avenues also allowed the novice teacher to experience a vast amount of on-the-job support from administrators and other teachers who participated in the same preparation program. Alternative preparation participants reported that their program provided continual support through a sizable online library of videos and instructional modules. However, novice teachers often needed help navigating and locating modules and lessons that would address their needs.

The novice teachers interviewed provided insight into the areas where alternative preparation programs could improve. Through the semi-structured interviews, the novice teachers in alternative preparation programs relayed the need for field experiences with experienced teachers. It would be greatly beneficial to observe how an actual classroom operates, how it is organized, and how the teacher forms connections with their students. The participants also praised the alternative preparation program for the massive online resources available to them through the program portal; however, they also mentioned the need for better organization and search functions in the online library. When the COVID-19 pandemic started, and schools switched from face-to-face to online instruction, stress levels were compounded by isolation and the lack of knowledge of online environments. However, novice teachers who participated in alternative preparation programs reported that they felt more prepared for the online environment due to experiences faced in the online preparation programs. An additional area for growth in alternative certification programs would be in the preparation of elementary vs secondary teachers. These two grade-level areas have significant differences and a need for specialized instruction to be successful at the different levels. For those novice teachers who participated in an alternative preparation program and in the interview portion of the study, all returned for the second year of teaching with the district.

Implications for Current and Future Practice

The findings from the current case study could assist leaders in teacher preparation programs in determining the content and support provided for novice teachers. These findings add to the contemporary research literature of studies that pursued novice teachers' perceptions of how prepared they felt for the first year of teaching. In providing the insights of novice teachers, education leaders in teacher preparation and those that support teachers in the first of

teaching may be able to improve preparation and mentoring programs to provide the novice teacher with skills and confidence as they transition from theory to application in the teaching profession. Education leaders must recognize and solicit the perceptions of the novice teacher and align preparation programs based on that feedback to improve the transition of the novice teacher.

Based on the analyzed data from this case study, leaders in teacher preparation can influence the quality of the preparation program in which the novice teacher participates to directly affect the novice teacher's confidence level in the first year of teaching by providing opportunities for the novice teacher to have robust field experiences before the first year of teaching through interactions with master teachers, classroom observations, and student teaching experiences. As school districts continue to face the challenge of recruiting and hiring teachers, improved efforts in supporting the first-year teacher must be addressed to retain and enhance the professional skills of novice teachers. The data presented in Chapter 4 and discussed in this chapter offer information that could cultivate numerous opportunities to strengthen the preparation for the novice teacher. Suggestions for practices to implement and components to include when preparing the novice teachers include the following areas:

- Model classrooms for the novice teacher to observe that include how to organize the classroom for effective instruction.
- Follow-up contact from the preparation program as a standard during the first year of teaching.
- Preparation program support and clear paths to certification.
- Quality mentoring programs for novice teachers with trained mentors
- Advanced instruction on structuring curriculum and breaking down the standards to focus on key components.
- Field-based experiences, including short-term classroom observations of rural and urban classrooms and districts.

- Field experiences that include long-term (three to six months) opportunities for student teaching
- Field experiences that include an internship lasting a full school year supported by both the district leadership and preparation programs.
- Focused coaching-mentoring program that extends beyond the first year of teaching.
- Create a focused approach to novice teacher professional development that focuses on the needs of first year novice teachers.
- Establish a cohort of novice teachers with time to work together and discuss experiences and needs.

Quality programs that provide continuing support for the novice teacher from both the preparation program and the hiring district are vital components to improving the novice teacher's experience and perceptions of the teaching profession. As districts look for opportunities to grow their own teachers and take a more prominent role in the preparation of teachers through district of innovation opportunities, they also carry the burden of supporting the novice teacher beyond the basics of classroom management and student behavior. As universities and alternative teacher preparation programs look into the future of preparing the next generation of teachers, it is essential to evaluate the program and adapt to the needs of the participants to ensure the novice teacher is prepared and confident when entering the classroom.

Recommendations for Further Research

For this study, participants were those teachers identified as novice teachers in the first year of teaching in a Texas school district. The participants were surveyed, and a small group self-identified and participated in semi-structured individual interviews. Based on the novice teacher perceptions and responses to the survey and individual interviews, characteristics of college-based and alternative teacher preparation programs were identified regarding the perceptions of the novice teacher participants. A future study with a larger sample size of

participants could result in additional findings regarding the perceptions of novice teachers and the type of preparation program in which they participated. Furthermore, a comparison study that includes an examination of districts with varying student enrollment sizes, geographical locations would be beneficial. Additional areas that could be examined includes retention rates for novice teachers, teacher outcomes in districts with and without new teacher academies that provide coaching or mentoring. The effect of these and other factors could add to the findings regarding the perceptions of novice teachers and how prepared and supported they felt during the first year of teaching.

This study offers multiple expansion opportunities. First, another study could focus on a cohort of novice teachers as they leave the preparation program and enter the first year of teaching in rural districts instead of large urban districts. Additionally, a follow-up with participants after the second year of teaching could also be added to the research findings to see if the priorities, areas of concern, and mentoring have altered their perception of how prepared they were at that time. One concern for this study was the limited participation of the novice teachers identified for the study. By working closely with a large urban district and the first-year new teacher program, the number of participants recruited for the study could increase, adding to the overall survey and interview process responses. Second, an additional study could focus on teacher education programs, their impact on recruiting and retaining future teachers and how they meet the needs of preservice teachers. Enlisting college-based and alternative preparation programs in the study would allow the researcher to follow participants from the start of the program through the first year of teaching to gauge the program's effectiveness from the novice teacher's perspective. Third, a comparison study of novice teachers experiencing coaching vs mentoring could add to the overall understanding of how novice teachers are supported in the

first year of teaching. Coaching is different from mentoring in that it involves immediate feedback that can directly impact student learning, is constructive in nature, and leads to immediate opportunities to improve. Furthermore, this type of study would be able to provide the perspective of the novice teacher when being coached versus being mentored.

Additionally, replicating the study in a post COVID-19 pandemic environment could reveal areas of strength and new areas of weakness in the preparation process of novice teachers. This replication could also be broadened to include multiple districts based on the type of mentoring and new teacher induction programs offered to novice teachers to determine the perception of novice teachers on how supported they felt in the first year of teaching. As the need for teachers grows, the need to provide novice teachers with quality preparation programs also increases. Opportunities grow with the gap between teachers participating in college-based and alternative preparation programs narrowing and novice teachers' need for continual support and mentoring grows.

Researcher Reflections

In deciding on the topic for this case study, I was influenced by the quality of teachers entering the education field and how often they seemed to struggle after completing an alternative preparation program during their first year. Those novice teachers who had participated in a college-based program had an advantage over the alternative program participants based on the opportunity for field experience. However, I was intrigued by the opportunities of alternative preparation programs and the way potential novice teachers could start a path to teaching with little to no field experience or knowledge of the vast roles a teacher plays in a classroom. Participants also indicated that when receiving coaching from field supervisors, the process focused on the critical aspects of what was observed resulting in positive

outcomes and focused on areas where improvement was needed. Mentoring when present was often based on criticism and left the novice teacher feeling defeated and ineffective. Establishing support protocols for novice teachers that include intentional, structured, and formalized approaches to coaching and professional development would improve the successful interactions between mentors, coaches, and novice teachers. Novice teacher participants often sought out other novice teachers or veteran teachers other than assigned mentors when having difficulties. Providing novice teachers with a risk-free environment where they can view model lesson rooms and lesson would provide these novice teachers opportunities to improve and grow as a teacher. An innovation gaining traction is the teacher residency program that allows the novice teacher a full year on a campus as a teacher prior to graduation from college. These programs consist of strong mentorship by trained mentors, shorter work weeks, and continual support from the college or university where the program is based. A program that allows college students in their senior year to experience the classroom setting, student interactions, planning lessons, testing, and the school environment provides that real-world job experience that is needed prior to entering that first year of teaching.

The novice teachers who participated in the study were open and truthful when completing the survey and participating in the interview process. These novice teachers eagerly engaged in the process to improve their knowledge and potentially impact the process for other novice teachers. As several participants in the study indicated, they wanted to teach in their district and impact their local community, a place where they had gone to school and felt connected. The need to offer opportunities for students to see teachers who looked like them and had similar experiences directly influenced why many pursued being a teacher. Interacting with the novice teachers during this study strengthens my resolve to mentor those we work with and

supervise. It is vital to the growth and achievement of the novice teacher that the preparation program and district work together to strengthen the knowledge base and experiences for these teachers as they directly impact the daily lives and achievement of the students they teach.

Recognizing the practices and characteristics of the teacher preparation program and the impact these programs have on the level of confidence and preparedness as perceived by novice teachers are areas that need to be identified and explored thoroughly. With that knowledge and understanding, the additional support and experiences offered to novice teachers for interacting with experienced teachers, administrators, mentors, and support staff need to be strengthened to ensure that the novice teachers have all opportunities to be successful in the first year and beyond.

Conclusion

The findings of this case study revealed the importance of the opportunities afforded the novice teachers before entering the field as a first-year teacher. The findings confirmed the differences and commonalities between the programs and the reasons for becoming a teacher. The novice teacher's perceptions are often skewed based on previous experiences and related employment. As seen in the survey, overall, the novice teachers felt somewhat prepared; however, during the semi-structured interviews, the respondents often told of new teacher induction and mentoring shortfalls.

Knowledge of the research process and data gathering provided insight into how important it was to adhere to the research methodology and processes during the study to ensure that all participants had the same opportunity to respond to questions and relay their perceptions of the teacher preparation program in which they participated. With the number of teachers leaving the field and the opportunities for districts to grow their own teachers, the quality and

content of teacher preparation programs must change to ensure that the novice teacher is prepared and has the essential experiences to be successful in the first year of teaching.

The hope is that this case study will be the starting point for more studies that will follow a cohort of novice teachers beyond the first year of teaching and that the results will strengthen the preparation programs that prepare novice teachers to enter the field. Being comfortable with the belief that there will always be young adults who choose the teaching profession will no longer suffice in today's situation and the shortage of teachers. The active recruiting of future teachers is needed now more than ever, starting at the high school level with scholarships to innovative, robust teaching preparation programs. With this concentrated effort to examine the perceptions of novice teachers about how prepared they felt in the first year of teaching, it is a must that preparation programs ensure that the program meets the needs of the novice teacher and the district. Why wait longer to meet the need of novice teachers and help ensure their success?

APPENDIX A
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE LETTER

IRB-20-2020 – Teacher Preparation Programs

Email Recruitment Letter (Participants)

Good morning and greetings teachers, I want to first say thank you for taking the time to read this invitation and hope your school year is going well.

I am Ronald Bragg, a doctoral student at the University of North Texas. As part of my dissertation, I am conducting a research case study to collect the perspective of novice teachers towards their teacher preparation program.

I invite you to participate in this research project. Participation is voluntary, and you and your responses are confidential. Your participation will involve a brief online survey that will take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete. Your answers will remain confidential and will not be linked to any personally identifiable data. Results of the survey will be reported only on a group basis. Additional informed consent information will be covered at the start of the survey.

Upon finishing the survey, you will be given the opportunity to enter a contact email address to receive a \$15.00 Amazon electronic gift card. The Amazon gift cards will be sent via email after the survey closes.

You will also be given the opportunity to volunteer for the next phase of the research project and participate in an individual interview. Participation in this phase of the study is voluntary, and your responses are confidential. All selected participants in the second phase of the study will receive an additional \$25.00 Amazon electronic gift card for participating.

Link to the Survey: https://unt.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7ah447CdytRLIcB

For additional questions regarding the case study please contact me at ronaldbragg@my.unt.edu or you may text or call xxx.xxx.xxxx. Have a great day and thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ron Bragg
ronaldbragg@my.unt.edu

APPENDIX B
NOVICE TEACHER SURVEY QUESTIONS

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project survey to explore teacher preparation programs. The purpose of this survey to gain your initial perceptions regarding the teacher preparation program you participated in that lead to teacher certification and/or receiving your teaching position. The survey will take less than 20 minutes to complete. Individual results of the survey are strictly confidential and will not be revealed to anyone other than the researcher and the researcher's major professor / dissertation chair at the University of North Texas.

Part I:

Directions: Please complete the following general demographic items.

1. Are you a novice teacher?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No

2. Please chose the type of teacher preparation program you participated in:
 - A. College or University Teacher Preparation Program
 - B. Alternative Teacher Preparation Programs

3. Please describe the factors that influenced our choice in a teacher preparation program.

4. Please indicate your highest educational level completed.
 - A. Associates Degree
 - B. Bachelor's Degree
 - C. Master's Degree
 - D. Doctorate Student
 - E. Other

5. Please indicate the type of campus at which you currently work.
 - A. Early Childhood [Pre-k]
 - B. Elementary [K-5]
 - B. Middle School [6-8]
 - C. High School [9-12]

6. What grade-level(s) do you currently teach?
Please Specify_____

7. What subject or subject(s) to do you currently teach?
Please Specify_____

8. Please select the choice which best represents your age range.
23-28

- 29-34
- 35-40
- 41-46
- 47-52
- 53-58
- 59 or older

9. Please indicate your gender.

- Male
- Female

10. Please indicate your ethnicity.

- Caucasian (white)
- African American
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Native American
- Multi-racial
- Other: Please specify

11. Please select the choice which best represents the number of years you have taught at your current school.

- I am in my First year of teaching on this campus.
- I am in my Second year of teaching on this campus.

Part II:

Directions: Please complete the following section of the survey. This section is designed to gain insight into your perceptions regarding the preparation you received to enter the classroom in the first year of teaching.

Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below by marking one of the five responses from “Not at all Prepared” to “Well Prepared”.

- 12. Classroom management and organization?
- 13. Utilizing technology as an instructional tool?
- 14. Creations of effective lessons to impact student learning?
- 15. Differentiation of lessons to meet the needs of diverse student populations?
- 16. Managing curriculum and curriculum resources in a learning management system?
- 17. Online learning technology platforms [Skype, Google Classroom, MS-Teams, Zoom]?
- 18. Special Education Admission Review and Dismissal (ARD) Committees; individualized education plans (IEP); and implementation of a behavior intervention plan (BIP)?
- 19. Creation of spiraling lesson to ensure student mastery?

APPENDIX C

SEMI STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this case study of teacher preparation programs. The purpose of this interview is to allow you to provide additional feedback and thoughts about the teacher preparation program you participated in prior to or simultaneously as you entered the teaching profession. There are no correct or incorrect answers to these questions. The interview is to gain your perceptions, insight, and feedback, not to evaluate anything that you say. Your identity will be kept confidential as the results are analyzed.

I find it helpful to audio record our conversation. Recording ensures that I have an accurate record of your responses. If you agree with the audio recording, please initial your consent on the informed consent form. The recording will not reveal your name and will only be reviewed by me. All recordings will be kept in a locked safe with no recognizable identification. Again, I want to stress that there are no correct or incorrect responses, and in fact, the depth of your answers will be extremely informative as I analyze the data. Be assured that your identity is completely confidential, and the content of the interviews will remain confidential.

Are there any questions so far? We have several areas for discussion. I may need to seek clarification from you prior to proceeding to the next question. I may also need to go back later in the discussion to clarify something you might have said earlier. Are you ready to begin?

1. Tell me how you feel the first year of teaching.
2. Tell me what you found to be the biggest challenge in your first year of teaching? (RQ1, RQ2). Probes: Of those experiences, what do you feel was the most valuable learning experience from your first year of teaching? What are the basis of your comment?
3. What do you feel are the characteristics of a quality teacher preparation program? (RQ1) Probe: Which characteristic is the one that should be mastered prior to entering the field? What is the basis of your comment?
4. How prepared do you feel now in dealing with the needs of a diverse student population? (RQ1., RQ2) Probes: What additional steps did you take during the school year to help you deal with special populations (examples, special education students. English learners, etc.)?
5. What experiences have you had with classroom management this year? (RQ1, RQ2) Probe: How will you prepare differently for the next semester based on the past? What management style did you develop as the semester/year progressed?

6. Have you completed your teacher preparation program? (RQ1, RQ2) Probe: At that time, what did you wish you had learned in your preparation program that was not offered in that curriculum?
7. Has your perception changed regarding your teacher preparation program after you completed your first year of teaching? (RQ1, RQ2) Probe: At that time, what do you now realize that you needed from your program? What do you wish was included in the program design and curriculum?
8. What type of additional training or professional development will you attend during the end of this school year and the start of the next school year? (RQ1, RQ2) Probes: What do you hope to learn from that training or professional development? How has the district helped you in obtaining and attending the training or professional development?
9. Do you believe the perceptions that your campus and district administrators have regarding the teacher preparation program you participated in has changed from the start of the year? (RQ1, RQ2) Probes: Do you believe that school leaders prefer one program over another? Why? If you were hiring a new teacher, in which type of teacher preparation program would you prefer that novice teacher was prepared? What is the basis of your comment?
10. In your novice years as a teacher, how did you mentor help you? If yes, describe that situation.
11. Is there anything else you would like to tell me that might help with my study?

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