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Beginning Teachers' Experiences Working with a District-Employed Mentor in a North Carolina School District

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INTRODUCTION

In the year 2016, there will be a shortage of 18 million teachers in elementary schools around the world (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012). Unfortunately, the most talented and academically inclined teachers are more likely to leave teaching, a profession that accounts for 4% of the entire workforce in America (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Schwartz, Wurtzel, & Olson, 2007). In addition, new teacher attrition has been increasing steadily. Nationally, 30% of beginning teachers leave the profession after the first 5 years (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future [NCTAF], 2010). In North Carolina, teacher turnover rates range from approximately 34% in Washington County to as low as 6% in Clay County (NC Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2014)

The first few years of teaching are a critical period of time in a teacher's career. Research has indicated new teachers "leave before they have had time to become proficient educators who know how to work with their colleagues to improve student learning" (NCTAF, 2010, p. 4). To address this problem, new teachers are often given a mentor to guide them during their first years. Mentors provide emotional and technical support to new teachers as they begin their careers. The mentoring process, when combined with an effective induction process, can provide a minimum of a year-long period of nurturing and support for those who need it most (Womack-Wynne et al., 2011).

Joftus and Maddox-Dolan (2002) noted teacher induction should be linked to a vision guided by understanding of teacher learning. Teacher induction

should be supported by a professional culture that encourages collaboration and inquiry; includes strong administrative and mentor support, staff development beginning before the first teaching year, and observation of effective teachers; and allows for assessment and reflective evaluation opportunities (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan, 2002). Ingersoll and Smith (2004) explained the strongest factors for retention include having a mentor from the same field, common planning time with same-subject teachers, regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers, and being a part of an external network of teachers.

Purpose

The intent of this phenomenological study was to examine the lived experience of beginning teachers in working with a district-employed Teaching and Learning Coach as a mentor. The study included exploring the attitudes and beliefs new teachers experienced during their first 2 years in the profession. Using the lens of Illeris' (2002) Three Dimensions of Learning Model, focused on adult development, the experiences of beginning teachers were analyzed using cognitive, emotional, and societal/environmental dimensions.

The study took place in a rural school district in NC. Qualitative data were collected by interviewing beginning teachers in Year 1 and Year 2 of their careers. Each of the beginning teachers worked with one of eight different Teaching and Learning Coaches (TLCs), employed by the district, who served as their mentors.

In this district, each TLC was assigned a group of beginning teachers to mentor. The TLCs served multiple beginning teachers at up to four schools. It is

important to note that mentoring was only one of the multiple responsibilities assigned to the TLCs. For example, TLCs also worked with small groups of students for instruction and behavior management, administered assessments, mentored students, and lead professional development and growth across the county. According to the Director of Human Resources, the district's goal was to employ one TLC per two schools, but that goal has not yet been obtained.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the development of this study.

1. How do beginning teachers describe their experiences working with a district-employed Teaching and Learning Coach who acted in the role of a mentor?

2. How do beginning teachers perceive the difference between the support provided by a district-employed Teaching and Learning Coach and the support provided by in-house colleagues?

3. How has having a Teaching and Learning Coach employed by the district impacted the self-efficacy of beginning teachers?

Teacher Shortages, Retention, & Attrition

Focusing on teacher retention may prove to be more beneficial than continuously hiring new teachers. Over the years, critics have charged that the teaching profession is an occupation that "cannibalizes its young" with the initiation of new teachers being a "sink or swim" experience (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Numerous benefits of retention of highly qualified and effective teachers include

1. Stability and growth among the teaching force.

2. Equitable distribution of highly qualified teachers.

3. Increased student achievement.

4. To save money (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Lasagna, 2009).

According to Breaux and Wong (2003, as cited in Lasagna, 2009) the cost for a district to find one new teacher can total up to $50,000.

Alternative Routes to Teaching

As more teachers enter the profession through alternative methods, the need for mentoring through an effective induction program increases. Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2012) noted more than 40% of teachers entered through nontraditional or alternative routes. Ingersoll et al. studied the pedagogical training of math and science teachers and found that 68% of new science teachers and 42% of new math teachers had a non-education, academic degree. The findings indicated these teachers had less pedagogical training, an influential factor in teachers staying in the profession after their first year. According to the study, 24.6% of teachers who left the profession after 1 year of teaching had little to no pedagogy training, while only 9.8% of teachers with comprehensive pedagogy training exited the profession (Ingersoll et al., 2012).

Effective Mentoring

In the field of teaching, the mentor plays a vital role in the development and training of someone new to the profession. The primary task of the mentor is to establish a relationship based on mutual trust, respect, and collegiality. Trust is the single most important factor in building personal and professional

relationships (Maxwell, 2008). An effective mentor has qualities and responsibilities that go beyond those of an effective teacher. Qualifications of effective mentors include (a) being a skilled teacher; (b) being able to transmit effective teaching strategies; (c) having a thorough command of the curriculum being taught; (d) being able to communicate openly with the beginning teacher; (e) being a good listener; (f) being sensitive to the needs of the beginning teacher; (g) understanding that teachers may be effective using a variety of styles; and (h) not being overly judgmental (Jonson, 2002, p. 9).

Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1995) referred to self-efficacy as the "belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 2). An individual's perception of self-efficacy determines how much effort they are willing to exert and how long they will persist in the face of aversive experiences (Bandura, 1982). Self-efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act (Bandura, 1995). Bandura (1982) asserted an aid to good performance is a strong sense of self-efficacy to withstand failures in addition to a degree of uncertainty to stimulate preparatory acquisition of knowledge and skill. Mastery experiences are the most effective means to create a strong sense of self-efficacy. When people believe they can succeed, they continue through tough times and emerge stronger from adversity. These types of experiences involve acquiring the cognitive, behavioral, and self-regulatory tools necessary to manage varying life circumstances (Bandura, 1995). Vicarious experiences are situations in which a person learns from

watching someone else. Individuals who view social models similar to themselves develop a sense of self-efficacy by watching others master circumstances through perseverant effort.

Theoretical framework

Illeris's (2002) Three Dimensions of Learning was used to understand the beginning teachers' experiences working with their TLC. Illeris's framework combines the cognitive, emotional, and social elements of learning. All learning has a content of skill or meaning (Illeris, 2002). When entering the teaching profession, teachers are challenged to acquire skills necessary to increase student learning. Teachers must have knowledge in classroom management, curriculum and instruction, and communication. All learning is an emotional process simultaneously involving emotions, attitudes, and motivations (Illeris, 2002). Beginning teachers encounter a whirlwind of emotion as they transition from inexperienced newcomers to polished professionals. Research supports the emotional branch of learning by indicating a mentor's parental role to his/her protégés and his/her duty to be a good listener (Hicks et al., 2005; Jonson, 2002). Illeris's (2002) social element of learning involves the interaction between the individual and his/her surroundings. Mentorship calls for establishing a connection with others to create mutual understanding (Zachary, 2000). Beginning teachers interact with their mentors, their colleagues, their students, and the community. Each interaction shapes his/her learning.

METHODS

Data Collection

Data collection took place at the end of the school year. Data were collected through two in-depth interviews with each participant. Each interview was conducted by the researcher and was in the form of "lived-experience descriptions" (van Manen, 1990, p. 55). Initial interviews were conducted using guiding questions developed by the researcher and validated through the use of a pilot study. After preliminary data analysis, follow up questions were created, and a second in-depth interview with each participant was conducted. Both sets of interview questions were aligned with the three research questions as well as Illeris's (2002) Three Dimensions of Learning.

Demographics of participants

The sample was made up of voluntary participants in their first 2 years of teaching. The teachers consisted of elementary, middle, and high school teachers of diverse genders and teaching backgrounds. Table 1 outlines the specific demographics of the participants.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	School	TLC	Program Year	Grade/Subject	Pathway
Participant 1	School A	TLC 1	Year 2	Elementary (Music)	Education major
Participant 2	School B	TLC 2	Year 2	Elementary (Kindergarten)	Education major
Participant 3	School C	TLC 3	Year 1	Elementary (Third)	Lateral entry
Participant 4	School D	TLC 4	Year 2	Elementary (Kindergarten)	Lateral entry
Participant 5	School E	TLC 5	Year 1	Middle (Fifth/Sixth Self-Contained)	Education major
Participant 6	School F	TLC 6	Year 2	Middle (Seventh Science/Social Studies)	Education major
Participant 7	School G	TLC 7	Year 2	High (Spanish)	Lateral entry
Participant 8	School H	TLC 8	Year 1	High (Science)	Lateral entry
Participant 9	School I	TLC 8	Year 1	High (English Language Arts)	Lateral entry

The nine participants included were teachers of music, self-contained exceptional children, science, English/language arts, Spanish, kindergarten, and first grade. Five teachers were lateral-entry and four teachers were education majors.

Data Analysis

Data analysis took place based on a set of specific steps for phenomenology as set forth by Creswell (2013), based on the work of Moustakas (1994). The researcher first described personal experiences with the

phenomenon. This step is referred to as an epoche or bracketing, in which the researcher attempted to set aside any bias and personal experience so that the focus could be explicitly directed to the participants (Creswell, 2013). Bracketing aided in the validation of data. The researcher then conducted two cycles of data analysis. The first cycle, known as values coding, required the researcher to look at the interview transcripts as a method of attuning the researcher to the perspectives of the teachers (Saldaña, 2013). This step was completed by developing a list of significant statements using the transcribed interviews to determine how individuals experienced the topic. This horizontalization of the data consisted of non-repetitive statements. Next, the researcher took the significant statements and grouped them into larger units. The researcher then interviewed participants for a second time in order to explore the data in more depth

The next cycle, eclectic coding, was used to refine the first cycle choices (Saldaña, 2013). The researcher wrote a description of "what" and "how" the participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Development of this textural description included verbatim examples from interview participants. This "essence" represented the culminating aspect of the study, and the researcher described the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced.

FINDINGS

Initial

The research findings for the study are organized based on each of the three research questions. Specific themes accompany each research question

and arose based on the teachers' responses. The researcher analyzed each
initial interview by developing codes based on the teachers' responses. Each
time a code was identified in the participant responses, the researcher recorded
a tally mark on the coding chart. Table 2 outlines the initial data analysis by
identifying the frequency of preliminary codes distributed by participant number.
The researcher categorized the codes by reference to TLC or by reference to
colleagues.

Table 2

Frequency of Initial Code Distribution by Participant

	Participant Number								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
In reference to the teachers' TLC:									
Scheduling	3	12	11	10	8	6	2	4	1
Safe	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Someone to talk to	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	1
Ideas & Resources	1	6	5	4	2	7	3	0	1
Support	8	0	1	4	4	2	1	0	2
Guidance	9	2	0	1	4	0	0	1	4
Feedback	13	9	2	6	3	6	5	3	3
Positive	5	6	1	3	2	5	2	3	5
Expertise	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Helpful	5	9	3	5	2	3	5	6	6
Growth/Confidence	6	6	3	3	0	2	2	2	5
Encouragement	3	3	0	3	3	5	3	0	2
In reference to the teachers' colleagues:									
Positive	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Supportive	3	3	1	7	3	5	1	1	2
Collaboration	4	8	2	4	1	2	3	1	6
Experience	1	4	1	2	0	1	0	0	2
Encouraging	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Helpful	3	3	2	5	2	1	0	1	0
Busy	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0
Ideas	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Honest	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

Since the researcher asked participants to compare and contrast the support they received from their TLC with the support from their colleagues, some responses only dealt with the teachers' colleagues. Therefore, the researcher used two separate sets of codes for the TLC and for the colleagues. The researcher read through each interview and highlighted pertinent data. The researcher then returned to the data and broke the highlighted information down into specific codes. The researcher coded the TLC data in one color and used a separate color for the codes associated with the colleagues.

The researcher carried out the same process of coding the data for the second cycle. During the second data analysis, the researcher added codes such as "someone to talk to" for the TLC section and "honest" for the colleague section. Next, the researcher used the codes to create larger themes. To do this, the researcher combined codes into categories. For example, the codes "encouragement" and "confidence" were placed with the theme of "validation." The researcher then used the themes to identify which research question they addressed. Table 3 displays the initial meanings, themes, and research questions that were noted by the researcher.

Table 3

Final Data Analysis

Initial Meaning	Final Theme	Research Question
Provided Instructional ideas/resources Positive Feedback Support	Helpful	1
Shared availability Multiple new teachers	Scheduling	1
<u>Influencing Factors:</u> Experience of colleagues Logistics of school (time, scheduling) Availability of TLCs Closeness of relationship	Supportive, differing experiences based on school and TLC	2
Increased confidence Encouragement Growth Inspirational Support	Validation	3

To clarify each theme, the researcher identified the theme as positive or

negative. Table 4 identifies the theme as well as the appropriate label.

Table 4

Theme Clarification

Theme	Clarification
Helpful	Positive
Scheduling	Negative
Supportive, Differing Experience	Both positive and negative
Validation	Positive

Validation of Data

The researcher used several validation techniques proposed by Creswell (2013). Triangulation occurs when the researcher corroborates evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective (Creswell, 2013). The four strategies the researcher used included peer review; clarifying researcher bias; member-checking; and rich, thick description.

Peer review was conducted after final data analysis was completed by the researcher. The researcher asked an external professional to review the data analysis and provide feedback. To carry out this process, the researcher sent the interview transcripts as well as the descriptive narrative of data to the peer. The peer reviewed the documents to verify the accuracy of the researcher's analysis. The researcher did not revise the analysis after peer review because the external professional confirmed the accuracy of data.

After the researcher's initial data analysis was completed, member-checking took place. Member-checking is defined as the "verification or extension of information developed by the researcher" (Hatch, 2002, p. 92). Creswell (2013) described this process as taking the preliminary data analysis to participants to understand their views of the written analysis as well as what is missing. The candidate met with the participants to give them the opportunity to consider and give their reactions to the interpretations.

The last validation strategy, rich, thick description, entailed using a detailed description that will "[enable] readers to transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred" (Creswell,

2013, p. 252). Data triangulation took place through the use of a second in-depth interview conducted with each participant. The second interview allowed the researcher to explore the initial themes in more depth. The rich, thick description aided in the interpretation of the ways the theoretical framework related to beginning teachers' perceptions of the mentoring relationship.

Overall

The research study uncovered four findings from teacher interviews that addressed the three research questions. The four findings were (1) beginning teachers indicated their TLCs were helpful; (2) most beginning teachers indicated their TLCs' scheduling needed improvement; (3) beginning teachers indicated the support provided by their TLCs and their colleagues differed based on each participant's individual school and TLC; and (4) TLCs have positively impacted teacher self-efficacy through validation.

The first finding was positive and suggested that the TLCs were helpful in numerous ways: providing instructional ideas and resources, always being positive, providing feedback, and always being supportive. New teachers described numerous challenges and struggles throughout the year and elaborated on how their TLC was helpful to them in overcoming those situations. Beginning teachers described classroom management, classroom organization, and curriculum planning as areas in which the TLC lent a helping hand.

The second finding revealed a negative experience associated with the TLCs' availabilities and responsibilities. New teachers described the TLCs' numerous duties in addition to mentoring. Teachers also identified that TLCs

were assigned numerous schools and new teachers to service. New teachers saw their TLC from 1-3 days per week. Generally, teachers who had a TLC who was more available had a more positive experience. One teacher described her experience of having her mentor at her school full-time. She was highly satisfied with the experience and noted having a TLC housed at the school full-time made a significant impact on the quality of her teaching.

The third finding was both positive and negative and uncovered that the new teachers' colleagues and TLCs were both supportive but each teacher's experiences were dependent upon the school and TLC. As mentioned above, teachers who had TLCs who made themselves readily available created a more positive experience for the new teachers. The support system at each teacher's school varied considerably. Some teachers had strong support from veteran teachers on their teams as well as support from administration. Other teachers did not have that type of support, leading to more reliance on the TLC. Teachers with a weaker support system valued the mentoring experience more.

The fourth finding suggested new teacher self-efficacy increased as a result of the validation their TLC provided. When reflecting upon the beginning of the school year versus the end of the school year, many teachers stated they had grown. The TLCs' consistent encouragement and guidance aided in the personal and professional growth of teachers. When asked how they had grown, many teachers responded by referencing their confidence level. Five research participants were lateral entry and had no classroom experience prior to

becoming a teacher. These teachers especially valued the support provided by the TLC. One teacher's quote perfectly alluded to an effective mentor: "At first, [the TLC is] like a loving mother but by the end she's pounding you into this finely-tuned instrument and gradually raising her expectations for the teacher" (Participant 9, personal communication, June 15, 2015).

INTERPRETATION

Theoretical framework. Illeris's (2002) Three Dimensions of Learning guided the methodology for this study and provided a framework for understanding and interpreting the data. The model states there are three dimensions involved in learning: cognitive, emotional, and social; and each one was clearly recognized in this study.

Cognitive. Illeris's (2002, 2003, 2004) cognitive function is representative of the idea that learning requires a specific skill set or acquisition of content knowledge. Beginning teachers portrayed this dimension of learning throughout the interviews by citing an appreciation for their mentors' helpfulness with regard to completing work requiring a specific skill. Many teachers identified learning how to write PDPs and PEPs as concepts their mentor addressed. Not only did the new teachers need to have content knowledge of their subject, they had to complete paperwork, find test scores, organize their classrooms, and carry out curriculum planning, each aiding in their personal and professional learning. One teacher explained that his TLC highlighted the need to have a procedure for everything, a simple yet invaluable piece of advice for a novice. Another teacher explained learning classroom management was a struggle:

"Knowing when to be firm and when to back off . . . and that fine balance" (Participant 1, personal communication, June 15, 2015). Learning within the mentoring experience allowed new teachers to gain ideas and instructional strategies from their mentors. New teachers created their lesson plans and as a result developed a sense of competency as a teacher.

        The value of meeting teachers' cognitive needs reaches beyond measure. Providing new teachers with the necessary knowledge to aid in their success contributes to increasing overall teacher satisfaction, leading to a higher-quality education for students and decreased turnover for school systems. The researcher placed importance on understanding the new teachers' experiences with regard to the cognitive function in order to highlight the need for new teachers to acquire a specific skill set. Understanding the new teachers' lack of or presence of knowledge was useful by presenting ways in which the mentoring relationship met or did not meet the needs of teachers. The researcher associated the cognitive dimension with Findings 1 and 3. Finding 1 indicated new teachers found their TLCs to be helpful, while Finding 3 compared and contrasted the TLCs' support with the colleagues' support. Overall, in this study, the cognitive needs of the new teachers were met through the assistance of the TLCs and colleagues. The majority of teachers expounded upon the fact that they learned more about teaching in general from their mentors. New teachers became more proficient in executing their lesson plans, learning how to complete paperwork, learning how to discipline students, and implementing a variety of instructional strategies.

Emotional. Illeris's (2002, 2003, 2004) emotional dimension includes the feelings, motivations, and mental energy associated with learning. Participants identified experiences that challenged them in diverse ways. One teacher explained, "I'm still coping with the ups and downs of being a teacher . . . you will start thinking it's you" (Participant 9, personal communication, July 22, 2015). That same teacher described his teaching experience as, "It's rewarding but not rewarding from an academic sense. It's more from trying to give people hope . . . to smile at someone" (Participant 9, personal communication, June 15, 2015). Another participant described his emotions at the beginning of his career and working with his TLC as "It was scary at first . . . but to have someone come in and be very positive . . . has been very effective" (Participant 1, personal communication, June 15, 2015). The teacher described a range of emotions by saying,

> I've been surprised at how rewarding and gratifying it is to be able to see a smile on a child's face. To give that child hope, just to give them a hug . . . I'm surprised at how much I've learned about myself as a person . . . how I've felt stronger as a person. (Participant 1, personal communication, June 15, 2015)

Research indicated even though beginning teachers may appear to be confident, they often need—and want—feedback (Boreen et al., 2009). Participants clearly described this idea throughout the interviews by associating their TLCs' feedback with their increased confidence and growth. One participant experienced aggravation due to her TLC's availability. The teacher

felt as if the TLC was too busy, and her TLC's presence would have her "given a sense of importance" (Participant 3, personal communication, June 16, 2015).

The purpose of this study was to understand beginning teachers' experiences working with their TLCs as mentors. Understanding new teachers' thoughts, feelings, and motivations were crucial to fulfilling the purpose of the study and were used to address the study's research questions. The researcher used the data to associate the emotional dimension with Findings 3 and 4. Finding 3 highlighted the individualized differences of support received from colleagues and TLCs based on each participant's school context and TLC. Finding 4 addressed the validation provided by the TLC. The researcher found that the teachers' emotional needs were met through the utilization of a TLC provided by the district. Every teacher was emphatic about the confidence that resulted from receiving their TLC's encouragement. While the year was full of struggles and successes, ultimately each new teacher felt he/she grew tremendously. By understanding the new teachers' experiences, the researcher was able to conclude that the mentoring relationship was effective in the emotional dimension. Also, the researcher was able to conclude that new teachers' emotional needs were not met only by the TLC but by their colleagues as well.

Social. Illeris's (2002, 2003, 2004) social function involves external interactions such as participation, communication, and cooperation. Beginning teachers collaborate on a regular basis with colleagues, students, parents, administration, and their TLCs. These experiences shape them into their

personal and professional beings. In this study, the participants elaborated on interacting with colleagues and their TLCs. Research supported the fact that new teachers need freedom to experiment and take risks in order to develop independence (Boreen et al., 2009). Research also suggested mentors can help beginning teachers navigate new terrain by self-assessing the school environment or school culture and providing a clarification to their mentees, introducing them to faculty and staff, modeling respect for administrators, and following school procedures (Boreen et al., 2009). These interactions can have a direct effect on a new teacher's experience. One participant stated, "It's a great feeling to be connected with faculty and like-minded folks" (Participant 1, personal communication, June 15, 2015). Another participant described time and scheduling to be factors that created a barrier for collaborating with colleagues. Many teachers who had a strong support system at their school had differing experiences with their TLC than teachers who had a weak support system, indicative of the influences interaction can have among the new teachers' experiences.

In this study, the researcher was able to link all four findings to Illeris's social dimension. The data indicated the new teachers reported areas that dealt with collaboration or the school environment. The TLCs were helpful, overloaded, provided individualized support, and increased confidence in new teachers—all of which relate to communication and collaboration. The regular interaction that took place between the TLC and new teacher was the most obvious type of social learning that took place in the mentoring relationship.

Regular exchanges with the TLCs were a social function; however, the new

teachers were simultaneously learning through the cognitive and emotional

dimensions. On a day-to-day basis, the new teachers collaborated with their

colleagues as well as their TLC. By asking participants to describe their

experiences with both the mentor and TLC, the researcher was able to attribute

meaning to the data and understand the teachers' experiences with the

mentoring phenomenon in the study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this study can help inform teacher induction policy,

design, and implementation. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) stated, "Loss of new

teachers plays a major role in the teacher shortage, but pouring more teachers

into the system will not solve the retention problem" (p. 1). The researcher

recommends that beginning teachers continue to be provided a TLC by the

district. Support provided to new teachers through full-time TLCs is imperative to

sustaining a high-quality, professional staff of teachers for the district. Learning

how this support is provided and how teachers describe their experiences is

informative to district staff.

Teachers are the most important factor for student learning; therefore,

improving the quality of teaching is critical to student success. Continuous

support through mentoring can help stimulate professional development for new

teachers. In the study, many beginning teachers reported their interaction with

the TLC to occur a few times per week. During the first few years, new teachers

are in a transition phase of moving from a student of teaching to the teacher of

students (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Other teachers are becoming familiarized with the educational world altogether through alternative licensure programs. Regardless of the pathway into the teaching profession, new teachers need intensive support from a mentor. The majority of teachers stated it would have been more beneficial if the TLCs were more available and had fewer teachers to service in the county. The researcher agrees with this finding. The researcher recommends employing one TLC per school. If TLCs serve one school, it would eliminate the need for time spent traveling to multiple locations and result in increased time spent with new teachers.

Ingersoll and Smith (2003) identified lack of administrative support, poor student discipline and motivation, and lack of participation in decision making as effective improvement efforts. Beginning teachers reported the TLCs served the purpose of bridging the gap between the teacher and administrator. The TLCs also provided instructional ideas, resources, feedback, and encouragement to deal with classroom management and student engagement and motivation. The TLCs validated the efforts of new teachers and aided in increasing their confidence levels. The researcher recommends the TLC continue utilizing the current effective practices as well as identifying ways to give the beginning teachers a voice in the decision making regarding their mentoring experience and overall induction requirements.

Implications for Future Research

This study provided insight into other areas of research that could take place in the future. The study was focused on beginning teachers describing their

lived experiences with their mentor in order to attribute meaning to their experiences. Additional research is necessary to explore the beliefs and attitudes of more teachers using varied methodology. Phenomenology did not allow for generalizations to be made for the district. While this study was an excellent starting point for understanding the mentoring component for the district, additional research would be needed in order to make decisions with regard to change.

Second, research is needed to compare and contrast beginning teachers' experiences working with a TLC who has mentoring duties at one school versus working with a TLC who has mentoring duties at numerous schools. In this study, only one participant had a TLC who was assigned only to her school. Eight other participants had a TLC assigned to two or three different schools. Participant 5's TLC began the school year serving two schools but the TLC was reassigned to serve one school. The participant was able to have experience working with the TLC while she was assigned to two schools as well as when she only had one school. While Participant 5 noted that having the TLC full-time made a significant difference, more research is desirable.

Third, while studying the mentoring component of induction is informative, mentoring is one component of the entire induction program for the district. In order to gain a holistic understanding of the induction program and/or effectiveness of the program, research would need to be carried out. The effectiveness of the mentoring component was not determined through this study. Research that evaluates the mentoring component and induction program

would be beneficial and invaluable to the district.

Finally, the sample of participants was limited to nine beginning teachers. These nine teachers were diverse in content area; however, only Year 1 and Year 2 teachers participated. The researcher was unable to elicit cooperation with Year 3 teachers. Additional research regarding the experiences of beginning teachers in Year 3 would be appropriate to gaining a broader understanding of mentoring and induction. A more comprehensive sample size for additional research would be conducive to expanding the usefulness of a TLC.

Summary

In this study, the researcher was able to explore and describe beginning teachers' experiences with their district-employed TLC. Beginning teachers revealed four themes relevant to the three research questions posed by the researcher. The findings were valuable at providing insight into the mentoring phenomenon for new teachers. The data were used to identify ways in which new teachers' cognitive, emotional, and social learning needs were met. The researcher used the data to provide recommendations for the district and to serve as a guiding mechanism for understanding the mentoring component of new teacher induction. Overall, new teachers highly valued the contributions of their TLCs and felt an overall growth in their performance under his/her guidance.

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