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## ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, THE TEACHER CADET PROGRAM: QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS OF SEQUENCE AND SCOPE, by PATSY D. LEWIS, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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Patsy D. Lewis

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## ABSTRACT

### THE TEACHER CADET PROGRAM: QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS IN SEQUENCE AND SCOPE by Patsy D. Lewis

The Teacher Cadet Program began in South Carolina as a means of introducing high school students to teaching. Although implemented in 1986, little research exists about the perspectives of stakeholders in the Teacher Cadet Program. The purpose of this study was to explore the participants' perspectives concerning the structure and experiences offered in the TCP and describe how those experiences influenced college and career decisions.

This qualitative case study investigated how 46 Teacher Cadet participants in a rural public high school perceived their experiences in the TCP. The study examined the stories of four participants who represented each of the groups studied. Data collection methods included survey information, interviews, and focus group discussions analyzed using a constant-comparative approach. Focusing on a single site allowed the researcher to explore the stories of program participants and uncovered three elements they viewed as the most important characteristics of the program: the contributions of hands-on experiences, the significance of early exposure to the field of teaching, and the importance of the relationships that were established. Study results provided a framework for understanding the affects of the Teacher Cadet Program on participants. The findings documented overall positive perceptions. This study added to the body of knowledge about the perspectives of stakeholders in the Teacher Cadet Program in regards to the value participants placed on their experiences and subsequently how those experiences influenced their career and college plans.

THE TEACHER CADET PROGRAM:  
QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS  
IN SEQUENCE  
AND SCOPE  
by  
Patsy D. Lewis

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the  
Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Educational Leadership  
in  
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in  
the College of Education  
Georgia State University

Atlanta, Georgia  
2013



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Throughout the country, colleges and universities have searched for answers to the current dilemmas facing the recruitment of future teachers and the effectiveness of teacher preparation to ensure a high quality workforce of educators who choose to stay in the field. Recruitment programs have worked to attract candidates who want to become teachers and are prepared for the rigors of the profession (Byrd, 2002; Lewis, 1992; McCaw, Freeman & Philhower, 2002; Schmitz, Nourse, & Ross, 2012; Swanson, 2011), while schools of education have restructured programs to make the curriculum more relevant hoping such transformations will improve teacher preparation (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education [AACTE], 2010; Grossman, 2010; Hovland & Chandler, 2008; The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], 2010). Specifically, reform in teacher education has recently emphasized the importance of recruiting dedicated young people and providing them with clinical preparation consisting of opportunities for early and sustained hands-on experiences in classroom (AACTE, 2010; Grossman, 2010; Hovland & Chandler, 2008; NCATE, 2010). Within this context, certain teacher recruitment programs provide early exposure to the teaching profession in order to attract talented students into the field of education. The Teacher Cadet Program, developed in 1985 for high school students, is one model, which takes this approach. Using this premise, teacher effectiveness connects to both teacher preparation and the recruitment of candidates who understand the field and are committed to the profession (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Darling-Hammond &

Haselkorn, 2009; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Liu, Johnson, & Peske, 2004); therefore, this inquiry focuses on exploring stakeholders' perspectives in one Teacher Cadet Program. Teacher preparation begun as early as high school immerses students into the field of teaching and provides them with vital clinical experiences that will help shape their ideas about teaching. The intent of this research was to understand the perspectives of stakeholders in the Teacher Cadet Program with the hope of revealing the value of the program and to possibly identify effective elements to incorporate into teacher preparation programs. Research on the early field experiences of the Teacher Cadet Program could also potentially add to the body of literature on clinical teacher preparation. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the perspectives of stakeholders in the Teacher Cadet Program on program participants and describe whether stakeholders felt that providing preservice teachers with early clinical experiences during their high school years presented a viable addition to teacher preparation programs.

### **Background of the Problem**

After working as the Teacher Cadet Program facilitator at a rural high school in the North Georgia area, the idea of conducting research about the experiences of participants in the program became intriguing. This high school began a Teacher Cadet program in the 1996-1997 school year. The Teacher Cadet Program (TCP) consisted of a two-year curriculum developed under an articulation agreement with local universities. According to the agreement, first-year participants received classroom instruction using materials similar to those used by college professors in Introduction to Education courses. Participants also served as student interns with field experiences, which included structured classroom observations in grades K-8. The second year of the program



consisted of placement in the Teacher Apprenticeship class and the completion of a one-year internship with a teacher of the student's choice.

While facilitating the Teacher Cadet Program for ten years, it was apparent that the program affected participants. Some students knew immediately that they did not want a career in education and transferred into other electives at the end of the first semester. Other students seemed to develop a drive to teach, which often resulted in volunteer opportunities while they were high school students and beyond. An extension of this occurred when participants in the program left for college only to return to the district as educators once they received their initial teacher certification. Over the years, I presumed that the Teacher Cadet Program influenced participants, but I was not aware of research, which conducted in that area. In the following section, I will describe what I was subsequently able to find in the literature with regard to that program.

In beginning to investigate the Teacher Cadet Program, it became evident that little information existed on the TCP except for general program descriptions and suggestions for implementation. I inquired into current research on the Teacher Cadet Program through the Georgia Department of Education. This department assigned individuals to act as liaisons to TCP program coordinators throughout the state. In an e-mail conversation with the state liaison, (personal communication, February 22, 2007) she noted numerous educators in Georgia with valuable experience in the Teacher Cadet Program who would prove to be excellent contacts, but the liaison had no knowledge of any studies that had been conducted since the implementation of the Teacher Cadet Program in Georgia schools. A similar conversation occurred with the liaison for the Work-Based Learning Specialist, (personal communication, February 21, 2007), who

indicated that he and a Family and Consumer Science Specialist, were working together to revise curriculum for Georgia Teacher Cadet Programs. The Work-Based Learning Specialist had no knowledge of educational research in the vocational field directly tied to the Teacher Cadet Program. With the Teacher Cadet contacts at the Georgia Department of Education exhausted, the next focus targeted resources outside of Georgia.

The Teacher Cadet Program began during 1985-1986 in South Carolina with a pilot that consisted of four high schools. Later, the North Carolina Association of Educators trained 150 teachers or contacts; approximately 125 sites representing 55 counties (NCAE, 2011). Following the lead of South Carolina and North Carolina, Georgia created a similar program and placed it under the auspices of Teacher Apprenticeship, part of the work-based learning initiative. According to Standards and Guidelines for Work-Based Learning Programs in Georgia, work-based learning programs include three components: (1) school-based learning with classroom instruction in both academic and occupational areas, (2) work-based learning with structured work, and (3) connecting or career development activities (Georgia Department of Education, 2005, p. 1-2). Although established in 2005, these guidelines are still true today. The Teacher Cadet Program satisfied each of the three components through academic classroom instruction and clinical experiences in a classroom setting that connected to career development.

Investigating the literature about the Teacher Cadet Program revealed general program information and suggestions for implementation based upon the South Carolina program (South Carolina Center for Education, Recruitment, and Advancement, 2003). Further research revealed that other states have also implemented similar programs. In 2003, 18 states had Teacher Cadet Programs patterned after the South Carolina program.

Ten years later, the number of states that offered Teacher Cadet Programs grounded in the framework established by the South Carolina program had grown to include 33 states (South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement, 2013).

The website for South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement also known as CERRA, provided real-time data gathered from the 2011-2012 Teacher Cadets in South Carolina. As students completed the Teacher Cadet Student Pre-Survey for the 2012-2013 school year, data updated automatically. In January 2013, the website data indicated 178 schools were involved in the Teacher Cadet Program, and 2,192 students had completed the survey. The ethnicity breakdowns of participants were 66.8% White, 25.4 Black or African-American, 2.8% Hispanic, 2.7% other, 1.8% Asian, and .5% American Indian or Alaskan Native. Further data gathered from the survey questioned students about their future goals. The survey indicated that 36.7% of the participants planned to pursue a career in teaching, 18% planned to pursue medicine, 19.2% other, 12.0% undecided, 5.6% Business Management, 4.3% Allied Health, and 4.2% Engineering (South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement, 2013).

References to the Teacher Cadet Program noted in various education journals emphasize how the program can result in growing your own teachers or, in other words, discussions of the Teacher Cadet Program as a vehicle for recruitment. Several of these journal entries are explored below. *Georgia's Grow-Your-Own Teacher Programs Attract the Right Stuff* (Swanson, 2011) discusses a variety of programs such as Future Educators of America, a student organization that has collaborated with Phi Delta Kappa, Pathways to Teaching Careers, Teacher Cadets, and Troops to Teachers. Each of these

programs discusses providing important opportunities for students to explore careers in education.

Byrd (2002) writes about the Teacher Cadet Program as a survey course that could provide an opportunity for teachers to use a taxonomy as a framework for developing instructional units. Byrd encourages teachers of the Teacher Cadet program and Teacher Cadet students to apply the taxonomy discussed in the article as a means to model, examine, analyze, and reflect upon various approaches to teaching. The article was informative but not a research study.

Other articles also provide descriptive overviews and recommendations for Teacher Cadet Programs. For instance, Lewis (1992) provides information about the Teacher Cadet Program origination and describes it as a means for recruiting students into teaching. Lewis explains how the program developed as an educational reform of the 1980s and continues to attract top students into the field of education. Aspects of the article discuss university partnerships, networking within the state, and curriculum. Although not a research study, the article does highlight positive aspects of the Teacher Cadet Program such as obvious program effects and the inroads the program is making into minority recruitment.

The use of such programs to recruit minorities occurs in another teacher-training program similar to the Teacher Cadet Program, The Crenshaw Training Academy in Los Angeles, California (Mitchell, 1988). Addressing more than just teacher preparation at the high school level, The Crenshaw Training Academy has developed a teacher education program for minorities that specifically addresses the recruitment of African-American, Asian, Latino, and Native American teachers. In 2012, Crenshaw High School

listed general information about the Teacher Training Magnet school on its website citing the program as a Los Angeles Unified School District program designed to help prepare high school students for a career in teaching. The website describes Crenshaw High School as an ideal location for a teacher-training program since it is central to four universities that work closely with students. According to Mitchell (1988), those universities include UCLA, USC California State University, Los Angeles and Immaculate Heart College. Similarly, another grow-your-own program mentioned in the Mitchell (1988) article refers to the Central Washington University and Renton School District Future Teacher Academy (FTA). The FTA began in 2009 to address the increasing gap between the number of minority teacher candidates and minority students in the Renton School District. The purpose of the program was to introduce minority high school students to teaching careers. The program creators measured success of the program by the number of students who graduate from high school and matriculate to a community college or four-year university (Schmitz, Nourse, & Ross, 2012). Again, although the descriptions of these programs were informative, research on the participants' perspectives on the programs or the value of the programs was not evident.

Finally, the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs publishes the Rural Research Report in collaboration with Western Illinois University. McCaw, Freeman, and Philhower, (2002) discuss the Teacher Cadet Program in the context of rural education and provide suggestions for growing your own teachers. The publication mentioned the South Carolina Teacher Cadet program and referred to other programs that focused on recruiting high school students into the field of teaching. Although this edition referenced the Teacher Cadet Program as a possible recruitment tool for hard-to-staff schools, it was

not a research study.

While the use of Teacher Cadet Programs have grown since the creation of the program in 1985, literature about the Teacher Cadet Program has revealed no research-based information indicating how exposure in clinical settings during high school influenced participants. Therefore, I decided there was a need to investigate in what ways the Teacher Cadet Program influenced participants because there was a gap in the knowledge base.

### **A Statement of the Problem**

The Teacher Cadet Program provides high school students, who have an interest in the teaching profession, an opportunity to study introductory education concepts and participate in numerous field experiences in K-8 classrooms. The intent is to enable prospective teachers to have opportunities to explore the field of education through hands-on interaction in real-life classrooms. The importance of rich, field-based experiences as a vital element in teacher preparation has become an increasingly important topic in teacher preparation across the country. Both educators and nonprofessionals interested in the reform of teacher education emphasize the critical importance of the clinical aspect of teacher preparation. The importance of this issue to the public appears as articles in magazines and newspapers tout the benefits of clinical preparation for preservice teachers. For instance, *The Washington Post* published an article in November 2010 discussing proposed changes in teacher preparation at the collegiate level. The article emphasized that teachers, like doctors, should receive their training through clinical practice. In November 2010, NCATE released a report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on clinical preparation and partnerships for improved learning. The

panel determined that the nation must reform teacher preparation programs and place an emphasis on clinical practice. The report called for five initiatives that will be the foundation of the reform. These initiatives included 1) more rigorous accountability 2) strengthening candidate selection and placement 3) revamping curricula, incentives, and staffing 4) supporting partnerships and 5) expanding the knowledge base to identify what works and support continuous improvement. At the release of the report findings, eight states, which include California, Colorado, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, Ohio, Oregon, and Tennessee, had signed letters of intent to implement the new agenda (NCATE, 2010). Also in 2010, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) released a policy brief that detailed the need for clinical preparation of teachers. The policy brief discussed changes in teacher preparation, offered evidence of the importance of strong clinical preparation, and described an effective clinical preparation program (AACTE, 2010).

Another report commissioned by the National Education Association Center for Teacher Quality (2009) also focused on the clinical experience of teacher preparation. The report consisted of findings based on a review of historical documents, websites, and interviews from 12 pre-collegiate teacher recruitment programs. One of the programs reviewed is the South Carolina Teacher Cadet Program. The report was quick to indicate that although many of the 12 programs, including South Carolina's Teacher Cadets, have been in existence for several decades, few have the necessary funding or data collection required to formally review the program (National Education Association Department of Teacher Quality, 2009).

As shown in these recent documents, teacher education literature currently stresses the importance of reforming teacher preparation through attention to field experience and clinical practice. An examination of this literature reveals three important themes: (a) the importance of connecting theory with clinical practice, (b) the intersections of field experiences and the resulting teacher quality and effectiveness, and (c) an emphasis on early field experiences with diverse learners as a way to recruit for teacher for diverse classrooms. Of these, the most prevalent topic in the literature seems to be the importance of connecting theory with clinical practice. Between 2008 and 2012, numerous studies appeared in education journals about clinical practice (Hudson, 2012; Lingam, 2012; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2011; Stronge, Ward, and Grant, 2011; Zeichner, 2010). During that time, reports released by NCATE and AACTE also concentrated on the importance of clinical preparation. Both policy briefs recommend a shift from the focus on course work to practical hands-on experiences (AACTE, 2010; NCATE, 2010).

Hudson (2012) studied ten first-year teachers to determine how universities can better support their needs. Findings indicated that the beginning teachers believed their university course work needed to provide practical training in combination with theory. The teachers discussed the need for having hands-on experiences concerning setting up a classroom, managing student behavior, and parent communications. In scholarship exploring the boundaries between collegiate course work and field placement in K-12 schools, Zeichner (2010) argues for a new approach to teacher preparation where academic course work is no longer the primary source of knowledge, and field placements receive equal priority. Zeichner contends that the revised approach will better prepare preservice teachers improving teacher quality and effectiveness.



The impact of rich clinical experiences on teacher quality and effectiveness is another theme relevant in current literature. Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2011) studied the relationship between the pathways teachers choose to prepare for a career in teaching and their preparedness and intention to remain in teaching. Participants in the study experienced one of three pathways to teaching: traditional, professional development school, or teacher-in-residence. Regardless of the pathway, participants agreed that their most vital preparation came from being in the classroom setting and the relationships they established with other educators in that setting. Stronge, Ward, and Grant (2011) conclude that, “The common denominator in school improvement and student success is the teacher” (p. 351). Another article stressing the importance of teacher quality and effectiveness describes a study of beginning teachers’ perceptions of their training program. The study reveals that the success and failure of education centers on the classroom teacher. Again, the researchers conclude that the competence of teachers depends primarily upon the quality of their teacher preparation program, and the way theory merges with application (Lingam, 2012).

Recruitment for a diverse teacher workforce, which may refer to diversity as a cultural aspect or a specific discipline, appears an additional underlying idea in much of the current literature examining effective and early field-based opportunities. Gomez, Strage, Knustson-Miller, and Garcia-Nevarez (2009) concentrate on placement in early field experiences with culturally and linguistically diverse students. The research findings indicate that early field experiences are significant in helping teachers examine their desires to teach. These experiences can help candidates explore and clarify goals by providing a realistic framework for classroom interactions with diverse learners. The

researchers caution that one should thoughtfully consider early field experiences because placement can lead to outcomes that may or may not be the initial goal of the experience (Gomez et al., 2009).

Miksza and Austin (2010) investigated a pre-collegiate music teacher initiative that interviewed 11 high school students who served as sectional coaches during a 12-week middle school band program. The early field experience provided opportunities for high school students to serve in supervised teaching assignments. The research findings conclude that eight of the 11 students actively pursued admission into music education programs indicating that the early field experience had a positive influence on student participants. In another study focusing on high school programs, Zascavage, Winterman, Armstrong, and Schroeder-Steward (2008) examine the relationship between high school students who participated in support groups for students with special needs and recruitment of these students as future special educators. The findings of the study indicate that using this approach is a cost effective and pro-active means for addressing teacher recruitment in special education through early field experience.

Although the research such as studies mentioned above addresses the importance of early field experiences in helping future educators make connections between theory and practice, in contributing the quality and effectiveness of teachers, and in recruiting teachers to work with diverse students and across diverse fields, none of the research discusses such experiences within Teacher Cadet Programs. The attention to the importance of clinical experiences within the current conversations on teacher education reform, combined with a lack of research on the Teacher Cadet Program in particular, results in a need for this specific study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Although numerous high schools implement the Teacher Cadet Program, no one has researched the influence of the program on stakeholders. This circumstance creates a situation that deserves further investigation. If the goal of a teacher preparation program is to prepare educators who are committed to the profession, it would seem logical to identify those interested in teaching at an early age, expose them to clinical experiences, and present opportunities for them to explore aspects of the teaching profession. According to information about the design of the Teacher Cadet Program, this occurs, but research is needed which explores how the educational experiences within this program affect stakeholder perspectives participants.

In addition to providing important information on the Teacher Cadet Program specifically, this study will also fill a gap in the literature by providing important information on the perceived importance of early field experiences as a valuable element of the clinical preparation of teachers. Thus far, the influence on high school students who have participated in Teacher Cadet Program clinical experiences has not been researched in teacher education literature. If students are intrigued with the idea of teaching, early exposure could provide them with a means to determine if the field of education was a possible career option for them. Furthermore, early exposure might increase retention rates in the field because students who entered a collegiate education program would do so having had previous educational experiences through the Teacher Cadet Program. Students who participate in early field experiences may possess a personal understanding of the various aspects of teaching and consequently may enter a teacher education program with more realistic expectations about teaching. Again, this is

simply supposition because researchers have not conducted studies into the affects of early field experiences, which occur in the high school years of the future preservice candidates.

Although the Teacher Cadet Program has become a popular introductory experience for future educators across the country, there is a lack of research on the perspectives of stakeholders and how they perceive its importance. At the same time, while reform in teacher education has called for increased attention to the clinical preparation of teachers, little attention has been given to the value of early field experiences provided in programs such as the Teacher Cadet Program. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of stakeholders in the Teacher Cadet Program and to explore stakeholders' perspectives of the value of the early field experiences provided in the program. The following questions guided the research investigation:

1. What are the stakeholders' perspectives of the structure and the experiences offered in a Teacher Cadet program?
2. What value do stakeholders see in those experiences?
3. In what ways do current and former Teacher Cadets feel their subsequent career or college plans and experiences were affected by their participation?

### **Methodology**

The research design was a qualitative study focusing on participants' experiences in a specific Teacher Cadet Program offered at a secondary school in North Georgia. Purposive sampling procedures were used to identify research participants. Specifically, participants were comprised of current students, graduates of the program, and supervising teachers. Primary data sources included personal stories and reflections of

program participants gathered through focus groups and interviews. Secondary data sources used during the research study include a questionnaire designed to aid in the selection of key informants. The procedures followed to collect data included an initial meeting used to explain the context of the study and provide an opportunity for potential participants to complete consent forms and a survey. Stakeholders wrote their names on the survey making division into focus groups easier. The focus groups met to discuss the results of the survey and to respond to specific interview questions. As needed, members of the focus group participated in member checks in order to provide more information or to clarify previous statements.

Data analysis occurred through thematic analysis. Coding and category systems assist the process of inductive analysis to elicit emerging themes (Krathwohl, 1998). Using suggestions from Charmaz (2006), codes were used to analyze data with key concepts sorted into categories and subcategories. Using an Excel spreadsheet, I created nine worksheets within the database to organize participant data. On the theme analysis sheet, I color-coded data into three distinct categories. Identifying characteristics were removed from all participant data sources. I assigned all participants a pseudonym to protect the identities of the education agency and study participants. I housed research documentation collected from study participants in a locked cabinet whenever not in use. I analyzed data collected during the study as soon as possible after collection, beginning with the initial surveys. The on-going analysis guided subsequent data collection.

### **Definition of Terms**

Terms that will appear in this study, which may be unfamiliar are listed next with the appropriate definition.

- *Teacher Cadet Program*: Teacher Cadet Program refers to a specific two-year program of study offered to high school students. During the first year, students enroll in two courses: Examining the Teaching Profession (1<sup>st</sup> semester) and Contemporary Issues in Education (2<sup>nd</sup> semester). The second year of the program consists of an internship called Teaching as a Profession Internship (Georgia Department of Education, 2013b).
- *Articulation agreement*: Articulation agreement refers to an agreement between a high school and a postsecondary institution regarding the awarding of both secondary and postsecondary credit for a dual enrollment course (Georgia Department of Education, 2013a).

### **Significance of the Study**

With so much interest in placing Teacher Cadet Programs at the high school level, it is curious that researchers have not investigated the affect of the TCP on stakeholders. Why has this program been implemented into numerous high schools without research into stakeholders' perceptions concerning the value of the program? Greater understanding of the affect of the TCP on participants could help inform school systems in making decisions regarding whether such programs should be included in course offerings. The research would be beneficial to states in times of budget crunches because it would provide data about the viability of the program and if school resources were being used efficiently. If as Swanson (2011) stated, "teachers tend to return to the area in which they were raised" (p. 119), then the conclusions drawn from a research study about the perspectives of stakeholders in the Teacher Cadet Program could reveal implications for identifying and recruiting potential educators within a community. Knowing this

information could promote an atmosphere of collaboration with local universities and colleges encouraging a partnership that would be beneficial to both groups. Nationally, findings from a research study about the perspectives of stakeholders in the Teacher Cadet Program may provide insights for recruiting teachers in difficult to staff schools and attracting a diversity of individuals into the field of teaching.

### **Summary**

Chapter 1 introduced the need to conduct a research study on the perceptions concerning the Teacher Cadet Program. In this chapter, I presented the background of the problem, which indicates a gap in the knowledge concerning how the Teacher Cadet Program affects program participants. Numerous studies do exist, examining clinical experiences within teacher preparation programs, and many recommend changes in the existing format for training preservice teachers. Although research supports the notion that teacher preparation programs should include more opportunities for clinical practice, none of the existing studies provides information about the clinical aspects of the Teacher Cadet Program.

The next chapter presents a review of the related literature. The chapter begins with an exploration of the teacher recruitment literature as it relates the identification of potential teachers and growing-your-own. The following section of this review provides background information on the Teacher Cadet Program, its South Carolina origination, and its evolution in states like North Carolina and Georgia. Finally, a review of current research related to teacher preparation precedes a section of literature focused on the importance of field and clinical experiences connected to theory, teacher quality, and effectiveness.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review relevant literature related to the Teacher Cadet Program. The chapter begins with an exploration of teacher recruitment literature as it relates to the identification of potential teachers and growing-your-own. Next, literature directly related to the Teacher Cadet Program (TCP), its origination in South Carolina, and its evolution in states like North Carolina and Georgia follows. A discussion of current research related to teacher preparation follows. Finally, I discuss current research related to the importance of field and clinical experiences in teacher preparation as it connects to theory, teacher quality, and effectiveness. The chapter summary serves to provide a synopsis of the literature as it pertained to the study.

#### **Teacher Recruitment**

In teacher recruitment, one of the first steps is to identify the pool of potential teachers who would be willing and qualified to teach. Numerous programs have developed since the prediction of a teacher shortage for 2000-2010 (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Unforeseen economic conditions postponed the predicted shortage, but educators hired in the late 1970s and early 1980s who have postponed retirement will ultimately retire and fulfill the teacher shortage prophecy. Their retirement will add to the attrition rate and create a need for newly prepared teachers. Arne Duncan (2010a) addressed a group of prospective teachers at the 2010 Future Educator's Association National Conference in San Antonio, Texas. In the speech, Duncan told students, "We anticipate over the next five to eight years needing as many as a million new teachers in our nation's classrooms. We will be hiring each year



between 100,000 moving up to 200,000 teachers across the country...” Duncan (2010a) ended the address telling students that, “this is a huge opportunity, particularly in a tough economy, to come in and make a difference. This is really a call to service.” In “Bridging the Generation Gap,” Johnson and Kardos (2005) referenced the same generational shift. For the first time since the late 1960s and early 1970s, the proportion of new teachers in the teaching force is growing as the first generation of career teachers has reached retirement. Although economic downturns have extended the retirement age of some educators, the generational shift is beginning to occur.

### **Identifying Potential Teachers**

Quezada, Galbo, Russ, and Vang (1996) analyzed teacher recruitment efforts focusing on K-12 students using a survey to identify the quantity and quality of teacher recruitment programs designed as early outreach initiatives. The study surveyed 380 K-12 schools within the service area of a university in north central California. According to the research findings, few steps have been taken to identify potential teachers at an early age. Research recommendations included (a) Teachers must promote positive aspects of the teaching profession; (b) Teacher education programs should incorporate teacher recruitment models for K-12 students into preservice and in-service teacher education; and (c) Student teachers are an untapped resource for becoming active role models in developing future teachers. This research study addressed the need for early identification of educators, but it did not refer to the Teacher Cadet Program or the influence of such a program on participants.

In a literature review, not a research study, Darling-Hammond and Berry (1999) also discuss teacher supply, demand, and quality. Within the review, the South Carolina

Teacher Cadet Program is mentioned as well as other programs such as North Carolina Teaching Fellows, Teach Boston, and the Summerbridge National Project, which also utilized early identification of potential teachers. The review revealed that the evaluations of the Teacher Cadet Program focused primarily upon the degree to which the program has influenced the participants' career decisions, not the influence of the program on the participants or their perspectives as proposed in this study. Another important aspect of the Darling-Hammond review specified that teachers are the individuals who most often influence students to consider a career in teaching, which was echoed in additional literature (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999; Galbo, Demetrulius, & Crippen, Spring, 1990; Lortie, 1975; Metlife, 2006; Page & Page, 1984).

### **Growing-Your-Own**

“Growing-your-Own” is a phrase used to describe programs that address teacher recruitment through efforts to identify and prepare potential teachers within a given community (Lemke, 1994). It is a term that appeared throughout the literature reviewed for this study. The premise by Grant (2001) that “you cannot reap what you have not sown” may be Biblical, but it describes the necessity of early identification and preparation of potential teachers. Although the South Carolina Teacher Cadet Program is one of the first programs to embrace this philosophy, other programs exist that adhere to the same ideas. A report submitted by National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) discussed effective high school recruitment programs, some of which concentrated on minority teacher recruitment such as the Bridge Program from Kean College, California State University's Saturday program, Calvin Coolidge High School, and Crenshaw Academy. Another program discussed was the Golden Apple Scholars of

Illinois. Chicago teachers who had received the Golden Apple Award for excellence in teaching recruited high school students during their junior year of high school. The Golden Apple recipients mentored the students through the rest of high school, into the college years, and through five years of actual teaching. The 1996 program boasted a 90 percent retention rate; the minority retention rate was 80 percent. The program is now statewide and involves 22 private and public campuses.

In a separate literature review of successful minority programs, Kauffman (1988) also references the Bridge Program from Kean College, California State University's Saturday program, Calvin Coolidge High School, and Crenshaw Academy. Both the report and the literature review reflected information about the need for minority teacher recruitment and the importance of growing your own teachers.

Programs such as Future Educators of America, Pathways to Teaching Careers, Teacher Cadets and Troops to Teacher provide opportunities for students to explore careers in education through grow-your-own type initiatives (Swanson, 2011). Swanson's research examines these types of program through the lens of Holland's Self-Directed Search inventory. The purpose of the research was to identify the personality profile of students in Future Educator of America programs in Georgia using Holland's inventory. The study focused on examining the personality profile of FEA students in Georgia to determine if their profile corresponded with the personality profile of in-service educators. The findings from the research study indicate that Georgia's FEA members share the same Holland code as teachers who were currently working in schools. These findings support that grow-your-own teacher programs attract individuals who have a predisposition for the teaching profession.

Project *Nueva Generación* is another type of grow-your-own recruitment program. Skinner (2010) describes a nine-year-old partnership between a community-based organization and a teacher education program, which resulted from the need to connect teacher candidates with urban communities hence growing their own teachers. In 2006, Project *Nueva Generación* graduated two students who accepted jobs with the Chicago Public Schools. As of May 2009, nine students were graduates of the program, and 55 students were in the pipeline to graduate. Although not a research study, the article describes the importance of grow-your-own programs related to the recruitment and retention of teachers. The article focused on the importance of partnerships between Logan Square neighborhood schools, the Bilingual Education Program at Chicago State University, and minority students within the teacher education program.

North Carolina Teaching Fellows (2011) was created to reverse the decline in North Carolina high school students entering collegiate teaching programs. North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program has been touted as one of the most ambitious statewide recruitment programs. According to data on the website, there were Teaching Fellows in 99 of 100 public school systems in North Carolina. The North Carolina Teaching Fellows provides \$6,500 yearly scholarship to outstanding high school seniors who agree to teach four years in one of North Carolina's public schools or government schools upon graduating from college. The Teaching Fellows program is sequential beginning in the freshman year. Structured observations and tutoring are part of the field experiences. The program provides pre-student teaching experiences in the same school until graduation. "This continuity and sequence provides public school experiences that foster a greater understanding of the total school program and the school community" (*North Carolina*

*Teaching Fellows Program, 2011, p. 2*). The information recorded from this selection is a program description not a research study, but it does describe the importance of growing your own teachers, which is at center of the Teacher Cadet program researched in this study.

In a program evaluation of the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program, Henry, Bastian, and Smith (2013) noted participants from this program (a) have significantly higher academic qualifications; (b) teach in schools and classrooms with greater concentrations of higher performing and lower poverty students; (c) produce larger increases in student test scores in all high school exams and in 3rd-8th grade mathematics exams; and (d) remain in North Carolina public schools longer than other teachers. The researchers summarized their findings stating that the Teaching Fellows Program has had a positive effect on education in North Carolina, but program evaluation should occur every four years to determine the extent to which the above statements remain true. This policy brief supported the same concepts about the importance of growing your own teachers as seen in previously reviewed literature within this chapter.

### **Teacher Cadet Program**

In the early eighties, Ernest Boyer (1983) published a report called *High School*, which addressed the declining number of South Carolina students who were entering education programs in college. Boyer felt that it was too late to approach university students about entering education as a career. Instead, he recommended establishing a cadet-teaching program in South Carolina high schools, which would provide educational opportunities for students to present, tutor, and interact with high school and college

teachers. Four sites were chosen to pilot a course that was called *Teacher Cadets* because of Dr. Boyer's recommendation in *High School* (1983).

Lewis (1992) provides information about the Teacher Cadet Program origination and describes it as a means for recruiting students into teaching. Lewis explains how the program developed as an educational reform of the 1980s and continues to attract top students into the field of education. Aspects of the article discuss university partnerships, networking within the state, and curriculum. The article is not a research study; however, it does highlight positive aspects of the Teacher Cadet Program such as obvious program effects on recruitment and the inroads the program is making into minority recruitment.

Over the last two decades, Teacher Cadet programs have spread across states as a way to attract individuals into considering a career in education. The South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment (SCCTR) website (2010) emphasizes the Teacher Cadet Program is a teacher recruitment program for high school students. The website listed eighteen states that have a type of cadet-teaching program patterned after the program that began at Conway High School in Horry County, South Carolina. According to the website, the Teacher Cadet Program now included 149 high schools, and it served over 2,500 high school juniors and seniors yearly.

The Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (2010) or CERRA provided information on how to start a Teacher Cadet Program, scholarships, general resources, instructor information, and curriculum. The 2009-2010 Teacher Cadet Data indicated that the Teacher Cadet Program has grown from the original four pilot schools to include 170 high schools reflecting a Teacher Cadet course offering in 75% of all public high schools in South Carolina. In the program's 25-year history, more than

45,000 students have participated in TCP. According to the website, one student from every five students who participated in the TCP has earned a South Carolina teaching certificate, and in 2008-2009, 4,043 teachers employed by South Carolina public schools were former Teacher Cadet Program participants.

The North Carolina Association of Educators or NCAE (2011) is a website that provides information about the Teacher Cadet Program in North Carolina. Through a site license and a contract with South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment, NCAE has permission to modify the Teacher Cadet curriculum to better meet the needs of the students in North Carolina. The North Carolina Teacher Cadet Program receives funding from the North Carolina General Assembly, and it is part of the North Carolina Foundation of Public School Children.

According to NCAE (2011), the association considers the Teacher Cadet Program as an introduction or orientation to the teaching profession. It views the program's main purpose as one of recruitment. NCAE encourages students who demonstrate high academic ability and the appropriate personality traits found in good teachers to pursue education as a career. The website documents the impact of the Teacher Cadet program on its participants statistically through increasing SAT scores, larger numbers of students pursuing education as a career, and a developing community of teachers, students, and colleges. Students enrolled in the North Carolina Teacher Cadet Program must be rising seniors with a GPA of 3.0 on a four-point scale.

After the initial introduction of the program to Georgia public schools in 1990, additional program implementations followed in several counties in 1996, 1998, and 2006-2007 (Cherokee Board Of Education, 2007). Data supplied during a phone

conversation with the former State Coordinator for Georgia Youth Apprenticeship Program (personal communication, February 22, 2007) reported that in 2006, roughly 700 students were involved in the teacher apprenticeship program throughout the state in. Approximately 60 school systems with about 80 high schools participate in the program.

Organization of the Teacher Cadet Programs in Georgia uses the same structure and curriculum found in South Carolina and North Carolina. The Teacher Cadet Program is a learner-centered program. McCombs and Whisler (1997) define learner-centered education as:

the perspective that couples a focus on individual learners (their heredity, experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities, and needs) with a focus on learning (the best available knowledge about learning and how it occurs and about teaching practices that are most effective in promoting the highest levels of motivation, learning, and achievement for all learners). (p.9)

The curriculum used in the course is *Experiencing Education*, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition written and revised by South Carolina Teacher Cadet instructors. The curriculum is separates into three themes, which focus on experiencing the learner, the profession, and the classroom (Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement, 2010). Characteristic of a learner-centered classroom, students explore a variety of educational topics in a safe environment; the instructor is no longer the dominant figure in the classroom but a facilitator. Students create meaning as they explore their own learning styles, seek new information, and participate in meaningful experiences as they pursue knowledge through personal discovery (Brown-Ward & Richardson-Jones, 2003). This type of teacher



preparation allows students to safely explore the field of teaching through the guidance of a trained classroom teacher.

### **Teacher Preparation**

Beginning as early as 1963, researchers were addressing the need for better teacher preparation programs (Howard, 1963), and the call to improve teacher preparation is still being heard today. Since the release of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission On Excellence in Education, 1983), which outlined the inconsistencies in American education and called for innovations in recruiting the best and brightest candidates into teaching, researchers have explored the relationship between teacher quality and effectiveness. Many of these researchers believe that the most important variable in a student's educational success is the effectiveness of the teacher (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008; Ashby, 2002; Berry, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999; Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Heilig, 2005; Duncan, 2010a; Duncan, 2010b; Ferguson, 1991; Glassberg, 1980; Massachusetts Teachers Association, 2008; Williams, 2000). Since the goal of the Teacher Cadet Program is to provide a means for introducing high school students into the field of education, the emphasis is on the preparation of potential educators. The preparation one receives directly effects if the candidate decides to teach, and if so, the teacher he or she ultimately becomes. Shulman and Sykes (1983) describe the importance of teachers in the reform of teacher education programs:

The teacher must remain the key...Debates over educational policy are moot, if the primary agents of instruction are incapable of performing their functions well. No microcomputer will replace

them, no television system will clone and distribute them, no scripted lessons will direct and control them, no voucher system will by pass them. (p. 504)

The preparation one receives directly affects teacher quality. Effective teacher preparation may determine if the candidate decides to teach, and if so, the teacher he or she ultimately becomes. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy refers to a person's beliefs in his or her own abilities to complete a specific task, and it is the foundation for career choices. People pursue careers because of the skills they possess and their self-efficacy toward job performance. The relationship between teaching and self-efficacy connects to teacher preparation. When an individual with the skill sets required for teaching enters the profession, his or her success links to job performance. Occupational success manifests in confidence. As the preservice teacher's confidence improves, new career opportunities are considered. Bandura (1997) indicated that individuals would show a greater interest in their career choices and would perform better educationally in their career preparation. He further explained that the individual would have a greater staying power in his or her chosen profession.

Although complex factors influence career decisions, intrinsic factors are most influential in determining if a person entered teaching or if a teacher stayed in teaching (Bergsma & Chu, 1981; Harms & Knobloch, 2005; Kiggins, 2007). Lortie (1975) identified five themes, which influence why people teach. Those themes included: 1) the *service theme*, serving other people and making a difference in their lives; 2) the *interpersonal theme*, working with individuals and making a difference in their lives; 3) the *continuation theme*, continuing positive experiences people have had in their earlier

lives and education (a coach being involved in teaching people about sports, someone who liked literature, teaching English, etc.) 4) the *time compatibility theme*, having a job that is compatible with people's needs or desires (having summer breaks to allow one to travel, having a schedule that allows one the time to have a profession and also raise children); and 5) the *market benefit theme*, making an income on which to live.

Researchers have explored two of the five themes, working with young people and being of service, in numerous studies (Alexander, Chant & Cox, 1994; Harms & Knobloch, 2005; Kiggins, 2007; Page & Page, 1984). Benefitting from the themes found in Lortie's 1975 work, Bernhardt (2010) further investigated why individuals enter the teaching profession. The Bernhardt study investigated the commitment of two educators to teaching. Although each educator remained deeply committed to the profession, the study explored their devotion to the field and followed the diverse pathways they traveled. One educator remained in a high school English classroom, yet the other became a professor at a university. Both educators revealed that their goals in pursuing a career in education revolved around positively influencing the lives of students, echoing Lortie's *continuation theme*.

This research emphasized reasons a person might choose to enter the teaching profession. In discussing the Teacher Cadet Program with study participants, the themes developed by Lortie were reoccurring in participant comments concerning the value they placed on experiences in the Teacher Cadet program.

### **Improving Teacher Preparation**

In 1998, Congress amended the Higher Education Act (HEA) to include improving the quality of teaching by improving teacher-training programs. Schools of education

continue to restructure programs to improve teacher preparation (Ashby, 2002; Kennesaw State University, 2010; North Georgia College and State University, 2009; North Georgia College and State University, 2010; University System of Georgia, 2010), and state organizations like GA P-16 have continued to upgrade the quality of teacher preparation (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Ashby (2002) reported that many teacher preparation programs leave teachers feeling unprepared; therefore, the quality of teacher training is critical. Darling-Hammond (1996) and Lieberman and Miller (2000) view teaching as a key in educational reform, which would require investments in stronger teacher preparation programs.

According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996), teacher expertise is the most important factor in student achievement. The report discussed how quality teacher preparation equates to quality teaching and that fully prepared teachers are more highly rated and more effective with students than those who lack one or more of the elements of formal teacher education. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) and Darling-Hammond et al., (2005) assert that immersion of potential teachers in the elements of formal teacher education, which include subject matter preparation, knowledge about teaching and learning, and guided clinical experience is critical. Furthermore, those teachers who are better prepared enter and stay in teaching at higher rates (Darling-Hammond, 1992; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Johnson and Birkeland (2003) maintain that teachers would only stay in teaching if they felt valued and successful. Data recovered from National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) reported a large difference in first-year teachers'

plans to stay in teaching. If the first-year teacher felt well prepared, he or she was more likely to continue pursuing a career in teaching than those who felt poorly prepared.

Literature suggests emphasizing the role of clinical practice in teacher preparation.

### **Clinical Practice**

The importance of rich, field-based experiences as an essential element in teacher preparation has become an increasingly important topic throughout the country. Both educators and nonprofessionals have emphasized the importance of the clinical aspect of teacher preparation. Blue Ribbon Panels formed to explore the effectiveness of moving toward a more clinical approach in preparing teachers while articles appear in magazines and newspapers touting the benefits of a more clinical preparation for preservice teachers.

Between 2008 and 2012, numerous studies appeared in education journals about clinical practice. During that time, reports released by NCATE and AACTE also concentrated on the importance of clinical preparation. Both policy briefs recommended a shift from the focus on course work to practical hands-on experiences (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2010; The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010). Literature on the importance of clinical experience in teacher preparation focused on three themes: connecting theory with clinical practice, teacher quality and effectiveness, and recruitment for teacher diversity. The most prevalent topic in the literature as it related to the Teacher Cadet Program is connecting theory with clinical practice.

Hovland and Chandler (2008) describe a jointly funded project through the South Dakota Department of Education, Black Hills State University, and Spearfish School District called the Teacher Learning Center. The purpose of the project was to provide

opportunities for preservice and novice teachers to observe classroom teachers engaging with their students through a one-way mirror system. The one-way mirrors installed on the back walls of two elementary classrooms created an observation room positioned between the two. This environment provided preservice and novice teachers the opportunity to observe instructional delivery from veteran teachers and discuss the decisions made, note evidence supporting those judgments, and relate those observations to their own teaching. The project continues presently and is a different approach to clinical preparation of teachers. This approach echoes the clinical practices supported in the Teacher Cadet Program with the exception that the Cadet is actively engaged in the classroom, not a passive observer like those in the Teacher Learning Center project.

A report commissioned by the National Education Association Center for Teacher Quality focused on the clinical experience of teacher preparation. The report consists of findings based on a review of historical documents, websites, and interviews from 12 pre-collegiate teacher recruitment programs. One of the programs reviewed is the South Carolina Teacher Cadet Program. The report is quick to indicate that although many of the 12 programs, including South Carolina's Teacher Cadets, have been in existence for several decades, few have the necessary funding or data collection required to formally review the program (National Education Association Department of Teacher Quality, 2009). This report suggests the importance in further researching the perspectives of stakeholders in the Teacher Cadet Program.

The article by Grossman et al (2009) describes the importance of clinical practice in supporting the development of skilled practice in novice teachers. The authors acknowledge that the divide between foundation and method courses must narrow so that

the courses work in conjunction not in isolation. The article argues for changes in the traditional format of teacher education programs.

Lampert (2010) explores definitions of the word practice as it pertains to teaching. The purpose of the essay is to present the various meanings of practice as it relates to teaching and encourage readers to discuss how practice must look in learning how to teach. Lampert contrasts practice with theory and considers the development of teaching practices in novice teachers. The essay concludes by stressing that understanding the work of teaching as it relates to practice will be challenging and requires collective problem solving and the development of a common language.

Grossman (2010) addresses the design of clinical experience in teacher preparation. In the policy brief, Grossman acknowledges that all teacher education programs provide opportunities for clinical practice through field experiences, but the nature of those experiences vary from program to program. Grossman examines elements of clinical practice including records of practice such as videos or teacher logs, length of practice, and quality of practice in regards to the supervising teacher and opportunities he or she provides for the intern.

*The Washington Post* published an article in November 2010 discussing proposed changes in teacher preparation at the collegiate level. The article emphasized that teachers, like doctors, should receive their training through clinical practice. The article based much of its information on the Blue Ribbon Panel report from The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

In November 2010, NCATE released a report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on clinical preparation and partnerships for improved learning. The panel determined that the nation

must reform teacher preparation programs and place an emphasis on clinical practice. The report called for five initiatives that will be the foundation of the reform. These initiatives included 1) more rigorous accountability 2) strengthening candidate selection and placement 3) revamping curricula, incentives, and staffing 4) supporting partnerships and 5) expanding the knowledge base to identify what works and support continuous improvement. At the release of the report findings, eight states, which include California, Colorado, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, Ohio, Oregon, and Tennessee, had signed letters of intent to implement the new agenda (The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010).

Also in 2010, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) released a policy brief that detailed the need for clinical preparation of teachers. Like previously cited sources in this literature review, AACTE recognizes the most important factor in student learning is teacher preparation. The policy brief provides a synopsis of 19th-Century teacher education describing how little it has changed since its inception. It describes what little clinical practice has been included in teacher preparation programs and calls for an increase in the quality and quantity of clinical practice. The policy brief discussed changes in teacher preparation, offered evidence of the importance of strong clinical preparation, and described an effective clinical preparation program (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2010).

Darling-Hammond (2010) refers to teacher education programs in America as exhibiting the best of times and the worst of times. According to this article, teacher education represents the best of times because of the efforts of numerous teacher educators to transform teacher preparation programs. Conversely, Darling-Hammond



believes it is the worst of times because of the forces that undermine these efforts.

Darling-Hammond sites the movement in teacher preparation programs toward connecting theory and practice through well-designed clinical experiences. Other aspects of the article address alternative certification, implications for teaching quality, and difference in teacher preparation programs. Darling-Hammond notes that “the most effective programs require students to spend extensive time in the field throughout the entire program, examining and applying the concepts and strategies they are simultaneously learning about in their courses” (p. 41).

Zeichner (2010) researched the boundaries between collegiate course work and field placement in K-12 schools. Zeichner argues for a new approach to teacher preparation where academic course work is no longer the primary source of knowledge, and field placements receive equal priority. Zeichner contends that the revised approach will better prepare preservice teachers improving teacher quality and effectiveness. Zeichner’s research connects to the Teacher Cadet Program in that the TCP provides opportunity to explore classroom theory and academic knowledge while providing occasions to participate in clinical practice. However, there exists no research investigating how this pairing influences participants in the Teacher Cadet Program.

Hudson (2012) studied 10 first-year teachers to determine how universities can better support their needs. Findings indicate that the beginning teachers believed their university course work needed to provide practical training in combination with theory. The novice teachers discussed the need for having hands-on experiences concerning setting up a classroom, managing student behavior, and parent communications. The study suggests that beginning teachers need continued support. The research stresses that

although beginning teachers have typically completed a four-year undergraduate degree, the majority of their preparation focuses on classroom theory not clinical experience.

Miksza and Austin (2012) studied 21 high school students over a 12-week period in a music teacher recruitment program to determine how participation in the program affected students' motivation to teach. The recruits completed an extensive survey at the beginning and end of the study and were video recorded while they participated in teaching activities. Research findings at the end of the study indicated significant increases in social motivation for teaching, teacher identity, and classroom management efficacy.

An extensive review of the literature revealed that few initiatives for the recruitment of high school students into teaching exist, but research indicates that people choose to enter teaching at an early age (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999; Harms & Knobloch, 2005; Lortie, 1975; National Commission On Teaching And America's Future, 1996; Page & Page, 1984; Quezada, Galbo, Russ, & Vang, 1996). Furthermore, the Teacher Cadet Program is the most prominent high school recruitment program. Programs patterned after the South Carolina Teacher Cadet Program exists in 18 states (South Carolina Center for Education, 2013), and thirty-four states have adopted the curriculum. Although numerous states offer a cadet-teaching program, there is no substantial research available on the perceptions of stakeholders in the Teacher Cadet Program. According to the 2009-2010 data on Center For Educator Recruitment, Retention, & Advancement (2010), 43% of the Teacher Cadets chose teaching as the career they planned to pursue, but the data does not tell the participants' stories or in what ways the program influenced them to consider teaching as a career option. Therefore, it was this researcher's belief that

a need existed for the study of the Teacher Cadet Program to determine the perspectives of stakeholders and to explore the stories of the experiences.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guide this qualitative dissertation:

1. What are stakeholders' perspectives of the structure and the experiences offered in a Teacher Cadet program?
2. What value do stakeholders see in those experiences?
3. In what ways do current and former Teacher Cadets feel their subsequent career or college plans and experiences were affected by their participation?

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Crotty (2003) proposes that the methodologies and methods used to conduct research directly relate to the purpose of the research and the questions guiding the line of inquiry. Determining the epistemological and theoretical perspectives was paramount in supporting the research and providing the researcher with a basis for developing assumptions and drawing conclusions about the outcomes. Considering the purpose of the research, to discover how the Teacher Cadet Program affects stakeholder perceptions and to explore their stories, I chose a qualitative approach grounded within the epistemological stance of social constructionism.

Social constructionism best described the orientation. Drawing on social constructionism, I perceive knowledge as a social construct created by social interaction between individuals and their environment (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Although knowledge communities foster knowledge as a social process, knowledge is never static; it is always evolving and changing with the interplay of objects in the world and the people who inhabit it. The belief that absolute truth or objectivity exists is rejected by constructionism. Instead, multiple truths or meanings exist in human experiences at social, cultural, and institutional levels (Crotty, 2003).

Because I recognize that individuals involved in the Teacher Cadet Program have constructed their own meanings from the experience, I utilized an approach that will allow me to explore individuals' unique interpretations. Crotty (1998) states that we are born into a world of meaning where we inherit a "system of meanings" (p. 54). According to Vygotsky (1978), humans create and share meaning through social

practices and communication between individuals. Burr (1995) suggests that this social process sustains knowledge and affects how we perceive reality through socially constructed patterns of communication.

In addition to personal views on how one constructs knowledge, the research is also informed by an interpretive perspective. Interpretivism is the theoretical perspective, which looks for “culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). The interpretivist approach developed from the realization that there is a difference in the natural and social world. People consciously engage in intentional behaviors and attach meaning to those activities as they interpret their reality through social, cultural, and experiential perceptions (Brunner, 1990; Crotty, 2003; Schwandt, 2000). Interpretive researchers attempt to understand the phenomena through accessing the meaning assigned to them. The goal of achieving “*verstehen*,” a German word that means understanding, requires the researcher to imagine how the participant perceives the world and to interpret the systems of meaning that influence their actions (Taylor, 2010). This perspective framed efforts to understand the meanings stakeholders attach to specific elements of the Teacher Cadet Program and their perceptions of that program.

In designing the research, I also considered how the interpretive approach of symbolic interactionism might inform this work. Symbolic interactionism as coined by Blumer (1969) refers to three core principles: meaning, language, and thoughts. Crotty (2003) states that the primary focus of symbolic interactionism is the study of social reality from the perspective of the actor or research informant, not the researcher. Symbolic interactionism requires the researcher to take the “standpoint of those studied”

(Crotty, 2003, p. 75). The creation of meaning lies in the interpretation of the social interactions and activities of the actor (Blumer, 1969). In particular, I sought to understand the meanings individuals ascribe to their experiences by listening to the stories they shared regarding the Teacher Cadet program and how these lived-experiences influenced their lives. The participants' stories, or narratives, became the primary focus of this inquiry.

In order to draw out participants' stories, I utilized approaches such as interviews and focus groups, which are associated with narrative inquiries. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative inquiry explores the experiences of people by drawing from their conversations and actions to provide contour and dimension to their lived and told stories. Understanding experience through lived and told stories has gained acceptance and credibility in qualitative research. Unlike traditional quantitative research methods, narrative inquiry illuminates the personal and human dimensions of research that one cannot readily explore through impersonal facts and numerical data alone. Chase (2005) stated that a narrative could take the form of an interview, or it could appear as oral or written communication. As a means of inquiry, narrative interviews reveal invaluable descriptions of a participant's experiences while giving voice to both the researcher and the researched. Since the purpose of this study was to explore the influence of the Teacher Cadet Program on participants, the study explored the stories and experiences of the individuals to fully understand the influence of the program.

### **Design of the Study**

This qualitative inquiry took the form of a case study of participants associated with one Teacher Cadet Program. Case study research is the examination of a specific object

(Stake, 1995). A case may be a person, place, or a collection of artifacts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Krathwohl, 1998; Merriam et al, 2001; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). With respect to the inquiry, this research was bound in relation to participants' experiences in a specific program (the Teacher Cadet Program) offered at a specific location (a secondary school in North Georgia).

There are numerous approaches to qualitative case study research; however, the research design used by Lather and Smithies (1997) was particularly informative to this investigation. Formal interviews (conducted in part in a conversational, focus group format), informal interviews, and the examination of documents and artifacts provided insight into the perceptions concerning the Teacher Cadet Program. The case study method allowed construction of thick descriptions of individual understanding concerning the perceptions of stakeholders in the TCP.

Using the tools of narrative ethnography to focus on participants' stories strengthened the exploration of this Teacher Cadet Program because this method provided information about the individuals' lived-experiences as a participant in the program. The flexible nature of qualitative research allowed the methodology, sampling procedures, and data collection methods to change as the research dictates (Krathwohl, 1998). Understanding the degree of influence experienced by participants in the Teacher Cadet Program was paramount to exploring in what ways, if any, the program influenced participants to become classroom teachers or select another career path.

The following questions guided the research investigation:

1. What are stakeholder perspectives of the structure and the experiences offered in a Teacher Cadet program?

2. What value do stakeholders see in those experiences?
3. In what ways do Cadets and former Cadets feel their subsequent career or college plans and experiences were affected by their participation?

### **Context for the Study**

This study of the Teacher Cadet Program emanated from a need to explore the relevance of the program on the lives of student participants. The course has been an academic elective for many years, and articulation agreements existed with various colleges and universities to support its continuance. However, other than statistical data representing facts such as number of students enrolled in the course yearly or perhaps where a student chooses to attend college, qualitative data exploring the influence of the program on participants does not exist. It is within this framework the decision to conduct a qualitative investigation of the Teacher Cadet Program was made.

The context of this study was the Teacher Cadet Program offered at a rural high school in the North Georgia Mountains. The continuity of the program is the reason for selecting this setting, which began in 1996 and continues presently. The program, referred to as an academic elective, is open for enrollment to juniors and seniors who think they would be interested in pursuing a career in education. Articulation agreements with local colleges and universities have been in place since the introduction of the program. The Teacher Cadet Program offers students the opportunity to explore educational issues and complete supervised internships in grades K-8 in the same school system. In 2004, the district opened a ninth grade academy, which was separate from the high school. This allowed students who were interested in secondary school education the



opportunity to observe high school classrooms without being in class with their peers. At that point, observations then included K-9.

The school system serves approximately 3,900 K-12 students at seven locations. All schools have achieved accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), and the system has continuously maintained accreditation for the past 36 years. Two of the schools within the district have achieved the status of Georgia Schools of Excellence. The county is experiencing rapid growth completed a new middle school complex using local SPLOST moneys in December 2011.

The system has one high school housing grades 10-12 with approximately 850 students enrolled. The ninth grade academy is located on a separate campus from the high school with an approximate population of 300 students. The county has one middle school with a student population of 600 students, and the remaining student population of approximately 2000 is shared between the four elementary schools (D. Brady, personal communication, July 13, 2010).

The Teacher Cadet Program is a two-year program taught during the junior and senior year of high school. During the first year of the program, students receive instruction in introductory educational content such as child development and educational philosophy. The Teacher Cadet Program facilitator works closely with the colleges and universities who participate in the Teacher Cadet consortium developed through an articulation agreement. The articulation agreement certifies that Teacher Cadet participants who complete both years of the course and 300-volunteer hours in an educational setting are eligible to obtain college credit.

The course content utilizes curriculum developed from the South Carolina Teacher Cadet textbook, *Experiencing Education*. The curriculum for the Teacher Cadet Program is a combination of the textbook and collegiate assignments similar to those offered by consortium members in their Introduction to Education courses. Although students meet daily at the high school for 90-minute classes, scheduled observation occur in grades K-9 during some of this instructional time, which will take students off campus.

Observations begin during the first semester of the first year around October. This provides time to introduce students to several instructional units, including the Georgia Code of Ethics, before they enter the classroom to observe students and teachers. The length of the initial observation period varies with the school calendar, but students visit each of the schools housing grades K-9 to ensure maximum exposure to a variety of leadership and teaching styles. During the observations, Teacher Cadets are encouraged to observe and participate to the extent that the supervising teacher is comfortable. For some Teacher Cadets this will consist of only observing and taking notes during the observations, for others, this may mean immediate work with small groups or individual students as directed by the supervising teacher. After completing observations for a specific grade, Teacher Cadets to return to the classroom and discuss what they observed in a professional and confidential manner.

Using the first semester observations as a reference point, Teacher Cadets select a supervising teacher for a six-week placement. Although this may seem strange, by this point in the program, the Teacher Cadets have personally experienced several different leadership and classroom styles. So that they have ownership in their long-term placement, they have the freedom to select from any of the supervising teachers discussed

during the observations process. It is then their responsibility to contact the potential supervisor to secure the placement through a letter or in person. During this time, the long-term assignment, the Teacher Cadet reports to the observation site instead of the high school for class. The Teacher Cadet interns with the supervising teacher and completes weekly assessments of his or her experiences during the internship. Other assessments during the six-week observation include a daily reflection journal and a formal observation conducted by the Teacher Cadet Facilitator. Under the direction of the supervising teacher, the Teacher Cadet prepares a 30-minute lesson plan using the host school's format. The Teacher Cadet schedules the observation with the TCP facilitator before the end of the six-week observation time. Along with the six-week observation, Teacher Cadets prepare a portfolio reflecting what they have learned during the first year of the program. Teacher Cadets present the portfolio to the class during an oral presentation of its contents at the end of the second semester of the first year. The presentation and portfolio serve as the final exam for second semester.

The senior year in the Teacher Cadet Program is Teacher Apprenticeship. This is a year of observation working with a supervising teacher selected by the student. Approval must be obtained by all parties including the TCP facilitator, supervising teacher, student, and appropriate school administrators. The Teacher Cadet functions like a college intern in student teaching; he or she reports to the host school daily for the 90-minute class time. The first semester is unpaid, but the second semester pays participants a minimum wage. At the end of the second year, if students have successfully completed both years and obtained 300-volunteer hours, some of which are hours scheduled through the class, others working as a volunteer in an educational setting, they are eligible to receive

college credit for Introduction to Education from a consortium member under the articulation agreement.

### **Participants**

Purposive sampling procedures were used to identify research participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Krathwohl, 1998). Bogdan and Biklen (2003) assert that purposive sampling facilitates the development of emerging themes and/or theories. The study participants represented a “maximum variation sample” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2001) with a wide range in participant attributes. Specifically, participants were comprised of current students, graduates of the program, and supervising teachers who are or who have been involved in the program.

By choosing participants who have a multitude of different experiences but share the single experience of being involved in the Teacher Cadet Program at the same high school, it was possible to conduct a deep investigation of general perceptions concerning the Teacher Cadet Program. Each of these study participants served as sensitive informants to enrich knowledge of the phenomenon. Their stories added to the overall understanding of perceptions concerning the Teacher Cadet Program (Krathwohl, 1998).

Respect for persons encompasses many aspects of research including voluntary participation in the research process, confidentiality, and the promise that no harm will come to participants (Babbie, 2008; Strike et al., 2002). Preceding the research study, potential participants received detailed information about the research project, which included a description of the chosen methods of inquiry. The information discussed the researcher responsibilities, participants’ rights, and any potentially positive or negative consequences resulting from participation in the study. The study participants were

solicited on a voluntary basis. Those agreeing to participate in the research signed consent forms with the understanding that they could withdraw from participation in the study at any time.

### **Current Students**

Potential participants comprising the category of ‘current students’ included all students enrolled in the Teacher Cadet Program for the 2011-2012 school year. These students were primarily juniors in high school. This group consisted of students who chose to enroll in the Teacher Cadet Program for both semesters, as well as students who chose to leave the program after the first semester. In order to understand the range of experiences of participants, the selection of key informants purposefully included individuals who remained in the program over time and those who exited the program after a single semester.

First semester enrollment for the Teacher Cadet Program totaled 16 students. Of that total, three were male and 13 were female. Students in the class identified their ethnicity as one African-American student, 14 Caucasian students, and one Indian/Pacific Islander. The second semester enrollment for the Teacher Cadet Program totaled 10 students. Of that total, the population consists of no male students, and ten female students. The ethnicity of the group consisted of one African-American student and nine Caucasian students.

### **Teacher Cadet Alumni**

Potential participants grouped as “*Teacher Cadet Alumni*” had enrolled in the TCP during their high school experience. These participants graduated from the high school between 1997 and 2011. They represented individuals who may or may not have pursued

a degree in education after graduating from high school, but who did enroll in the Teacher Cadet Program. I selected four groups of students from the graduate category of participants. These groups consisted of (a) students who did not choose to attend postsecondary school, (b) those who did choose to attend postsecondary school, and (c) those who currently have jobs in education, and (d) those who became K-9 educators and now supervise interns from the Teacher Cadet Program.

Although 150 students enrolled in the program between 1997 and 2011, I was not in contact with all of the former students. At the beginning of the study, I had remained in contact with approximately 75 graduates through social media and email. To determine who might volunteer in the research study, I sent an electronic message to my network of friends and contacts. In the message, I explained that I was trying to determine who might be interested in participating in a study focusing on the Teacher Cadet Program. Of the 75, I contacted through social media and email, 18 responded and agreed to participate in the study. These 18 study participants represented members from (a) students who did not choose to attend postsecondary school, (b) those who did choose to attend postsecondary school, and (c) those who currently have jobs in education, and (d) those who became K-9 educators and now supervise interns from the Teacher Cadet Program; all were Caucasians.

### **Supervising Teachers**

The supervising teachers were participants who volunteered to have a Teacher Cadet Student work in their classroom and provide supervision for varying lengths of time. Some of the supervising teachers may have only sponsored a student for a single day, while others may have worked with the Teacher Cadet for a six-week period. The

total number of supervising teachers was 76. (Twelve of these teachers were former Teacher Cadet alumni). The supervising teachers were important to interview because they are key informants in the field placement component of the Teacher Cadet Program. Efforts were made to focus on key informants from diverse schools, grade levels, and content areas. Thirty-seven supervising teachers agreed to the interview process. Thirty-four were Caucasian, and three were African-American.

### **Additional Key Informants**

Additional key informants included a range of faculty and administrators who have been involved with the program or with program participants. These participants included supervising principals, the current program director, and the former and current county superintendents. All of these participants perform administrative duties, although the members may range from classroom teacher to superintendent.

Supervising principals were those principals who agree to host Teacher Cadet students during the initial observations and during the internships. The principals who participated in this group represented K-9 schools. One of the principals worked in a primary school housing grades K-2. Another principal worked in an intermediate school housing grades 3-6. Principals in two of the schools guided elementary schools containing grades K-6. One of the principals served in a middle school containing grades 7 and 8, and the final administrator served in a ninth grade academy setting that was separate from the high school. Since the ninth grade academy was separate from the high school, this allowed Teacher Cadets who wanted the opportunity to teach in a 9-12 setting the opportunity to observe in a school that was not educating students who would be peers of the Teacher Cadet. Until the establishment of the ninth grade academy as a

separate entity, those students who wanted to explore secondary education in grades 9 through 12 had no other options.

The current program director for the Teacher Cadet course is a high school business teacher who also functions as the apprenticeship coordinator. The program director oversees those students who enroll in the Teacher Cadet Program as high school juniors who are taking the initial course as well as those students who are in their second year of the Teacher Cadet Program and working through the Teacher Apprenticeship setting. No other faculty members in the high school work with the Teacher Cadet Program.

### **Data Sources and Data Collection**

Primary data sources included personal stories and reflections of program participants gathered through focus groups and interviews. Secondary data sources that were used during the research study included a questionnaire designed to aid in the selection of key informants, a database on program participants from 1997 until 2007, Facebook entries, and e-mails from graduates of the Teacher Cadet Program, as well as artifacts from the Teacher Cadet Program such as observation sheets and classroom materials.

Data collection began by inviting potential participants to attend a homecoming celebration held in the media center of the middle school. The purpose of the homecoming was to reintroduce participants to each other and to explain the purpose of the study. Supervisors, current students, and former students were invited, and twenty potential study participants attended. During the event, potential participants read an overview of the study and the consent letter. Individuals who were willing to participate completed a questionnaire consisting of eight statements regarding the Teacher Cadet



Program to which individuals response using a *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* Likert scale. Two open-ended questions were included at the end of the questionnaire. These data provided a broad understanding of participants' perspectives on the program and helped identify potential key informants for the focus group. A copy of the questionnaire can be located in Appendix A.

After providing an overview of the study and an invitation for participation, participants mingled with each other in a small social gathering. The goal of employing this type of ambiance was to help participants reconnect with each other and to trigger memories about experiences in the Teacher Cadet Program. Artifacts, such as handouts, projects, and self-assessment tests used during the 1997-2007 period were placed around the room to further enhance participant memories about the Teacher Cadet Program.

Data from the questionnaires along with information from the database related to the Teacher Cadet Program were used to identify key informants from each participant group. Those individuals were interviewed in either a focus group format or an individual interview, using the procedures discussed below.

### **Focus Groups**

Focus groups were one of narrative inquiry approaches I used in this study. According to Morgan (1997), "The hallmark of a focus group is the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group" (p.12). Patton (1991) states that the purpose of the group is to produce qualitative data that will provide insights into participants' attitudes, perceptions, and opinions.

Previous research (Lather & Smithies, 1997) illustrates that small focus groups can make participants feel comfortable, which enhances the group discussions. The family-like atmosphere of a focus group can encourage participants to interact and share experiences. I wanted to use this simple strategy in the inquiry with the hope that the format would encourage people to share their stories with the group because the experiences were personal and potentially meaningful to everyone involved.

I desired to create that same environment in the investigation of the Teacher Cadet Program. Focus groups consisted of 6 to 8 members. After beginning the research, I found it necessary to collapse groups into three focus groups because of the types of response I received. The three focus groups consisted of one group of 6 participants who were current and former Teacher Cadets, a group of 6 former Teacher Cadets who were also supervising teachers, and a larger group of 37 supervising teachers, which were further collapsed into 3 groups representing the respective schools where the participants taught. After working with each focus group, I conducted member checks for anything that needed clarity. Then, I conducted follow up interviews with key informants to explore themes. More information on the format of the interviews, including the focus group interviews, follows below.

### **Interviews**

Interviews were necessary to reveal how participation in the Teacher Cadet Program influenced participants to become educators. Formal (group and individual) and informal interviews through social media were utilized to determine how the Teacher Cadet Program influenced the range of participants. After analyzing the interview and

compiling the analysis, a copy of the transcript given to the participant verified accuracy through a member check.

In the formal group and individual interviews, open-ended questions were designed to create a conversational flow between the researcher and the participant(s). The answers participants provided directed the conversation and the follow-up questions or prompts. The premise of the interview process was to explore how and to what extent participating in the Teacher Cadet Program influenced the participants regardless of the participants' role. Interviews were tape recorded to limit the amount of notes taken during the actual interview; however, I took sporadic notes during the interview process to assess expressions, body language, and my initial perceptions.

The formal focus group interviews occurred after school in the media center. The interviews lasted approximately one hour. A list of open-ended questions designed to use with the interviewees is located in Appendix B.

During the course of the research study, the school system was undergoing system accreditation through Advanced Ed/Southern Association of Colleges. Several teachers and school administrators were study participants who were also working with SACs. These initiatives made meeting with the focus group seemingly impossible to schedule; therefore, I met with three participants individually for approximately 30 minutes in length. The list of open-ended questions designed to use with the teachers and system administration group is in the appendix.

I am obligated to respect the moral rights of my study's participants; and to ensure the protection of vulnerable groups during my research process (Babbie, 2008; Strike et al., 2002). Providing accurate representations of a data is an important consideration of

researchers in order to ensure justice in the conduct of an inquiry (Babbie, 2008; Strike et al., 2002). Therefore, after the formal interviews with participants, informal interviews occurred as needed throughout the study. These occurred as person-to-person discussions, through phone calls, or email conversations. The purpose of these informal interviews was to gather additional information for clarification as needed, to explore themes in greater depth as working hypothesis emerged, or to conduct member checks.

In confirming research findings, Lincoln and Guba (1985), Lather and Smithies (1997) suggest using member checks. A member check encourages participants to review the researcher's findings, to correct any misunderstandings, and to clarify meaning. This approach occurred with all focus group study participants. Member checks included the sharing of specific data clips, themes, or the entire manuscript. Lather and Smithies (1997) used this approach when they encouraged the participants in their study to read the final manuscript and discuss the representation of their stories. This technique is vital because it provides another glimpse at the data collection from differing perspectives. By permitting participants to examine transcripts, emerging themes and/or the finished product, I worked to assure accuracy in detailing each participant's contributions to the narrative.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis. Coding and category systems assisted the process of inductive analysis to elicit emerging themes (Krathwohl, 1998). Using suggestions from Charmaz (2006), codes were used to analyze data with key concepts being sorted into categories and subcategories. Identifying characteristics were removed from surveys, interview recordings, and interview transcripts. I assigned

all participants a pseudonym to protect the identities of the education agency and study participants. I housed research documentation collected from study participants in a locked cabinet whenever not in use. All data collected during the study were analyzed as soon as possible after being collected, beginning with the initial surveys. Subsequent data collection was guided by the on-going analysis.

During the initial analysis, I created a matrix using an Excel spreadsheet to organize raw data according to the research questions. Once the data was organized by research question, I developed codes based upon key words and phrases. The analysis then moved from creating initial categories to creating definitions for each category. At this point, I reanalyzed all data based on the definitions, which lead to an analysis that enabled me to compare categories and explore relationship between categories and how the categories were related. Finally, I looked across types of participants and variations among those participants to see how certain themes or categories might relate to the different perspectives and/or backgrounds of the participants. The exploration and identification of emerging patterns and themes occurred through the data analysis process.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As the researcher in this study, I assumed the role of a human instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Humans are ideal for collecting information since they have the ability to respond to environmental cues, which allows the researcher to intermingle aspects of the environment with his or her own perceptions. Functioning as a human instrument allowed me to investigate the Teacher Cadet Program through the collection of multiple data sources while providing clarification and feedback as necessary during the collection and analysis stages. Accordingly, I feel that I have both an emic and etic perspective in

describing the TCP. Although I have worked with the program in the past, I am no longer involved in the administration of the program. This provides a dual understanding of the program itself.

Emic and etic perspectives indicate two different ways of viewing and describing an event. Kenneth Pike (1957) described both perspectives when he identified the emic perspective as the insider perspective, which draws knowledge from understanding a culture the way the natives understand it. The etic perspective attempts to impose an outsider point of view on the event. Pike stated that the researcher did not need to maintain a balance between the two perspectives but should be able to hold both positions concurrently in order to see stereoscopically. I felt that I must embrace this understanding since I do have insider knowledge of the TCP, but I am imposing an outsider point of view as I conduct the study.

I have been in education for twenty-five years, holding many different positions ranging from classroom teacher to administrator. Ten of these years included facilitating a Teacher Cadet Program in the school system where this study was conducted; this is an obvious bias, which presents both advantages and disadvantages. As an advantage, I understand the course implementation and the purpose behind offering the course in high school. Having been the previous facilitator, I have direct knowledge of all the stakeholders in this venture. This is also a disadvantage. Since I worked so closely with the program, it has been difficult to assume the role as an objective observer and not construe anything that happens to the program personally.

I took the program in its infancy and developed it into a viable program noticed throughout the state. When I left the program as facilitator, it was to pursue the role of

graduation coach. Leaving the position as Teacher Cadet Facilitator was more difficult than leaving my position as senior English teacher, one I had held for 19 years. Another disadvantage occurred in the knowledge that there has not been adequate research into the perceptions of Teacher Cadet Program stakeholders. Knowing this, I discerned the importance of completing this research study as accurately as possible. The weight of this was extremely suffocating when I think about the changes in the educational climate because of the economic trials school systems are facing. Since it is an elective course, the Teacher Cadet Program may appear as an expendable course offering. I felt the responsibility of conducting this research so that school system can make informative choices about offering the Teacher Cadet Program to students. Recognizing my advantages and disadvantages in conducting this study required me to take steps to assure that I acknowledged all of my biases and responded appropriately to triangulate data.

My biases for the TCP extended farther than just working with the program at this particular high school; I also represented the program on the state level. While functioning as the facilitator of the Teacher Cadet Program, I worked extensively with Mary Ruth Ray, state director of Future Educators Association to brainstorm ideas for the TCP. A group of Teacher Cadets from this high school actually developed the name for the spring conference attended by Teacher Cadet students across the state. Ray gave my students the task of brainstorming for an appropriate title for the training. They created the acronym, FEAST, which represents Future Educators Association Student Training. The training and acronym are still in use today. Also during 2006, the national FEA chapter chose my conference proposal, and I was a presenter at the National Future Educators Association Conference held in Atlanta, GA.

Although I am no longer directly involved, I felt a responsibility to safeguard that others are aware of the values this program embeds in participants. I believed that the program helps students make early decisions about the pursuit of teaching as a career, and I believed that students who enroll in both sections of the course benefited from the classroom instruction and the opportunity to work with a supervising teacher while exploring various aspects of teaching. I did not know to what extent the TCP influenced participants; which is why I felt research about this program is critical.

### **Trustworthiness**

I have taken specific steps to ensure the trustworthiness of this study as appropriate for a qualitative or naturalistic study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Below I will address the ways in which I established credibility, transferability, reflexivity, confirmability, and representation.

#### **Credibility**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), researchers have established credibility by using triangulation and member checks. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple data sources. By using artifact examination and focus groups, I designed a study where I collected data from multiple sources and pooled data collections to establish triangulation and thereby I have enhanced the consistency of the research findings. Using multiple data sources such as artifacts, interviews, and focus groups, also provided a means of triangulating data and establishing confirmability. Combining data triangulation with member checks and reflexivity strengthened the integrity of the research study.

#### **Triangulation**

Patton (1991) described triangulation as a means of creating validity through using



multiple data sources. Triangulation utilizes different methods within the same qualitative approach so that the consistency of results can be tested. Patton stressed that triangulation can illuminate inconsistencies in results, but that this aspect should not be seen as a weakness but as an opportunity to explore findings further. I intentionally debriefed with key informants as a follow up to their completion of the survey to find out additional detail regarding their personal rationale behind answers to their survey questions. I achieved triangulation by analyzing surveys, interviews, and program documents such as student observations, reflection journals, and other course artifacts. In triangulating the multiple data sources, I looked for commonalities within the artifacts to support references in the surveys, and more specifically, the interviews.

### **Transferability**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), transferability is the application of research findings to other contexts and locations. The degree to which readers will be able to determine the transferability of this study was enhanced with rich descriptions of the research site, study participants, and social and individual contexts in which the research occurred (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Krathwohl, 1998). My use of key informants as representative of different voices focus groups allowed me to provide more in-depth information regarding the lived experiences and perceptions of stakeholders. Using the patterns in my survey results accompanied by the thorough descriptions from key informants and focus group conversations, readers will be able to draw conclusions about the research findings and determine the extent to which their conclusions are transferable to other settings and individuals.

**Dependability**

The dependability of a study correlates reliability and replication (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Krathwohl, 1998). Patton (1991) described triangulation as a means of creating validity through using multiple data sources. Triangulation utilizes different methods within the same qualitative approach so that the consistency of results can be tested. Patton stressed that triangulation can illuminate inconsistencies in results, but that this aspect should not be seen as a weakness but as an opportunity to explore findings further.

**Reflexivity**

Reflexivity as a means of ensuring integrity is a desirable quality in a research study. Reflexivity makes the researcher accountable for any preconceptions or biases that might be present in the study. To address this aspect of the study, I kept a researcher's log. Since reflexivity encourages awareness in the researcher, I recorded any perspectives, positions, or values that may affect the research process in the log. Acknowledgement of how these factors might influence the research study helps assure integrity (Gilgun, 2010).

**Confirmability**

The degree to which data supports research findings and conclusions in regards to the interpretations of the researcher is confirmability. Confirmability certifies that research findings are not the result of researcher bias, personal or political motivations, or self-interest. Working within the constructionist and symbolic interactionism theoretical framework, I strived to arrive at subjective, not objective, truth based upon the contextual factors of the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) credit confirmability as occurring through reflexivity. As noted previously, reflexivity aides in establishing accountability

for any preconceptions or biases that a research may hold. Acknowledgement of how these factors might influence the research study helps assure integrity (Gilgun, 2010) thereby, confirmability is reached through reflexivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1984).

Beneficence involves a researcher maximizing the possible benefits of the study while minimizing the amount of possible harm and risks to the human participants (Babbie, 2008; Strike et al., 2002). It is the obligation of a researcher to protect the privacy of research participants. Discretion must be maintained; to do so, participants were guaranteed that disclosure of information will not occur without individual informed consent.

Providing accurate representations of a data is the final consideration of justice (Babbie, 2008; Strike et al., 2002). In confirming research findings, Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Lather and Smithies (1997) suggest using member checks. I met this expectation by following up with my key informants and providing them opportunities to review to my data and interpretations.

### **Representation**

The process of writing a narrative requires the researcher to identify the audience and determine the focus of the research study (Spradley, 1979). The primary focus of this investigation is to select a topic that reflects a current educational issue that has not been researched qualitatively, which appears to have numerous policy implications for current and future educators. Secondly, this text must also serve to fulfill the dissertation requirements at Georgia State University. Acknowledging both purposes, I chose a narrative format, which was accessible to all educational stakeholders: policymakers, educators, and academia.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe the qualitative researcher as a type of “bricoleur” (p. 4). Bricoleurs fit many descriptions, but the one most representative of the research intended in this study is that of the interpretive bricoleur. “The interpretive bricoleur produces a bricolage—that is, a pieced-together set of representations that is fitted to the specifics of a complex situation” (p. 4).

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of stakeholders in the Teacher Cadet Program on program participants and describe whether stakeholders felt that providing preservice teachers with early clinical experiences during their high school years presents a valuable introduction to teaching as a career and a viable addition to teacher preparation programs. I have chosen to use a qualitative approach using survey questions during an initial interview and further exploration through focus group discussions and follow-up questions. In this chapter, I will report findings related to the data, and I will describe themes that are common threads in the research.

The 43 participants in this research study represent four distinct groups of individuals with various roles and perspectives. These participants include (a) recent Teacher Cadets, (b) former Teacher Cadets who are not in education, (c) former Teacher Cadets who are in education, and (d) supervisors of Teacher Cadets. Six of the study participants were former Teacher Cadets who had obtained a position as a teacher and then served as a Teacher Cadet supervisor for students currently enrolled in the Teacher Cadet Program offered at a rural high school. In this chapter, I will begin by providing an overview of participants' perspectives from the surveys and debriefing questions related to the survey questions. Next, I will present the themes, which emerged from constant-comparative analysis of the interviews and focus group discussions, with special focus on four key informants to provide in-depth understanding of the perspectives of individuals from each of the participant groups.

### **Participants' Perspectives: An Overview**

I will begin by examining the survey results for groups of participants. In addition to the quantitative results, I will include insights into participants' responses that were gathered when I probed the rationale for their answers through follow-up debriefing questions.

#### **Teacher Cadet Perspectives**

The following table reports an overview of research findings in reference to the survey questions answered in the initial interview phase by Teacher Cadets (See Table 1). Six individuals represented this category of study participants. Language on the survey asked participants to rate the statements as *strongly disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *agree* (3), and *strongly agree* (4). In analyzing the survey responses, it is evident that the participants valued their experiences highly in the Teacher Cadet Program. Six of the 8 statements received mean ratings of 4.00. With the exception of two statements, all participants indicated that they *strongly agreed* with the statements listed on the survey. Two statements received mean ratings of 3.83, which indicates that two participants in the survey group rated a statement *agree* instead of *strongly agree*. Since all participants ranked 6 of the 8 questions *strongly agree*, which is a mean of 3.96, I chose to further explore through debriefing questions why two individuals had chosen the answer 'agree' to two of the statements.

In order to better understand the survey results, I used individual responses to the survey as probes for follow-up debriefing questions. I first explored the response agree that a former Teacher Cadet, Scarlett, selected for the statement, "The Teacher Cadet Program helped me make a decision about becoming a teacher." Scarlett is a former

Teacher Cadet participant who embodied a passion for teaching that is usually present in those who are already teachers, not students who think they want to teach. She participated in the program as a junior in high school taking the Introduction to Education

Table I  
*Likert Scale Means and Percentages from Teacher Cadet Survey Questions*

Survey Questions	N	Mean Rating	Strongly Agree	Agree
I enrolled in the Teacher Cadet Program to learn about the teaching profession.	6	4.0	6 (100%)	
The Teacher Cadet Program exposed me to many experiences in the teaching profession.	6	4.0	6 (100%)	
The Teacher Cadet Program helped me make a decision about becoming a teacher.	6	3.83	5 (83%)	1 (17%)
I have used information from the Teacher Cadet Program since graduating from high school.	6	4.00	6 (100%)	
I enjoyed the observations we completed in grades K-8 (9).	6	4.00	6 (100%)	
I think participating in the Teacher Cadet Program was a valuable experience.	6	4.00	6 (100%)	
What I learned in the Teacher Cadet Program changed the way I looked at teaching.	6	3.83	5 (83%)	1 (17%)
I think the Teacher Cadet Program is important to offer in high school.	6	4.00	6 (100%)	

course first semester and the Teaching as a Career course during second semester. During that time, Scarlett observed grades K-8, spending three days at each grade level. After the fall observations concluded, she decided that she wanted to observe in Kindergarten for the long-term assignment. During the second semester of her junior year, Scarlett requested to intern with a Kindergarten teacher she had observed in the fall at the local primary school housing grades K-2. The teacher agreed to be Scarlett's supervising teacher, and she spent six weeks observing this teacher during the long-term assignment. As a senior, she enrolled in the Teacher Apprenticeship phase and continued to apprentice in Kindergarten with the same teacher for both semesters of her senior year. Scarlett formed a strong bond with this teacher working not only her class schedule as an apprentice, but also volunteering to work on teacher workdays, weekends, and during holiday breaks. Scarlett continued to volunteer in this Kindergarten classroom after graduation and for several years thereafter. Although I knew Scarlett's story from the focus group, I asked a follow-up question through a social media site since Scarlett is currently out of state. I asked Scarlett why she had chosen *agree* instead of *strongly agree* on this particular statement. She responded,

In regards to the question from the survey, I answered agree instead of strongly agree, because I personally went into the program already knowing I wanted to teach. I think with or without the program I would have still pursued teaching. The program helped me to become more certain in my decision, as it gave me hands-on experience and a personal view of what the day to day life is like. (Follow-up question, August 2013)



Scarlett's response indicates that she had already determined that she wanted to become a teacher before enrolling in the Teacher Cadet Program; the program did not help her make a decision about becoming a teacher. The decision had already been made. She just wanted the opportunity to participate in the program to become more certain of her career choice; therefore, she rated the survey question *agree* instead of *strongly agree*.

A similar revelation came from Mandy. Mandy was a Teacher Cadet who took the class because she loved working with children and thought it would be a fun elective. As a child, Mandy would pretend to be a teacher, but she never believed that she could actually become a teacher until taking the class. Mandy answered *agree* instead of *strongly agree* to the statement, "*What I learned in the Teacher Cadet Program changed the way I looked at teaching.*" She agreed with Scarlett in that she had already established that she wanted to become a teacher before enrolling in the program. In a follow-up question, Mandy reported,

I chose *agree* for this one mainly due to the fact that I have always wanted to be a teacher. The program really didn't change the way I viewed teaching too much. For instance, I would bring my homework home every day and role play being a teacher. I had a small chalkboard that I would use to work out my math problems and other homework items. I had such a desire to be a teacher at a very young age. Even then, I had in mind what an ideal classroom should look like and how a teacher should be. Mainly because of the influences of the teachers I've had throughout my life. I just thought that I didn't have what it took to go to college to get the degree. Then, this program made me realize I should give it a

try to see if I could make it through at least one semester of college. The only thing that I recall that would have changed the way that I view teaching would be that some students didn't have a desire to work hard and do well. This program gave me the opportunity to witness this first hand. It was almost as if some students could care less if they passed or failed. I do not really remember seeing this type of student behavior until I was in the cadet program. I guess I was surprised to see that some students didn't have goals for their future. After fourteen years, I have four more classes left until I have my teaching degree completed. Thanks to the cadet program, I am looking forward to the day that my dream/goal becomes a reality. I hope that one day I can have a positive influence on students to never give up on their goals and dreams. I know for a fact that with much prayer, family support, and hard work it can be done. (Follow-up question, August 2013)

Mandy, like Scarlett, had already determined that she wanted to become a teacher, and the program offered her a way to become certain about her career decision. It did not change the way she looked at teaching because she already knew how she viewed teaching.

### **Supervisors' Perspectives**

A second group of stakeholders whose perceptions were important to understand was the educators who served as supervisors for Teacher Cadets. These participants included individuals who were involved in the Teacher Cadet program only from their roles as supervisors (supervisor only) and educators who were former Teacher Cadets themselves and were now classroom teachers serving as supervisors of Teacher Cadets

currently in the program (Former Teacher Cadets/Supervisors). I surveyed 37 supervisors, and of that number, 31 were supervisors only; they had never participated as a Teacher Cadet student in high school.

### **Supervisors Only**

In order to understand the overall perspectives of the second group of supervisors who had not been former cadets, the table on the following page reports the research findings in reference to these supervisors' responses to survey questions given during the initial interview. Table II denotes the mean of the answers provided by teachers who served as supervisors only (the responses of supervisors who were former Teacher Cadets will be reported in a subsequent section). Language on the survey asked participants to rate the statements as *strongly disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *agree* (3), and *strongly agree* (4).

In analyzing the survey responses, it is evident that the supervisor only participants valued their experiences highly in the Teacher Cadet Program. The mean ratings for the survey statements range from the lowest rating, 3.53, to 3.83, which is the highest rating on the 4.0 scale. The supervisor only group mean is 3.71 for all survey questions, which supports that this group of participants esteemed their experiences with the Teacher Cadet Program. According to the data, 73% of these supervisors chose *strongly agree* concerning the 8 Likert statements while 27% selected *agree*. The percentages indicate that those who served as supervisors only in the Teacher Cadet Program appreciated the various aspects of the program including the variety of learning opportunities provided for the Teacher Cadets, the early exposure to a career in teaching, and the short-term

observations and long-term assignments. In further analysis of the responses from the supervisor only key informants, I looked at the survey responses, which received the lowest mean ratings, and then I reviewed the open-ended debriefing questions and focus group dialogues to examine why the statements might have received those ratings.

Table 2  
*Likert Scale Means and Percentages from Supervisor Only Survey Questions*

Survey Questions	n	Supervisor Only	Percentage	Strongly Agree	Agree
I believe the Teacher Cadet Program provides students an opportunity to learn about the teaching profession.	31	3.83	96%	26 (84%)	5 (16%)
The Teacher Cadet Program exposed students to many experiences in the teaching profession.	31	3.80	95%	25 (81%)	6 (19%)
The Teacher Cadet Program provided me the opportunity to demonstrate the role of a teacher, which helped a Teacher Cadet make a decision about becoming a teacher.	31	3.63	90%	19 (61%)	12 (39%)
The information I provided in the Teacher Cadet Program would help the Teacher Cadet even after he or she graduated from high school.	31	3.53	88%	18 (58%)	13 (42%)
I enjoyed having a Teacher Cadet in my classroom for the short-term observations and the long-term assignments.	31	3.77	94%	23 (74%)	8 (26%)
I think participating in the Teacher Cadet Program was a valuable experience.	31	3.80	95%	24 (77%)	7 (23%)
Short-term observations and long-term assignments provided information that helped Teacher Cadets make an informed decision about whether or not to pursue teaching as a career.	31	3.57	89%	20 (65%)	11 (35%)
I think the Teacher Cadet Program is a valuable program to offer in high school.	31	3.80	95%	24 (77%)	7 (23%)

Two survey participants answered two different statements with a rating of *disagree*. Susanna, a teacher at the primary school rated the first statement, “*The information I provided in the Teacher Cadet Program would help the Teacher Cadet even after he or she graduated from high school*” with a rating of *disagree* resulting in a mean rating of 3.53. During the focus group, she shared why she had chosen *disagree* as her response.

Education is so far out in left field right now that pretty much anything happening in the school is exclusive only to education. Curriculum and standards change so often, what your students [Teacher Cadets] are hearing now may very well not exist tomorrow. I hope the experience and the time around the children impacts decisions even after graduation, but your students [Teacher Cadets] could forget everything said about curriculum and teaching strategies and they will be just fine. New stuff will be along soon enough. (Initial survey, January 2013)

The focus group discussed the rapidly changing climate of education and agreed that because education is changing so quickly that the informant’s reasoning was sound. To the group members, the experience with the students, not the current educational information, was the element that would provide substance, which would continue to guide the Teacher Cadet even after graduation.

Another supervisor, Chancy, rated the statement, “*Short-term observations and long-term assignments provided information that helped Teacher Cadets make an informed decision about whether or not to pursue teaching as a career,*” with a rating of *disagree* resulting in a mean rating of 3.57. During the focus group, the supervisor explained that she believed that some Teacher Cadets enter the program without truly wanting to teach. The supervisor stated, “I remember, very clearly, the differences

between the cadets that truly desired to be a teacher and the ones that do not.” (Focus Group, October 2012) When pressed further, she stated that the short-term observations and long-term assignment only helped those students who knew they wanted to become teachers. She explained that sometimes a Teacher Cadet would have already decided he or she did not want to teach but be unable to withdraw from the course at that point in the semester. The Teacher Cadet would still have to participate in the short-term observations and long-term assignments, but he or she already knew not to pursue teaching as a career. For this reason, the supervisor felt that the short-term observations and long-term assignments did not provide information that helped the Teacher Cadet make an informed decision, if the Teacher Cadet had already made the decision about teaching as a career prior to the assignments. Therefore, she believed a rating of *disagree* was an appropriate choice.

The highest rating from the supervisor only key informants was a mean of 3.83 on the statement, “*I believe the Teacher Cadet Program provides students an opportunity to learn about the teaching profession.*” Twenty-six of the survey participants rated this statement *strongly agree* while 5 rated the statement *agree*. The mean indicates that the 31 supervisor only participants recognize the importance of the Teacher Cadet Program and the opportunities it provides for Teacher Cadets.

### **Former Teacher Cadets/Supervisors’ Perspectives**

Six of the 31 supervisors were former Teacher Cadets who eventually became teachers and supervised Teacher Cadets as part of their professional practice. The following table reports research findings in reference to these participants’ responses to the survey questions given during the initial interview. Table 3 denotes the mean of the

answers provided by participants who were both supervisors and former Teacher Cadets. The mean for the 8 survey questions is 3.73, which indicates the supervisors who were former Teacher Cadets highly valued the Teacher Cadet Program. According to the data, 94% of the supervisors who were former Teacher Cadets selected *agree* or *strongly agree* on the Likert scale for the 8 survey questions. Language on the survey asked participants to rate the statements as *strongly disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *agree* (3), and *strongly agree* (4). The key informants rated one statement with a mean of 3.50, which is the lowest rating given to any statement from this group of key informants. The statement receiving a 3.50 mean rating, “*Short-term observations and long-term assignments provided information that helped Teacher Cadets make an informed decision about whether or not to pursue teaching as a career,*” received a rating of *agree* by three key informants. Each of the three informants referred back to the open-ended survey questions in explaining why they chose this rating.

The key informants explained their ratings best in the first open-ended question on the survey, “*What do you consider the most important thing you learned from participating in the Teacher Cadet Program?*” Anna, a middle school math teacher explained,

As a teacher, I have learned that it is important to experience different grade levels and different subject areas. When I first started out thinking about teaching, I almost didn't do it. I was put in a pre-K room and I was miserable. I then went to a middle school math experience and fell in love. (Initial Survey, October 2012)

Again, she provided insights that indicate the importance of hands-on experiences in helping a Teacher Cadet discover if he or she wants to teach, and if so, what grade

Table 3  
*Likert Scale Means and Percentages from Supervisors Who Were Former Teacher Cadets Survey Questions*

Survey Questions	n	Both Supervisors and Former Teacher Cadets	Percentages	Strongly Agree	Agree
I believe the teacher Cadet Program provides students an opportunity to learn about the teaching profession.	6	4.00	100%	6 (100%)	
The Teacher Cadet Program exposed students to many experiences I in the teaching profession.	6	3.83	96%	5 (83%)	1 (17%)
The Teacher Cadet Program provided me the opportunity to demonstrate the role of a teacher, which helped a Teacher Cadet make a decision about becoming a teacher.	6	3.83	96%	5 (83%)	1 (17%)
The information I provided in the Teacher Cadet Program would help the Teacher Cadet even after he or she graduated from high school.	6	3.66	92%	4 (67%)	2 (33%)
I enjoyed having a Teacher Cadets in my classroom for the short-term observations and the long-term assignments.	6	3.66	92%	4 (67%)	2 (33%)
I think participating in the Teacher Cadet Program was a valuable experience.	6	4.00	100%	6 (100%)	
Short-term observations and long-term assignments provided information that helped Teacher Cadets make an informed decision about whether or not to pursue teaching as a career.	6	3.50	88%	3 (50%)	3 (50%)
I think the TCP is a valuable program to offer in high school.	6	4.00	100%	6 (100%)	



level and subject fits best. Another key informant, Heidi, stated,

I learned how much I love working with the younger students. At the time, I was not sure what subject I wanted to teach, but I did want to work with small children. My afternoon consisted of picking the children up from the bus and then giving them a snack. Students would work on their homework, and I would help them with whatever they needed. (Initial Survey, October 2012)

The final informant responded, “It provides them with a glance of what teaching is.” (Initial Survey, March 2013) When I tried to press her further for details, she became tearful. Brooklyn shared that she felt unprepared for the realities of teaching in this climate of accountability. Her year had been particularly difficult and filled with changes. She said she had precious students, but the administration’s expectations, greater demands concerning teacher evaluations, and the newly revised state curriculum left her feeling defeated. Later, I learned that she chose not to return to teaching the following year.

Three statements received a mean of 4.00 from the key informants who were both supervisors and former Teacher Cadets. The mean for these statements indicates the key informants value the program individually because of their own personal investments in the program while seeing it as an important course offering in high school. The first statement, which received the highest possible rating, “*I believe the teacher Cadet Program provides students an opportunity to learn about the teaching profession,*” reflects the importance former Teacher Cadets who are currently supervising Teacher Cadets place on the Teacher Cadet Program. Hillary, a fifth year teacher, expressed,

The most important thing I learned from the teacher cadet program had to be seeing a small glimpse of what teaching was really like. Although I was only a high school student at the time, I was able to see teaching from a perspective that intrigued. (Initial Survey, October 2012)

The second statement, "*I think participating in the Teacher Cadet Program was a valuable experience*" reflects the survey participants' personal perceptions of the program. Stacia, a former Teacher Cadet supervisor who is currently serving as an administrator of a primary school commented that,

The opportunity to explore a career option in a real-life setting was a valuable opportunity for students. I enjoyed the opportunity to work with a high school student curious about a career choice in education, and get to know an "older student." (Initial Survey, January 2013)

The final statement, which also received the highest possible rating of 4.00, "*I think the Teacher Cadet Program is a valuable program to offer in high school*" reflects how the survey participants view the program as a course offering. The response of Lena, an elementary school teacher who has worked as a Teacher Cadet supervisor for 16 years, best expresses how veteran Teacher Cadet supervisors feel about the importance of the Teacher Cadet Program as a course offering in high school.

The most important thing that I learned is that there should be more programs like this in other schools. This type of program gives students a real life experience with students and this helps the impact of whether or not they will want to stay in education. (Initial Survey, January 2013)

### Comparisons Across Supervisor Groups

When comparing the mean of all of the supervisor only statements to the mean of those who were both Teacher Cadets and supervisors, the results are similar. The mean for the supervisor only study participants is 3.71 while the mean for the participants who were both supervisors and former Teacher Cadets is slightly higher at 3.80. Two

Table 4

*Likert Scale Means Comparison of Supervisors Only and Supervisors Who Were Also Former Teacher Cadets Survey Questions*

Survey Questions	n	Supervisors Only	Supervisors and Former Teacher Cadets
I believe the teacher Cadet Program provides students an opportunity to learn about the teaching profession.	37	3.83	4.00
The Teacher Cadet Program exposed students to many experiences in the teaching profession.	37	3.80	3.83
The Teacher Cadet Program provided me the opportunity to demonstrate the role of a teacher, which helped a Teacher Cadet make a decision about becoming a teacher.	37	3.63	3.83
The information I provided in the Teacher Cadet Program would help the Teacher Cadet even after he or she graduated from high school.	37	3.53	3.66
I enjoyed having Teacher Cadets in my classroom for the short-term observations and the long-term assignments.	37	3.77	3.66
I think participating in the Teacher Cadet Program was a valuable experience.	37	3.80	4.00
Short-term observations and long-term assignments provided information that helped Teacher Cadets make an informed decision about whether or not to pursue teaching as a career.	37	3.57	3.50
I think the Teacher Cadet Program is a valuable program to offer in high school.	37	3.80	4.00

statements on the survey received lower ratings from those supervisors who were former Teacher Cadets. The first statement, *“I enjoyed having Teacher Cadets in my classroom for the short-term observations and the long-term assignments,”* received a mean rating of 3.77 from the supervisor only group; the supervisors who were former Teacher Cadets scored the same statement with a mean rating of 3.66. The final statement scored lower by the supervisors who were former Teacher Cadets was, *“Short-term observations and long-term assignments provided information that helped Teacher Cadets make an informed decision about whether or not to pursue teaching as a career.”* This statement received a mean rating of 3.57 from the supervisor only key informants, but those who were supervisors and former Teacher Cadets placed the mean value at 3.50.

#### **Perceived Values of the Teacher Cadet Program: Emerging Themes**

In addition to analyzing survey responses to provide an overall view of perspectives toward the program, participants’ individual interviews and the focus group discussions were analyzed qualitatively to understand aspects of the program, which seem most salient. Three recurrent themes emerged through this analysis, (a) the importance of hands-on experiences, (b) the significance participants placed on the early exposure to the classroom, and (c) the value of relationships built as part of the program.

Numerous study participants offered insights into their experiences with the Teacher Cadet Program, which I will include throughout this chapter. However, four of the study participants were chosen as key informants to share insights from their perceptions of the Teacher Cadet Program as they relate to each of the three recurrent themes. These study key informants identify with four roles representative of those who participated in the study. Asher is a recent Teacher Cadet Program participant. She is

finishing her senior year of high school and will graduate in the spring of 2014 with plans to become a fourth grade math teacher. Scarlett is a former Teacher Cadet participant who began college to pursue a degree in education but has not finished. Mattie is a former Teacher Cadet participant who began college to obtain a degree in early childhood education, transferred into the school of business, and is currently working as a media paraprofessional in a rural ninth grade academy while she finishes her media certification. Cerridwen was a Teacher Cadet supervisor for 14 years who never participated as a Teacher Cadet. She is currently serving as an administrator in a rural primary school.

In my discussions with the key informants, although I referred to open-ended questions related to the three themes, I also asked each of the study participants follow-up questions concerning how they viewed the themes. I challenged them to rank the three themes according to where they placed the theme's importance in the Teacher Cadet Program and to explain why. I asked the key informants to rank what they perceived to be the most important theme as 1, the second most important theme as 2, and the third most important theme as 3. I compiled their answers and created a table indicating this information.

In drawing the portraits of the four study participants, I weave their stories with the information gathered from the surveys, focus group discussions, and follow-up questions so that a rich tapestry of the experiences in the Teacher Cadet Program unfolds.

### **Theme 1: The Importance of the Hands-on Experiences**

The first theme evident in the qualitative data was that all participants underscored the importance of the hands-on experiences provided in the Teacher Cadet

Program. For the purpose of this research study, hands-on experiences refer to the opportunity for Teacher Cadets to actively engage in a classroom setting. For some cadets, these experiences significantly sway stakeholders' perspectives of teaching and their views of the feasibility of education as a career. For others, these experiences reinforce perspectives they had already held.

For most Teacher Cadets, the level of engagement they experience depends upon the roles determined by the supervising teacher. Usually, those roles revolve around calendar time and work with individuals or small groups. Teacher Cadets in grades K-5 often lead calendar time (K-2) or learning boards (3-5), which could include weather reports for the day, identifying days of the week, identifying months of the year, recognizing colors, identifying basic numbers and the letters of the alphabet, counting and sorting numbers in groups of ones, tens, and hundreds, as well as identifying site words. In some classrooms, calendar time will identify student roles in the classroom for the day and week such as leader, line leader, weather person, calendar person, door holder, and the lunchroom helper. Older students in grades 3 through 5 may identify geometric shapes and work with multiplication tables.

Encouraging Teacher Cadets to participate and eventually lead calendar time is a hands-on experience used in grades K-5. Additionally, in grades K-5 and grades 6-8, Teacher Cadets are encouraged to work directly with individuals or small groups of students. In this role, Teacher Cadets often provide remediation for students who do not understand concepts, or they provide enhancement for students who need assignments that are more challenging. Regardless of the grade level or activity, supervising teachers determine to what extent Teacher Cadets engage in the classroom setting.

Another aspect of hands-on experiences in the Teacher Cadet Program involves planning and executing a mini-teaching lesson. During the long-term observations, Teacher Cadets teach one lesson developed in collaboration with the supervising teacher and formally evaluated by the Teacher Cadet Program Facilitator. The process mirrors student teaching observations required during collegiate student internships. After collaborating on a lesson topic, the Teacher Cadet submits formal lesson plans and schedules a date for the observation. The Teacher Cadet receives feedback on the lesson plans and a written evaluation of the lesson.

Twenty-eight of the 43 participants surveyed in this study identified the theme hands-on experiences directly or indirectly in their open-ended responses or in the focus group discussions and follow-up questions. The two open-ended questions prompted all participants to consider the most important thing they learned from participating in the Teacher Cadet Program and to recall the event they remembered most from their experiences as a Teacher Cadet.

**Scarlett.** Scarlett was a study participant who was a former Teacher Cadet. She married immediately upon graduation becoming a military wife. During her husband's initial deployment, she had begun working on a teaching degree but never finished because of the continual changes in his military assignments. Finally, after three children and several moves across the country, her family is settling down, and she plans to finish her teaching degree. Scarlett continues to display a passion for teaching that separated her from other Teacher Cadets during high school and continues to drive her toward a career in education today. When she completed the open-ended questions for the research study,

she discussed what she believed to be the most important thing she gained from participating in the Teacher Cadet Program.

I feel that it exposed me to the profession as a whole. I got to see that teaching is not just a job but a way of life. I saw how teachers never get to take their own children on a field trip because they are often on one with a class of their own. I saw how many teachers are there before seven [a.m.] and often eat dinner in their class while preparing their classroom for the next day. I saw how teachers often put their own money into their classroom to ensure that their students received the best experience possible. Teaching is not 9-5 Monday through Friday. It is giving your heart, time, and talent to the new group of smiling faces every year. (Initial Survey, October 2012)

When asked what she remembered most about her experiences in the Teacher Cadet Program, she did not hesitate in her answer.

The KIDS! Just hearing someone say the name of a child I once worked with brings so many memories back. I think about all the milestones that student achieved or how happy they were to finally learn to write their name, or even how many times I had to have that child pull up their card. You always take what your kids teach you, not just what you hope you taught them. (Initial Survey, October 2012)

Both responses indicate the importance Scarlett placed on the hands-on experiences she had in the Teacher Cadet Program. These experiences were invaluable in helping Scarlett determine the true nature of teaching, and they provided her with information to decide if she wanted to pursue teaching as a vocation.



In ranking the three themes identified in the research findings, Scarlett ranked hands-on experience as the second most important aspect of the Teacher Cadet Program for her. Scarlett wrote,

Having Hands-on experience truly made me more comfortable and confident in the classroom. Honestly, it goes back to the more time you are there, the more you learn. Not only was I able to learn the skills needed to become an educator, but I was also given an environment where I could practice those skills. I was lucky enough to work with a teacher who let me observe for a while, and then honestly let me go to do my own thing. Sometimes the way I did things were great, other times it was a learning experience on how I could approve my approach. (Follow-up Question, August 2013).

The opportunity to explore the field of teaching within the type of safety net provided by the Teacher Cadet Program allows Teacher Cadets the ability to experiment with curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment tools. This first-hand experience helps them realize if they have the necessary skills to become an educator.

**Mattie.** Mattie was also a Teacher Cadet participant, but her story is slightly different from Scarlett's story. Mattie graduated in May 2003 and started college in August of the same year. She obtained an Associates of Science degree in Early Childhood Education at which time she ended up on a waiting list for a school of education. Frustrated, she began taking classes in the school of business. In 2008, a rural ninth grade academy hired Mattie as a media paraprofessional. She explains that she needed a break from college.

I had obtained two associates degrees (early childhood and business) and was completely confused at what I wanted to do with the rest of my college career. I took a break to figure it out. I think the turning point was when I was put on a waiting list for a school of education... I began taking business classes. I loved it! I was so confused because I had wanted to be a teacher for so long. Then I got the job working in the media center. Once I began working in the media center, I realized that it was the best of both worlds in there! It was a perfect fit. Now I am finally finishing my Bachelor's degree in Instructional Design and Technology. In the spring, I plan to begin my Masters in Instructional Design with media certification. (Follow-up Questions, August 2013)

In completing the open-ended questions for the research study, Mattie revealed what she believed to be the most important thing she gained from participating in the Teacher Cadet Program.

After going back to get my media certification, I have been amazed at how much I learned in the Teacher Cadet Program that I have actually used in college. Many of the identical activities I completed in high school were requirements in my college classes. This has also been true for my husband in his education degree. He would mention an assignment, and I would tell him I had already done that assignment as a Cadet. The experience and early exposure to the realities of teaching are priceless. (Initial Survey, October 2012)

In listing what she remembered most from the Teacher Cadet Program, Mattie stated,

I remember all of the hand-on activities, creating the portfolio, and the opportunities to observe a variety of grade levels. All of these activities helped me know at an early age that I had the passion to be an educator. As I learned in Teacher Cadet, I am a kinesthetic learner. I learn by doing. Being in the Teacher Cadet Program was the perfect hands-on learning experience for me. (Initial Survey, October 2012)

In Mattie's experience with the Teacher Cadet Program, the hands-on experiences were the key factor in helping her determine that she wanted a career in education. She explained in the focus group how important the experiences were in helping her realize that she had the ability to be a teacher.

The early exposure and hands-on approach were key for me. The early exposure to the classroom helped me see that I was actually okay at being in the front of a classroom. It also kept (and still keeps) me from having freak-outs when I am asked to go cover classes. As I learned in Teacher Cadet, I am a kinesthetic learner. I learn by doing. Being in the Teacher Cadet Program was the perfect hands-on learning experience for me.

(Follow-up Question, August 2013)

Mattie, like Scarlett, believes her experiences in the Teacher Cadet Program were invaluable because they provided her with a framework so that as she faced various obstacles in college, she could draw from her previous experiences in the Teacher Cadet Program and make an educated decision.

When asked to rank the three themes identified in the research findings, Mattie shared that she would rank the themes hands-on experiences, early exposure, and finally

relationships. Although Mattie views each of the three as important aspects of the program, she believes that the hands-on experiences were crucial for her as a learner. She stated,

As I learned in Teacher Cadet, I am a kinesthetic learner. I learn by doing. Being in the Teacher Cadet Program was the perfect hands-on learning experience for me. I learn best this way! Being in the classroom and accumulating so many hours helped me to become comfortable in front of the classroom. (Follow-up Questions, August 2013)

According to Mattie, the Teacher Cadet Program appealed to her because of her learning style, which she discovered in one of the activities used in the program. Hands-on learning or kinesthetic learning allows students the opportunity to engage with their environment. For Mattie, the Teacher Cadet Program was a perfect fit because of the hands-on experiences.

**Asher.** At the beginning of the research study, Asher was a junior in high school enrolled in the Teacher Cadet Program. When we first began to talk, she was working in middle school in a 5<sup>th</sup> grade math classroom. Asher loved teaching math, but the year brought unexpected challenges. In late fall, the supervising teacher was diagnosed with cancer, and although Asher loved working with the students in this teacher's class, the responsibility of being the only constant in the classroom with a long-term substitute was overwhelming, especially since she was only in the middle school for a 90-minute block of time. Under these circumstances, the Teacher Cadet Program Facilitator talked with the middle school administration and requested a transfer to another classroom. Asher

finished the year with a different teacher who provided her with the opportunity to continue working with students and observe another teaching style.

As a senior in high school, Asher chose to participate in the joint enrollment program, which meant she would be taking both college and high school classes during her last year of high school. This choice made it impossible to participate in the Teacher Cadet Program during first semester. In the absence of working in a classroom, Asher realizes how much she misses working with students; she is trying to change her schedule for second semester so she can be in the classroom once more before graduation.

In answering the open-ended questions, Asher indicated that hands-on experiences were important in helping her decide to pursue an education degree. Her responses to the first open-ended question revealed,

It was important to be in the actual classroom as a student teacher in high school before I choose my major in college. Once I was in the classroom teaching students, I realized how much goes into teaching that most students don't realize. Many of the teacher cadets that were in my class had their hands-on experience, and then realized teaching wasn't for them.

(Initial Survey, October 2012)

During follow-up questions, I asked Asher to describe the turning point for her that made her know she wanted to become a classroom teacher. Asher explained,

One experience that led me to know I was meant to teach was during my second semester of the Teacher Cadet program, in Ms. Brittan's class.

There was a girl I will call Macy who hadn't been raised in the best home, and she did not have any family to truly care for her. When I started

student teaching in the class, I was drawn to her creativeness, but I knew she was too shy to ever let her classmates know how artistic she was. I worked with her one-on-one every day. Every morning when I would come into the class, she would be the first to run and give me a hug. She would always tell me about her night, and I felt like I was the only one in her life that actually listened. By the end of the semester, she was giving out her artwork to her classmates, and talking up a storm. I was able to watch her confidence grow stronger, and I could be there for her as a teacher and as a friend. That was when I knew I was in the right place.

(Follow-up Questions, August 2013)

Not only did Asher have hands-on experiences in working with this individual student, she developed a relationship with Macy, which speaks to another theme. The hands-on experiences as well as the bond that formed between teacher and student persuaded Asher that she was making the right choice about becoming a teacher because she experienced that aspect personally.

When Asher ranked the three themes, she chose relationships as the most important aspect, early exposure as the second most important feature, and hands-on experiences as the third most important facet. She explained that although she views relationships and early exposure as the most important aspects of the Teacher Cadet Program, the hands-on experiences were vital in helping her decide exactly what an educator does in preparation for teaching a lesson.

**Cerridwen.** At the time of this study, Cerridwen was a veteran teacher with 27 years of experience teaching grades 2-5 in the public, private and department of defense

school settings. Most recently, she has served as an Academic Coach at an intermediate school housing grades 3-5, and she is currently serving as an administrator at a rural primary school for grades K-2. Cerridwen was a Teacher Cadet supervisor beginning with the program in 1997 and continuing until she became an Academic Coach in 2012.

When answering the first open-ended question about what she believed to be the most important thing one can gain from participating in the Teacher Cadet Program, Cerridwen wrote,

The most important thing a Teacher Cadet can learn through the Teacher Cadet Program is that teachers are dedicated professionals. Teachers who are involved in this program and who use it correctly can provide Teacher Cadets a basis in education so their college experiences are richer since they "know the ropes" and can spend that time perfecting the craft of teaching, not deciding if they want to teach. (Initial Survey, November 2012)

In responding to the second open-ended question, Cerridwen actually touched on several of the themes uncovered in the research.

The most rewarding experience I have had from working with the teacher cadet program is seeing my former teacher cadets becoming teachers themselves. It has been very rewarding experience for me as several of them have come back to ask for help and opinions on matters while they are pursuing their degree and then have made a point to involve me in their graduations and job decisions. Being a part of providing the students

with a foundation for their future has been amazing. (Initial Survey, November 2012)

Hands-on experiences serve two purposes. First, they provide a safety net for Teacher Cadets to become involved in classroom activities and determine if teaching is a possible career choice. The second purpose is that Teacher Cadets become confident in working with students and realize the joy of helping a student reach a milestone or overcome an obstacle in their learning.

When asked to rank the three themes according to how she perceived their importance, Cerridwen commented,

I would rank the items in this order... 1. Relationships; 2. Early exposure to the classroom; and 3. Hands-on experience. Hands-on experience really should go along with early exposure... You really don't learn much about working with kids by watching someone else do it. If so, students could spend their training watching teacher tube videos and *Kindergarten Cop* and be ready for the good, the bad and the ugly when they walk into the classroom. I believe that early exposure, like that of our high school Teacher Cadets, helps aspiring teachers gain confidence and make their experiences in college so much more beneficial. It gives them the opportunity to use their college classes to learn specific strategies because they are not nervous about working with children. (Follow-up Question, August 2013)

Cerridwen views hands-on experience as important in helping Teacher Cadets develop confidence in their abilities to teach. She believes that once a Teacher Cadet



realizes that he or she has the ability to teach because of hands-on experiences through the program, then he or she can focus on other aspects of polishing their craft because the fear of working directly with students disappears.

**Focus Group Discussion.** Although the hands-on experiences provide Teacher Cadets with an opportunity to develop an understanding of teaching, these experiences only provide a glimpse of the realities of teaching. During the focus group discussion, Susanna, a veteran elementary school teacher stated,

I learned that these experiences are important to these young people. They remember the student side of school, but have little knowledge of the teacher side. I know it is also important to be positive about teaching when talking with the cadets. Even though we have challenges and troubled times, every profession needs the young and enthusiastic coming in. We "pros" need to encourage their passion. (Focus Group Discussion, January 2013)

Other teachers agreed that it was important to be positive about teaching, especially when working with a Teacher Cadet. They expounded on how much education has changed in the last 10 years, and that those changes are continuing to occur. Stacia, a middle school ELA teacher who had only been teaching for 5 years commented, “As a teacher, I see a lot of importance to teenagers preparing for the future... teachers need more preparation than what many colleges offer. Also, students get a good look at many different grade levels and content areas” (Focus Group Discussion, January 2013). Rebekah, a primary school media specialist who previously served as a middle school math teacher supervising Teacher Cadets added,

“I remember talking with students who really wish to become teachers and who now have an appreciation for all the stuff they never realized teachers dealt with before. It is great to develop the new relationship with former students who may become your colleague one day” (Focus Group Discussion, January 2013).

The focus group ended in agreement that teaching would continue to change and those who had been in it for a while would probably see things cycle back to practices from their earlier years in education. Even so, all agreed that the purpose of providing hands-on experiences in the Teacher Cadet Program was to provide a glimpse of the realities of teaching. The focus group members agreed that almost no high school interns and few college interns would ever fully understand the realities of teaching until they had a classroom of their own. The last comment came from Selena, a veteran primary school teacher who is currently serving as a classroom interventionist. She expressed that, “The experience allows the cadet to see all facets of the "classroom" without being accountable or responsible for the results, outcomes, or expectations of growth (academics) of the students.” (Focus Group Discussion, January 2013)

## **Theme 2: The Significance of Early Exposure to the Field of Education**

The second theme, which emerged in the analysis of the qualitative data, focused on the significance of early exposure. To the participants, the notion of “early exposure” seemed to refer to the value of providing early clinical experiences during high school for those students who think they may want a career in education. Thirty of the 43 study participants referenced the importance of early exposure to the field of teaching. Key informants identified this theme directly or indirectly in the open-ended responses or in the focus group discussions and follow-up questions. References to understanding the

realities of teaching and observing different subject areas and grade levels are the two topics that appeared most in the participants' data.

**Scarlett.** Since Scarlett has been out of state during the research study, I asked follow-up questions through email. After receiving clarification on the initial survey responses, I explained that the research uncovered three themes and asked Scarlett to rank those themes in order of importance. She replied,

The number one theme would be early exposure. I believe this to be the most vital, because the earlier you can identify exactly what you want to do in life, the quicker you are able to start taking the necessary steps to work toward that goal. The teacher apprenticeship program reinforced my desire to teach, and therefore I was able to start narrowing down colleges that fit my goal. I was personally even able to arrange my extracurricular activities to include things like tutoring and FEA, that would help set me apart when applying to those colleges. (Follow-up Question, August 2013)

For Scarlett, early exposure was the most important aspect of the Teacher Cadet Program because it provided the opportunity to explore the field of teaching and know if this was the career choice for her.

**Mattie.** Similarly, Mattie believed that early exposure was also a critical component of the Teacher Cadet Program. She explained,

Early exposure to the classroom was key. There are so many people who choose to go into the education field, but never step foot into a classroom in a teacher capacity until they begin their student teaching. Many people get to this point and realize they made a huge mistake! Early exposure was

important because I knew what I was getting myself into. I wasn't just going into the situation blindly. (Follow-up Question, August 2013)

Mattie refers to an important issue in teacher preparation programs. Some students complete a teacher education program and find out that they do not enjoy being in a classroom with students. Early exposure to classroom settings does eliminate finding out too late that teaching may not be the best career path. Mattie continued, “The early exposure to the classroom helped me see that I was actually okay at being in the front of a classroom. It also kept (and still keeps) me from having freakouts when I am asked to go cover classes.” (Initial Survey, October 2012)

Like the comments about hands-on experience, early exposure to the classroom also prepares students for a multitude of situations and delivers confidence that only comes from experiencing circumstances directly. Early exposure helps Teacher Cadets determine if teaching is the right vocation.

**Asher.** When asked to rank the three themes, Asher ranked early exposure as the second most important aspect of the Teacher Cadet Program.

The second theme would be Early Exposure to the Classroom because I was able to see several different teaching styles by observing other teachers. I learned the basics of lesson plans, to how to accommodate all learning styles... I was also able to get a feel for the age I would work best with before going towards a certain degree. (Follow-up Questions, August 2013)

Again, Asher refers to the importance of early exposure in the Teacher Cadet Program as a means of knowing if education is a good fit for an individual. If so, then early exposure

to various classroom settings can reveal which grade level and subject area is most suitable.

**Cerridwen.** For Cerridwen, early exposure was an extremely important issue in the Teacher Cadet Program. She described a situation she witnessed personally concerning a collegiate student intern who realized she did not want to be an elementary school teacher during student teaching. Cerridwen stressed,

Early exposure to the classroom is also key. I have worked with high school students and student teachers for years. Those who come into the classroom thinking that it is all fun and games and that "they are soooo cute" really get a reality check. The sooner the better as far as that is concerned. There was one particular case where I had a student teacher that came from an institution that didn't really value classroom experience. The student teacher was there for several weeks and realized that elementary education wasn't for her. She had spent her entire 4 years of college preparing for what she thought would be her career and discovered in her last semester it wasn't what she thought it was. Students need to know what it is all about before they get too far into their education.

(Follow-up Questions, August 2013)

**Focus Group Discussion.** The consensus of the four study participants who represented each of the stakeholders revealed that each of them valued the importance of early exposure in helping a Teacher Cadet determine if the field of education is a possible career choice. In the focus group discussion (January, 2013), various key informants

shared similar views. During the focus group, Rebekah, a primary school media specialist who was a middle-school math Teacher Cadet Supervisor commented,

“This opportunity allows them to enter college with more focus on the level of teaching they plan to study. It is a great way to prepare without wasting time and money in an area the student is not suited for teaching” Allison, a current Teacher Cadet added, “I enjoyed the opportunity to work with students and make a difference. The early exposure to the real life of a teacher is important, too. It isn't as easy as it looked when I was a student in a class”

Selena an elementary school teacher who had served as a Teacher Cadet supervisor for many years commented, “Yes, the realities of teaching without the outside stressors...” Allyne, a middle school art teacher shared,

I enjoy seeing past students come back to my class and want to pursue a career as an art teacher. Sometimes it surprises me who walks in the door. Who have I inspired? As a teacher, it's a good feeling. I may see them through the Teacher Cadet Program and then again as a student teacher. At that point, I feel I have been full circle with these students. (Focus Group Discussion, January 2013)

Chara an academic coach who had served as a Teacher Cadet supervisor when she taught grades 3-5 and then again in middle school rejoined,

Within today's economy, it is very important students understand exactly what the job consists of before they spend money on their education only to realize they did not like that specific job. The Teacher Cadet Program enables students to participate in classroom activities that teachers do each day and determine if this is the path they really want to follow.

Lara, a veteran first-grade teacher, who stated, echoed her contribution,

The experiences they have been part of will be of great benefit to them when they enter the teaching profession. I have been teaching for over 23 years, and when I think back on my experiences, I wish that I had had the same opportunities these students have had. The experiences they have had will be so important when they start their teaching career.

Kelli then added, “I think the program provides a great opportunity for students to see if they want to pursue a teaching career.”

The majority of the focus group participants from January 2013 worked in an elementary school setting. They cherished the opportunity to have a Teacher Cadet because it gave them an extra pair of hands in the classroom. Although the extra help was important to them, they also understood the importance of showing potential teachers a true picture of the realities of teaching without burdening them with all of the external chaos caused by tight budgets and increased accountability. This would appear to be another indirect reference to the Teacher Cadet Program as a safety net allowing Teacher Cadets to experience the field of teaching without harm.

### **Theme 3: The Significant Role of Forming Relationships**

The final theme revealed in the research findings related to the significant role the establishing of relationships played in the participants’ perspectives toward the Teacher Cadet Program. Relationships referred to both the bond between supervising teacher and Teacher Cadet as well as the ones that exist between Teacher Cadets and students. The common terms used in referencing relationships describe the supervising teacher’s responsibility to provide professional guidance for the Teacher Cadet, and the supervising

teacher's humbleness in accepting that a Teacher Cadet wanted to work in their classroom. Key informants wrote or spoke about making difference in the lives of their students and the Teacher Cadets. Thirty of the 43 study participants directly or indirectly site the importance of relationships in their initial survey responses, open-ended question responses, focus group discussions, or follow-up questions.

**Scarlett.** For Scarlett, relationships were the third most important aspect of the Teacher Cadet Program, but that did not mean they did not play a substantial role in her experiences. She reminisced about her time as a Teacher Cadet sharing,

I forged amazing relationships while in the program. From the teacher I worked with to the other students in the program, I feel like I was lucky enough to learn something from everyone. My mentor teacher was a wonderful example in my opinion of what a mentor should be. She involved me in every aspect from testing, all the way to how to set up a behavior chart. She was truly amazing at what she did, and she had no problem setting other people who worked with her up for success. I feel like I was equally lucky to be in the program with other talented aspiring educators. We had an environment where we could come back and regroup and talk about what was working for each other and what wasn't. If I had an issue I knew I could always go to a fellow cadet and ask and their opinion on what they do or even what their mentor was doing. I think the times that we were able to share our triumphs and failures really gave me some insight because you get to see the perspective of another person.

(Follow-up Questions, August 2013)



Scarlett and the Teacher Cadet supervisor shared an amazing bond in the Teacher Cadet Program and beyond. Scarlett volunteered in the classroom after graduating from high school, and she used the supervisor as a resource when she began college. Although they shared a bond through teaching, the friendship transcended the Teacher Cadet Program. They shared a collegial relationship as well as a friendship finding commonalities in their personal and professional lives. Eventually, both of their husbands were in the military and deployed out of state. This added another layer to the relationship formed in the Teacher Cadet Program. The bond formed in the Teacher Cadet Program continues in the capacity of friend and mentor now that Scarlett is returning to finish her teaching degree 10 years after first working in the supervising teacher's classroom.

**Mattie.** For Mattie, the relationships forged years ago in the Teacher Cadet Program were still relevant at the time of the study because of her current role in the school system. She explains, "The relationships I built while in this course were great. I still talk to many of the teachers I observed and student-taught with. And, I am still quite fond of the lady who taught the Teacher Cadet course" (Follow-up Questions, August 2013).

The importance of building professional relationships is evident in the comments shared by Mattie. In her current role as media paraprofessional for the ninth grade academy, she is a colleague of teachers she observed as a Teacher Cadet. She has continuously pulled from her resources in the Teacher Cadet Program as she finishes a Master's degree that will provide more opportunities in the field of education.

**Asher.** As a high school student who has been in the Teacher Cadet Program within the last year, Asher believes,

The most important theme would be relationships because the relationships I developed with the students I taught are my motivation to keep teaching, and to find the best ways to help them in their futures. This is the most important theme of the three because it is why I strive to want to be the best teacher I can be.

(Follow-up Questions, August 2013)

As data were collected, Asher was still forming relationships based on her experiences in the Teacher Cadet Program. She continued to see students from her middle school Teacher Cadet placement at ballgames and in the community. The students introduce her to their parents as Ms. Asher, their former teacher. Asher desires to return to the classroom because she misses the relationship with the supervising teacher and the students. The relationships she has formed in the Teacher Cadet Program has shown her the true nature of teaching and helped her make the decision to become a teacher.

**Cerridwen.** As one might expect, the perception of relationships to Cerridwen who was a 26-year veteran teacher focused more on how to engage and retain quality candidates in the field of teaching. Cerridwen commented on why she ranked relationships as the most important element in the Teacher Cadet Program. She began,

Relationships are the most important to me because that is how you gain and retain quality people in our profession. When working on my Student Support Specialist add-on, I read an article that described education as "the profession that eats its young". That statement has always resonated with me. I feel like I was extremely lucky, in my early years of my career,

to have amazing educators who took me under their wing and made sure I knew what was going on and was on the right track. Without the likes of J. L., L. H., and M. O., I would not have had the amazing foundation I do. I feel it is important to pass that on to new and aspiring teachers to make sure we keep those that will make an impact in education. (Follow-up Questions, August 2013)

In analyzing the four study participants' responses about relationships, the two key informants who ranked relationships as the most important feature of the Teacher Cadet Program were the participants with the least and the most years of experience in the program. Perhaps this speaks to the importance of relationships in establishing those who want to become teachers and retaining those who have chosen teaching as a career and wish to share its importance with others.

**Focus Group Discussion.** According to the responses from the study participants, 30 of the 43 participants referenced the importance of the theme relationships in the Teacher Cadet Program. In a focus group discussion (January, 2013), participants shared the following thoughts when asked to describe what they thought was the most important about thing about the Teacher Cadet Program. Chara, an academic coach at the elementary school level answered first,

...the relationships with the Teacher Cadets. The students are so excited to help and I have found each year that I learned from them. They bring fresh ideas into my classroom and provide me with a new perspective. I also love to see the Teacher Cadets form relationships with my students and Interact with them as

professionals, not his peers. They begin to see their purpose and blossom in this role in the classroom.

Debra, a veteran kindergarten teacher agreed with Chara, “I remember the most about how helpful high school students were to my kindergarten students. A few made hand-made games I still use today.” Some of the group murmured, “Wow.” Monique a middle school math teacher interjected, “When the Teacher Cadet makes a connection with a student in the classroom, or creating a game that the students played in the classroom about a concept we are learning...that’s important...”Joni, an elementary school teacher returned,

Yes, I have had several students who I feel I have positively influenced... and I overall have enjoyed working with the Cadets. J. G. was with me for 2 semesters and now volunteers on Friday afternoon even though she is in college. I have noticed through working with 6-7 cadets that some are "natural" teachers and some are not. Most have been very motivated to learn.

There is a brief undercurrent in the conversation concerning natural teachers. Monika responded to Jodi’s comment on “natural teachers” adding, “Those that have a natural ability for teaching, enter the classroom ready to work with the students...” Most focus group members were nodding their heads in agreement, as she continued, “Those that are still unsure eventually warm up to the working with the students.” Lena, another kindergarten teacher agreed, but thoughtfully added,

I did have one negative situation whereas the student just didn't have the motivation or initiative to do what needed to be done, but each personality and drive...even being different... have mostly been flexible and open minded and

positive experiences. It's been an inspirational opportunity to help others be what I believe to be the most important career of all.

The room grew quieter, and many of the focus group nodded their heads in agreement. After a few minutes, Barb, a primary school music teacher joined the discussion. She shared,

I learned that high school students who are seriously considering entering the teaching profession are like sponges! They love children and show it by their actions and interactions with the students! This enthusiasm spilled over, and reminded me why I went into teaching! It was a joy to meet and talk to Teacher Cadets!

Someone in the background was heard to say I agree, and a muffled conversation ensued about the enthusiasm of the Teacher Cadets. Kristy, a veteran elementary school teacher told the group,

The 2 cadets that I had long-term were awesome in the classroom. Aside from helping the students with small group or one-to-one, the cadets helped write so many art projects (preparing for the next day, week or month). I would have loved to have had this experience when I was in high school.

The group was beginning to become restless signaling the end of the session. As the interest began to shift, Karen, a retiring elementary school teacher eagerly shared,

The long-term Teacher Cadet I had 5 years ago became a huge asset to my classroom. I had several special needs students in my co-teach class that year. She was a great support for them, and a positive influence. I could not have gotten

through that very challenging year without her help...I remember the positive relationships the cadet formed with my students. They were life changing...

As the discussion ended, the focus group members were thoughtfully reflecting on the role of relationships in the Teacher Cadet Program. They concluded that relationships are critical. The group believes that they are the foundation for the hands-on experiences and early exposure in the classroom. Perhaps the comment that summarizes this idea best comes from the Teacher Cadet supervisor who worked with Scarlett. Zana replied,

I have learned to be open minded. Over the years, I have had many different "personalities" come into the classroom. They each bring something unique and special to the table. Even the shyest student cadet can reach our students in some way...The Cadets become a valued member of our classroom. The bonds that develop between the Cadets, the teachers, and the students can extend beyond the classroom.

### **Summary**

Chapter 4 presents the research findings revealed by the initial survey responses, open-ended questions, focus group discussions, and follow-up questions. Three themes emerged from the data regarding the perspectives of stakeholders in the Teacher Cadet Program: Hands-on Experiences, Early Exposure, and Relationships. Data from survey responses, open-ended questions, focus group discussions, and follow-up questions advance understanding of the study participants' experiences in the Teacher Cadet Program at a rural North Georgia high school. In the next chapter, I will discuss these findings in light of previous research on initiatives such as the Teacher Cadet Program.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perspectives of stakeholders in the Teacher Cadet Program on program participants and describe whether stakeholders felt that providing preservice teachers with early clinical experiences during their high school years presents an important introduction to the field of education and a viable addition to teacher preparation programs. The following research questions guided the analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of study findings:

1. What are stakeholders' perspectives of the structure and the experiences offered in a Teacher Cadet program?
2. What value do stakeholders see in those experiences?
3. In what ways do current and former Teacher Cadets feel their subsequent career or college plans and experiences were affected by their participation?

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss study findings and present reasonable inferences based upon the study results. After a general summary of findings and limitations of the study, the research questions will provide the organization for the discussion. The findings provide guidance for Teacher Cadet Programs as well as implications for future research and policies. The chapter concludes with recommendations for local education agencies and teacher preparation programs.

In this study, participants shared their insights through a survey consisting of 8 Likert scale statements and 2 open-ended response questions. The participants expressed further understandings through their comments during the focus group sessions. The participants' perspectives concerning the structure and experiences offered in the Teacher

Cadet Program reflect a generally positive view. Regardless of the group with which the participants identified, recent Teacher Cadets, former Teacher Cadets, supervisors, or supervisors who had once been Teacher Cadets, all shared the perspective that the Teacher Cadet Program offered valuable field experiences. Although the values participants placed on the experiences offered by the Teacher Cadet Program varied based upon the role of the participant, all participants found merit in those experiences. More than half of the study participants reported that hands-on experiences, early exposure to the teaching profession, and relationships were the most valuable aspects of the Teacher Cadet Program.

### **Limitations**

Although this research has contributed to the knowledge base about Teacher Cadet Programs and the importance of early clinical practice, limitations exist. Limitations of the study include the ability to generalize from these results and form wider implications. Since purpose of this study was to understand and describe participants' perspectives of a Teacher Cadet Program in a single school system, it is problematic to generalize results to other schools, systems, or states. Although the study participants are representative of the demographics associated with the teaching profession, namely that the majority of teachers are Caucasian females, this aspect of the study contributes to the difficulty in generalizing results across different settings. The study participants were not diverse primarily based upon these demographics, which is limitation in generalizing the results of the study. Although some researchers have encouraged the use of multiple case studies or cross-site analyses to understand the degree to which findings salient in one context may be transferable to another (Miles & Hubermann, 1984), the themes, which emerged



relative to this Teacher Cadet program, may well be unique to this setting. Future research could explore similar research questions and add to our understanding of the extent to which this study's findings were specific to this particular initiative or whether the themes are representative of the perceptions of others involved in similar programs. Such confirmation would strengthen the degree to which the findings in this study may inform policy recommendations related to the continuance of Teacher Cadet Programs in this state or others.

Another limitation of this research arises in analyzing the reliability of the study. Researchers can easily influence qualitative studies through personal biases and idiosyncrasies. In this work, I recognize my own biases having functioned as a Teacher Cadet Program facilitator for 10 years and acknowledge my passion for the program affected my point of reference. I did work to acknowledge and understand the ways in which my feelings may have shaped data analysis and interpretation. I conducted member checks, and I recorded my reflections in a research journal. Additionally, I used triangulation through analysis of surveys, interviews, and program documents, such as student observations, reflection journals, and other course artifacts, to ensure I acknowledged how my feelings may have influenced research findings. At the same time, even if another researcher uses the same approach, research questions, and methodologies in a case study of a subsequent program, he or she will have a unique perspective and may obtain different results. Consequently, building consistency across themes from additional case studies could affect variations in researcher perspectives and processes.

While recognizing these limitations, the findings from this study do present a pattern of participants' perspectives on the Teacher Cadet Program in which they were

involved. In the first section below, I summarize findings related to the first two research questions to understand the importance of key structures and experiences of the program from the perspectives of the participants. Then, I address the degree to which participants felt the program affects Teacher Cadet views of education and career decisions.

### **Recognizing and Valuing the Key Structures and Experiences of the Teacher Cadet Program**

The key structures and experiences of the Teacher Cadet Program revolve around the clinical practice embedded in the program. Students in the TCP participate in a series of observations during the first semester of the program. Although referred to as an observation period, supervising teachers often provide immediate hands-on experiences for the Teacher Cadets. Teacher Cadets participate in classroom activities, which may include calendar time, if appropriate to the grade level, whole class instruction, and small group or individual tutoring. The supervising teacher's level of comfort in providing engagement through hands-on opportunities is crucial in how the Teacher Cadets perceive their field experiences and the value they assign to each observation.

Observations begin in Kindergarten and continue through middle school with each Teacher Cadet completing three observations of one hour each at all grade levels. The consistency of three days at each grade level, K-8, allows a Teacher Cadet to experience a wide variety of school settings and leadership styles. These experiences guide the Teacher Cadets in determining their ideal placement in content area and grade level. At the conclusion of the first semester, Teacher Cadets have had the opportunity to participate in a minimum of 36 hours of clinical practice.

Using the K-8 observations, Teacher Cadets self-assess to determine the appropriate grade level and content area for completion of the long-term assignment. This field experience lasts a minimum of one hour a day for six weeks. Through the clinical practice embedded in the Teacher Cadet Program, it is possible for a Teacher Cadet to complete 57 clinical hours during the first and second semesters of their initial year in the Teacher Cadet Program. Consequently, the participation in meaningful clinical practice prepares the Teacher Cadet to determine if teaching is the appropriate career choice to pursue.

Echoing the importance of clinical practice in teacher preparation programs, NCATE (2010) released a report from the Blue Ribbon Panel addressing the need to reform collegiate teacher preparation programs placing more emphasis on clinical practice. Two other reports released between 2009 and 2010 by the National Education Association Center for Teacher Quality and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education call for the reform of teacher preparation programs to include more opportunities for clinical practice.

Darling-Hammond (2006) highlighted the characteristics of seven exemplary teacher education programs that produce exceptional graduates. One of the characteristics is that each of the programs had extended clinical experiences. In these programs, at least 30 weeks of supervised practicum and student teaching opportunities closely connect to the course work. This characteristic extends to the Teacher Cadet Program by virtue of the overall length of clinical practice offered and the connection with classroom instruction interspersed throughout the two-year program.

In the Teacher Cadet Program, the most salient aspect of the program is the opportunity for numerous field experiences at a variety of grade levels. Through the clinical practice entrenched in the junior and senior year of the program, a student could have the opportunity to participate in a minimum of 200 hours of clinical practice before graduating from high school. If the present study indicates the necessity of providing clinical practice for high school students, consider how much more important it is to include similar opportunities for clinical practice at the collegiate level. Providing opportunities for more clinical practice means prospective teachers will have a better understanding of the realities of teaching. They will know exactly what grade level and content area to pursue, and they may be more likely to remain in the field.

### **Valuing Hands-on Experience**

An outgrowth of the clinical practice rooted in the Teacher Cadet Program is the opportunity for hands-on experiences. In the Teacher Cadet Program, hands-on experiences refer to the opportunity to actively engage in a classroom setting. As previously mentioned, this could be through calendar time, whole class instruction, small group instruction, or individual tutoring. The current study indicates that more than half of the key informants believed hands-on experiences to be an important element of the Teacher Cadet Program. Many of the participants cited the value of working with students in helping them make a decision about becoming a teacher.

The findings from this present study reflect the importance of hands-on classroom experiences. Conversely, the Teacher Learning Center Project through Black Hills State University and the Spearfish School District (Hovland & Chandler, 2008) also presents the importance of classroom experiences, but unlike those in the Teacher Cadet Program,

the preservice and novice teacher experienced the classroom behind a one-way mirror system. The participants were merely observers; they did not actively engage with students. Although it is important to observe veteran teachers as they practice their craft, the present study suggests that the most important aspect of learning to teach is actually working with the students and actively engaging in the art of teaching.

Otterstetter et al. (2011) introduce a similar concept of hands-on experiences in the development of a collaborative laboratory model used with high school students and university students in the Department of Sport Science Wellness Education at the University of Akron. High school students pair with university students who have like interests to complete research projects. The primary goals of the laboratory model are to provide training experiences and early exposure for high school students who think they want a career in Athletic Health Care. Like the Teacher Cadet Program, the early exposure to various concepts, theories and procedures associated with the field of exercise science is important in helping students make informed decisions about their career pathway.

### **Providing for Early Exposure to Educational Contexts**

Another theme, which emerged from the present study, is early exposure to the field of teaching. Like hands-on experiences, early exposure relates to the importance of engaging in clinical practice. The premise of early exposure advocates the importance of providing early clinical experiences during high school for those students who think they may want a career in education. The clinical practice included in the Teacher Cadet Program provides early exposure so that Teacher Cadets discover which grade level and content area best suits their temperament. During the clinical practice, students have the

opportunity to observe and participate in actual teaching situations. These real life experiences provide occasion for the students to explore the duties and responsibilities of a teacher without incurring the full risk or accountability.

According to recent research concerning early exposure, teacher education must emphasize the importance of recruiting dedicated young people and providing them with clinical preparation consisting of opportunities for early and sustained hands-on experiences in the classroom (AACTE, 2010; Grossman, 2010; Hovland & Chandler, 2008; NCATE, 2010). The research speaks directly to the recruitment of those who are entering collegiate teacher preparation programs; however, this call to action is equally important in the Teacher Cadet Program offered to high school students. As suggested in the research, the Teacher Cadet Program recruits young people who express a desire to become teachers and provides them with clinical practice so they can make informed decision about a career in teaching.

During the course of the present study, many of the TCP supervisors expressed a wish that a similar opportunity had been available to them when they were deciding which career path to follow. According to the present research findings, representatives from all participant groups described the importance of early field experiences in deciding if education was an appropriate career choice.

### **Building and Appreciating Relationships**

According to the present study, relationships refer to the bond between supervising teacher and Teacher Cadet as well as the one that exists between Teacher Cadet and students. The research findings indicate that relationships are the most important theme revealed during the study. Seventy percent of the key informants cite relationships

between the supervisor and themselves as most helpful in determining if they wanted to become teachers. Research findings suggest that the guidance from the supervising teacher was crucial in helping the Teacher Cadet establish a foundation in teaching. The hands-on experiences the supervisor provided and guidance concerning the realities of teaching were key in helping students decide to become teachers.

Darling-Hammond (2006) confirmed that the realities of what it takes to become a teacher are nearly overwhelming in our current society. In “Constructing 21st-Century Teacher Education (2006), Darling-Hammond continually refers to the importance of relationships: those between student intern and supervisor as well as the relationship between the university and the P-12 school setting. She further posits exemplary teacher education programs produce well-prepared students through the development of strong relationships, common knowledge and shared beliefs. The Teacher Cadet Program supports these ideas through the numerous field experiences and classroom activities, which lead to the development of relationships, common knowledge and shared beliefs. Although the development of relationships with the supervising teacher and students is the most important relationship aspect in the Teacher Cadet Program, through articulation agreements with colleges and universities, there is also an opportunity through the Teacher Cadet Program to develop partnerships between the collegiate and P-12 settings. The importance of the P-16 partnerships is especially critical in reforming teacher preparation programs and providing extensive clinical practice at the university level. Although this type of relationship is important to Teacher Cadets who are graduating and entering college, it does not hold the same level of importance for those in the first year of the program who are trying to determine if they want to become teachers. If Teacher

Cadets decide to become teachers and take advantage of an articulation agreement, the P-16 relationship becomes extremely important as they make decisions about colleges and teacher preparation programs.

### **Understanding the Role of the Teacher Cadet Program on Career Decisions**

According to recent and former Teacher Cadet study participants, participating in the Teacher Cadet Program affected subsequent career or college plans to a degree. Many of the key informants had already decided to pursue a degree in education before enrolling in the Teacher Cadet Program; therefore, the influence of their participation in the program was minimal in helping them decide to become a teacher.

The three themes that emerged during the present study were the factors that participants most often credited with helping them make the decision to become teachers. More than half of the study participants reported that hands-on experiences, early exposure to the teaching profession, and relationships were the most valuable aspects of the Teacher Cadet Program as they contemplated if the teaching profession was an appropriate career decision.

Several participants shared that the Teacher Cadet Program helped them become more confident in their decision to teach. For those who had entertained the idea of teaching and enrolled in the program to determine if they wanted to pursue a degree in education, the clinical practice and hands-on experiences were significant. These aspects of the Teacher Cadet Program proved influential in the participants' decision to teach. Participants referred to the early field experiences as important in helping them ascertain if they would be able to perform in a classroom setting. The clinical practice was also critical in helping Teacher Cadets determine the appropriate grade level and content area.



Many key informants mentioned entering the program with preconceptions about teaching specific grade levels. For instance, several knew they wanted to become Kindergarten teachers or Art teachers. After the initial observations, they discovered that they either enjoyed or disliked grade levels and content areas that they had previously considered as possible careers choices. Without the opportunity to experience a multitude of grade levels and classes, the Teacher Cadet would have entered the field of teaching with misconceptions that the collegiate teacher preparation program usually would not address until the junior or senior year. Although many collegiate teacher preparation programs are working to reform the immediacy and frequency of clinical practice within their program, the practice still exists in numerous university settings, and students find out at the end of their teacher preparation experience that they do not want to become teachers.

The National Research Council (NRC) report, *Preparing Teachers: Building Evidence for Sound Policy* (2010) indicates that clinical practice is one of the three aspects of a teacher preparation program that is most likely to have the highest potential for effects on student outcomes. Although the NRC report acknowledged effects on student outcomes, those effects are in reference to students in P-12 settings whose teachers were candidates from teacher preparation programs with effective clinical practice aspects. The same logic relates to the Teacher Cadet Program. As evidenced by survey responses and focus group discussions, the clinical practice included in the Teacher Cadet Program has garnered the most discussion among participants, and it is that aspect of the program, which most influences the career decision of the Teacher Cadet. Although key informants discussed hands-on experiences and early exposure as

separate entities, both are aspects of the clinical practice. Therefore, clinical practice has the highest potential for effects on students enrolled in a Teacher Cadet Program. The quality and quantity of clinical practice is a determining factor in the career choices the Teacher Cadet pursues.

### **Implications and Conclusions**

Research findings from the present study support implications affecting professional practice and future research. The following discusses implications for local education agencies and teacher preparation programs. The research also considers implications for future investigations based on the scope of the study as well as available research on Teacher Cadet Programs and early clinical practice.

First, the present study advocates the importance of early exposure to the teaching profession through effective clinical practice. The importance of effective clinical practice offered to high school students who wish to become teachers is essential in providing the student with field experiences that will support informed decision-making about his or her career choices. This finding suggests teacher preparation programs should develop partnerships for P-16 education, which unite theory and practice.

Zeichner (2010) refers to this type of partnership as creating a hybrid space in teacher education. The idea of uniting theory and practice is central to the structure of the Teacher Cadet Program. At the beginning of the first semester of their junior year, students receive classroom instruction introducing them to the field education and the characteristics of the learner. They discuss effective classroom practices and engage in mini-teaching activities. The classroom instruction unites with observations designed to expose students to a variety of grade levels and content areas. With their minimal

knowledge base, they begin to apply the classroom theory to the clinical practice. This “hybrid space” (Zeichner, 2010) allows the Teacher Cadet to engage in hands-on experiences and begin to recognize some of the realities of what it means to be a teacher. Further research into the importance of clinical practice through early exposure at the high school level is necessary to determine to what extent this type of field experience impresses participants.

Additionally, following the research of Zeichner and the findings of this current research study, it is critical to improve the clinical practice offered in surrounding colleges and universities. These research findings support the urgency in creating P-12 relationships that provide for Zeichner’s hybrid space. Within a 30 mile radius of the Teacher Cadet Program investigated in this present study, four colleges or universities with teacher preparation programs exist. Blue Ribbon Panel results released in 2010 indicated a need for change, but few, if any, changes have occurred in local teacher education programs concerning the quantity and quality of clinical preparation. Likewise, the present study indicates a pool of teacher education candidates who would benefit greatly from the development of programs designed to establish a new approach to clinical preparation within a P-12 framework. Although movements in the direction of improving P-12 partnerships are occurring with programs like Complete College Georgia, those initiative pertain to increasing the number of graduates in all degree programs, not just teacher education (University of North Georgia, 2013). It is not enough to conduct business as usual when research findings suggest change is imperative. This implication applies to local, state, and federal education programs.

The current study included 43 participants within a single school system. During the course of the study, three themes emerged as important elements in this particular Teacher Cadet Program: hands-on experiences, early exposure to the teaching profession, and relationships. While the study participants' perspectives were valuable in the investigation of the Teacher Cadet Program, a large-scale investigation of several Teacher Cadet Programs may lead to different findings regarding thematic elements. The present study indicates a need for future research of other Teacher Cadet Programs and school systems.

Since there is no specific guideline for the quantity and quality of clinical experiences offered through a Teacher Cadet Program, research results might vary; however, it would be important to know if the same thematic threads emerge regardless of the types and frequency of clinical practice or size of the study. These implications are important in making policy decisions about whether to offer a Teacher Cadet Program. In the current economic climate of budget cuts and reduction of programs and staff, a large-scale study would prove beneficial in providing research that local educational agencies and administrators could use to make financial decisions.

Furthermore, future research needs to explore the importance of the relationship between the quality and quantity of clinical practice offered to prospective teachers. As such, the present study indicates the importance of the wide-ranging extent of clinical practice embedded in the Teacher Cadet Program. In the present study, it is possible for Teacher Cadets to participate in a minimum of 200 clinical practice hours before graduating from high school. Compared to most collegiate teacher preparation programs, the amount is staggering. Future research needs to explore the relationship between the

quality of clinical practice and the quantity to determine how much clinical practice is necessary to provide candidates with a realistic perception of the field of teaching.

In addition to the need to explore the quality and quantity of clinical practice, it is equally important to research the role of the supervising teacher. The present study indicates the importance of the supervising teacher in providing hands-on experiences and guidance concerning the realities of teaching. It is through the perspectives of the supervising teacher that many Teacher Cadets made decisions about the pursuit of a career in teaching. The present study has revealed information about the importance of effective clinical practice. Of equal importance is the role of the supervising teacher and their influence upon the Teacher Cadet. The effectiveness of the supervising teacher in the Teacher Cadet Program is key in better preparing Teacher Cadets to self-assess to determine if the teaching profession is the best career choice for their futures. Knowing how the supervising teacher affects that decision is critical in designing effective teacher preparation programs.

### **Summary**

In general, this inquiry investigated an area of teacher preparation, the Teacher Cadet Program, which researchers have scarcely explored. The study provides some insights into the stories of stakeholders in a Teacher Cadet Program while exploring the values they placed on those experiences, and how their experiences influenced their decision to become a teacher. As such, the study has added to the body of knowledge surrounding the experiences of those connected with a Teacher Cadet Program.

The study indicates that early exposure to the field of teaching and clinical practice in that field is crucial for high school students making the decision to become teachers.

Many of them approach the opportunity to participate in a Teacher Cadet Program already knowing they want to become teachers. Others discover through the clinical practice, hands-on experiences, and development of relationships whether teaching is an appropriate career choice.

This present study provides insights into an otherwise unexplored area of teacher education, the Teacher Cadet Program. By offering opportunities such as the Teacher Cadet Program, high school students who think they want to become teachers can safely explore the teaching profession to determine if a career in teaching is the best choice for their vocation.

Programs like the Teacher Cadet Program are valuable in helping to prepare the next generation of teachers. Through a variety of experiences, prospective teachers discover the realities of teaching before graduating from high school and entering a teacher education program. For participants in a Teacher Cadet Program, knowing that they do or do not possess the unique qualities necessary to become effective teachers removes some of the ambiguity of entering college and declaring a major. The Teacher Cadet Program allows students to experience teaching, recognize their own abilities, and discover what it truly means to be a teacher.

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## APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A – Teacher Cadet Questionnaire: Please complete the information below.

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Number \_\_\_\_\_

Current Employer \_\_\_\_\_ Job Title \_\_\_\_\_

Year(s) of Teacher Cadet Participation \_\_\_\_\_

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
		1	2	3	4
1.	I enrolled in the Teacher Cadet Program to learn about the teaching profession.	1	2	3	4
2.	The Teacher Cadet Program exposed me to many experiences in the teaching profession.	1	2	3	4
3.	The Teacher Cadet Program helped me make a decision about becoming a teacher.	1	2	3	4
4.	I have used information from the Teacher Cadet Program since graduating from high school.	1	2	3	4
5.	I enjoyed the observations we completed in grades K-8 (9).	1	2	3	4
6.	I think participating in the Teacher Cadet Program was a valuable experience.	1	2	3	4
7.	What I learned in the Teacher Cadet Program changed the way I looked at teaching.	1	2	3	4
8.	I think the Teacher Cadet Program is a program that is important to offer in high school.	1	2	3	4

**Open-Ended Questions: Answer the questions in the space provided.**

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## APPENDIX B – Supervisor Questionnaire

**Please complete the information below.**

Your Name _____	Contact Number _____
Current Employer _____	Job Title _____
Year(s) of Teacher Cadet Participation _____	

**On a scale of 1-4, with 4 being the highest score, indicate your response to the following questions. Circle the number which best describes your experience.**

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
		1	2	3	4
1.	I believe the teacher Cadet Program provides students an opportunity to learn about the teaching profession.	1	2	3	4
2.	The Teacher Cadet Program exposed students to many experiences I in the teaching profession.	1	2	3	4
3.	The Teacher Cadet Program provided me the opportunity to demonstrate the role of a teacher, which helped a Teacher Cadet make a decision about becoming a teacher.	1	2	3	4
4.	The information I provided in the Teacher Cadet Program would help the Teacher Cadet even after he or she graduated from high school.	1	2	3	4
5.	I enjoyed having a Teacher Cadets in my classroom for the short-term observations and the long-term observations.	1	2	3	4
6.	I think participating in the Teacher Cadet Program was a valuable experience.	1	2	3	4
7.	Short-term observations and long-term assignments provided information that helped Teacher Cadets make an informed decision about whether or not to pursue teaching as a career.	1	2	3	4
8.	I the Teacher Cadet Program is a valuable program to offer in high school.	1	2	3	4



## APPENDIX C- Interview Prompts

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**Global Questions for everyone:**

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1. How can the influence of the Teacher Cadet Program be described?
2. Why did you enroll in this course?
3. What are your thoughts about the Teacher Cadet Program?

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**Teacher Cadet Participant Questions**

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4. Tell me about your educational experiences since you graduated from high school?
5. What are your most vivid memories concerning participating in Teacher Cadet?
6. Who were some of the teachers you remember from the observations in grades K-8(9)?
7. What did you learn from the observation teachers?
8. Which grade level did you enjoy observing the most? Why?
9. In what ways did being in the Teacher Cadet Program support what you already thought about teaching and education?
10. In what ways did being in the Teacher Cadet Program oppose what you already thought about teaching and education?

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**Teacher Cadet Facilitator Questions**

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1. What do you think is the best aspect of this program?
2. What is the most difficult aspect as the program facilitator?
3. What do you think is the most valuable concept taught in this course?
4. In what ways do the concepts taught in this course lend themselves to other experiences?

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**Teacher Cadet Supervising Teacher Questions**

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1. What do you think is the best aspect of this program?
  2. What kinds of responsibilities and duties do you think are appropriate for TC in your class?
  3. What do you think is the most valuable concept students learn through the observations?
  4. In what ways do the concepts taught in this course lend themselves to other experiences?
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