TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL CULTURE AFTER THE CHANGE

FROM A SEMESTER SCHEDULE TO A TRIMESTER SCHEDULE: A

PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

JOSEPH L. SHOWELL

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Abstract

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Joseph L. Showell

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2018

Supervising Professor: Casey Graham Brown

Principals newly assigned to a campus often begin their work by talking

with staff, reviewing data, and evaluating the organizational structure with which

they were entrusted (Daresh & Alexander, 2015). Common areas for review

include campus budget, student performance on state and federal testing, overall

operating systems such as the school bell schedule, school culture, and campus

operating systems for communication (Daresh & Alexander, 2015). From this

review, principals design action plans that they believe best fit the needs of the

campus. The effectiveness of the principals' action plans generally is based on

quantitative student performance data from state and federal assessments (Coburn,

Hill, & Spillane, 2016; Grissom, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2015). However, these data

sets can be void of input from the teachers, who are responsible for implementing

the principals' action plans (Noddings, 2015). Knowledge of teachers' experiences

can provide additional information for principals to use in calculating the true effectiveness of their action plan. An action plan aspect often used by principals is the implementation of a new school schedule. In this study, I sought to examine the experiences of teachers who experienced a campus-wide schedule change from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule.

The participants of this phenomenological study were employed at a school that previously was not performing at a level equal to schools in the state comparison group on state assessments. Due to low student achievement, school leaders explored pathways to improve instruction and changed the school schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule in hopes of improving student and teacher performance.

The perceptions of 11 educators who participated in the organizational change of the school schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule were examined. The specific areas of exploration included the experiences of teachers in the areas of campus culture, tutoring, and remediation of students. The study also included an examination of the experiences with professional collaboration among colleagues. The relevance of this research lies in the ability to understand better how teachers experience the change of schedules from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. Through this understanding, administrators will have additional knowledge to use as they continue to lead schools and make similar school reform decisions.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Of all the resources designed to support student learning, teachers have the most influence on student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007). However, schools are facing a crisis due to the number of teachers who choose to leave the profession of education and the lack of new teachers who enter the field (Keigher, 2010; Lasagna, 2009; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). The authors of the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) *Teacher Attrition and Mobility Report* indicated that during the 2012-2013 academic year, there were 3,377,900 public school teachers in the United States. Per the authors of the report, 84% of the teachers continued to teach at their initial campus the following year, while 16% of teachers left their initial campus. Of the teachers in the 16% who left their initial campus, 8% stayed in the profession of education and moved to different schools, while 8% of the teachers left the education profession (Keigher, 2010). There were 80% of the teachers with 1-3 years of experience who remained at their initial school; 13% moved to another school, and 7% left the profession of education after their first year of teaching. Beginning teachers had a combined mobility and attrition rate that was 4% higher than teachers with more than three years of experience (Keigher, 2010).

The factors that Keigher (2010) found which led to teachers changing schools included 1) voluntary resignation due to moving, 2) personal life factors,

3) assignment and classroom factors, 4) salary and job benefits, 5) lack of time to collaborate with their peers, 6) school factors, and 7) student performance factors. During the period referenced in the NCES *Teacher Attrition and Mobility Report*, the major indicator of change tied to the mobility and turnover rates of teachers was a lack of time to collaborate with peers (Keigher, 2010).

Some teachers often are frustrated with too few opportunities to meet to learn pedagogy strategies, develop lesson plans, or design the mandated intervention plans for struggling students (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Peer collaboration is a valuable tool whereby teachers can collaborate on lessons and learn effective instructional strategies (Marzano, 2003). Researchers have supported the idea that teachers are concerned with inadequate individual planning time, challenging classroom behavior, and perceived lack of support on issues related to time for planning and professional growth (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Ingersoll, 2002; Theobald, 1990).

An additional concern for teachers is the growing sense of urgency for ever-improving student academic performance (Hultell, Melin, & Gustavsson, 2013). Some teachers feel inadequately equipped to meet the continually rising standards demanded from state testing (Hultell et al., 2013). Another major concern for teachers is the lack of quality preparation and planning time during the school day and year (Hultell et al., 2013). Efforts to increase student achievement should not be at the expense of teachers (Licklider, 1997). These

challenges often cause teachers to feel ineffective and frustrated. Some teachers feel that efforts to obtain student achievement should not be at their expense (Licklider, 1997). These conditions can lead to teacher mobility and attrition (Datnow, Park, & Kennedy Lewis, 2013; Dembo & Gibson, 1985).

To address the concerns of teachers, educational leaders make deliberate, systemic efforts in areas such as scheduling (Certo & Fox, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). The traditional semester schedule, the A/B alternating day block schedule, and the trimester schedule are examples of often-implemented schedules. Each of these schedules has appeal to academic leaders (Certo & Fox, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003); however, each schedule has variables that are not suited for all campus curriculum and instructional needs. Inadequate time schedules, designed to support teachers' opportunities for professional collaboration, often leave teachers feeling exhausted and demoralized (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

When teachers are tired and lose confidence in their abilities to tutor and remediate students, their condition can have a negative impact on classroom instruction (Dembo & Gibson, 1985; Hultell, Melin, & Gustavsson, 2013). To avoid burnout and negative feelings, many teachers choose to work in environments where ample time for professional collaboration and professional growth are provided (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). In this study, I sought to explore the perceptions of teachers who experienced the change of schedule from

a semester schedule to the trimester schedule. The lived interactions of the teachers who experienced the schedule change offer new voice and perspective into the conversation of school reform (Fullan, 2014; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990).

Statement of the Problem

Teachers have become increasingly aware that not every campus, or school district, uses the same plan to provide academic intervention for students (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Teachers are knowledgeable of the fact that academic interventions differ between campuses and districts (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). This heightened awareness provides justification for teacher attrition. Teacher attrition in the form of teachers leaving their campus to work at another campus or leaving the education profession is a growing concern (Dembo & Gibson, 1985; Hultell, Melin, & Gustavsson, 2013).

Teachers also are increasingly aware of the additional pressures placed on them to improve student academic performance on state assessments (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2014). Many teachers attempt to assist students by offering help in the form of tutoring before or after school. The pressure of working extra hours tutoring or providing remediation to support struggling students can create frustration for many educators (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2014).

The process for implementing a school schedule that has a collaborative

instructional culture for teachers, while simultaneously improving academic

performance of students as described in the 2009 NCES report is not a new

challenge that exists in the field of education (Alvy, 2005; DuFour & Marzano,

2015). Educators have tried to come up with schedules that best support teaching

and learning given the many variables of their learning environment (Alvy, 2005;

DuFour & Marzano, 2015). To address the challenges of providing academic

interventions for students and time for effective teacher planning, researchers

have suggested that more attention should be focused on providing a collaborative

school culture for teachers (Marzano, 2003; Murphy, 2001). Educators need a

differentiated, collaborative academic culture in schools, specific to the individual

needs of each teacher and student (Breunlin, Mann, Kelly, & Cimmarusti, 2005;

Datnow, Park, & Kennedy Lewis, 2013; Marzano, 2003).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived

experiences of teachers who experienced a school improvement plan designed to

address the challenges teachers were facing. The school at which the teachers in

the study are employed underwent a schedule change for the 2014-2015 and

2015-2016 school years which included transitioning the school schedule from the

semester schedule to the trimester schedule, to provide teachers with opportunities

to collaborate professionally with peers and to provide additional time for

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academic tutoring and interventions with students. The school transitioned back to the semester schedule during the 2016-2017 school year. In this study, I explored teacher perceptions in terms of tutoring and remediation of students and opportunities for professional collaboration.

School improvement often is based on student performance on state or federal assessments (Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005; Murnane & Steele, 2007). Specific effectiveness of campus initiatives often is evaluated solely on student test data (Loeb et al., 2005). In the state of Texas, data compiled for the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) are evidence used to determine layers of information about the school. The TAPR report includes information on individual schools, school districts, and a comprehensive state record. The TAPR report does not include information about the meanings that teachers ascribe to their experiences of preparing students or working together alongside other teachers in a professional learning environment during the school year. The omission of teacher reflections about their experiences leaves the TAPR report incomplete of teacher data. Educators can use the omitted teacher reflection data to focus on additional areas of interest with respect to school reform.

Research Questions

Via this research, I examined the perceptions of the teachers who experienced the change of schedule from a semester schedule to the trimester schedule. Unlike a case study where the focus is on learning more about the

individual, in this study I focused on the experiences of the teacher during the transition between the two schedules and use transcendental phenomenology as my philosophical approach.

Transcendental phenomenology is a research method in which the researcher must be descriptive about the meanings of individuals' lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). The goal is to understand how several individuals experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). To support this aim, research questions for transcendental phenomenology should be open ended (Creswell, 1998; Finlay, 1999; Moustakas, 1994).

The following research questions directed this study:

1. How do teachers perceive a change to the trimester schedule impacted their ability to participate in professional development with their colleagues?

2. How do teachers perceive that opportunities for student remediation in a trimester schedule impacted student learning?

3. How do teachers perceive a change of schedule affected a school's culture of collaboration?

The three questions address the areas of professional development, student remediation, and the ability of teachers to collaborate with their peers. The goal of the first question an attempt to answer questions about teachers' lived experiences with professional development after working on a semester schedule and then a

trimester schedule. For the second research question, teachers were probed for specific experiences they had with student remediation under a trimester schedule. The third question provided information about the lived experiences had by teachers in the areas of collaboration and professional learning. The third question was designed to understand not just simply if collaboration occurred after the change of schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule; this question was specifically tied to the culture of the school around teacher collaboration.

Theoretical Framework

I used Kurt Lewin's Change Theory as the lens through which to examine the perceptions of the teachers who experienced the changing of the school schedule from a semester schedule to the trimester schedule. While Lewin's change theory has been criticized for oversimplifying the change process, critics have acknowledged its relevance in organizational behavior discussions (Schein, 1996). The theory consists of three parts: unfreeze, change or transition, and freeze (Burnes, 2004; Schein, 1996). During the period of unfreeze, the organization must experience conditions that lead to the need for the organization to evolve (Burnes, 2004; Schein, 1996). The comfort level of the organization is stressed due to variables of change. Once the organization has experienced the stage of unfreeze, the system is ready for change.

The next evolution of the cycle requires that the organization changes or adapts due to the conditions created during the unfreezing (Burnes, 2004; Schein,

1996). Change is not a single event, but a process. Therefore, the word transition is also used to describe this stage (Burnes, 2004; Schein, 1996). In the current study, the change experienced by the teachers was the shift from a semester school schedule to a trimester school schedule. This shift occurred as a response to the stress put on the system causing teachers to work collaboratively to ensure students performed at higher levels. The stress in this case was the low academic performance of students on state and federal testing and the lack of adequate teacher preparation time.

Transition is challenging due to the unknowns experienced with change (Hayes, 2014). Teachers may potentially be aware of the poor student performance, as well as their lack of planning time. However, they may not readily be aware of how the proposed systemic change from the semester schedule to trimester schedule will address their current circumstances. The unknowns of the solution can create anxiety for teachers (Hayes, 2014).

The final phase of Lewin's change theory requires the freezing of the organization in its new state of operation (Burnes, 2004). Critics of Lewin's change theory have cited the ever-changing reality of our educational system and have commented that organizational freezing is not a reality (Burnes, 2004; Fossum, 1989). The fluid nature of education requires constant change. Thus, freezing should not be taken in its literal definition. The goal of freezing is for teachers to establish a formal routine and stability within the new systems

implemented during the change or transition stage (Day & Leggat, 2015). In a world of continuous improvement, there always is a need to improve production or performance (Day & Leggat, 2015). Through the lens of change theory as defined by Kurt Lewin, I was able to use the stages of change to frame and process the significance of the study.

Lewin's change theory is suited for this study because the school being researched had a need to change. Data showed the school was underperforming on state and federal assessments in relation to other campuses across the state and nation (Texas Education Agency, 2017). The low performance of the school created the unfreeze environment. Individuals were open to new ideas for school improvement due to the underperformance of the school.

The specific change adopted by the campus principal was the change of school schedule from the semester schedule to the trimester schedule. This period of transition is the area of Lewin's change theory where the research took place (Day & Leggat, 2015). The areas of interest for this study were teacher collaboration and student remediation, specifically for teachers who worked within the semester schedule and then the trimester schedule.

The freeze period of Lewin's change theory occurred after the school schedule was changed to the trimester schedule. During this time, the teachers were working within the new schedule and adapting. It is during this phase of Lewin's change theory where the teachers should adapt to the new schedule (Day

& Leggat, 2015). In this study, I sought to understand how the teachers experienced the adaptation of the trimester schedule after working within a semester schedule.

Significance of the Study

Teachers are the most important variable in school reform (Berliner & Glass, 2014; Marzano, 2003). It is critical for campus leaders to value and respect teacher experiences (Berliner & Glass, 2014; Marzano, 2003). However, to maximize effectiveness, teachers need time to master curriculum, collaborate, and plan effective lessons with fellow teachers (Berliner & Glass, 2014; Marzano, 2003). Extra time for teaching, planning, and learning as an academic intervention is a necessary technique to support students' academic needs (Britner & Pajares, 2006; Sleeman, Kelly, Martinak, Ward, & Moore, 1989).

The pressures placed on teachers and students to meet academic requirements in a culture of continuous school improvement have created a situation in which students are dropping out of school due to academic frustration (McLaurin, Smith, & Smillie, 2009). The burnout and disillusionment experienced by teachers is significant (Cherniss, 2016). Teachers are leaving the profession of education for alternative professions (Harfitt, 2015; Hong, 2012; Ingersoll, 2002). A well-used alternative for teachers who are contemplating an early exit from the teaching profession is to seek employment in other districts (Loeb, 2005).

The void that is created by teachers leaving schools for other districts, or leaving the teaching profession, requires campus leaders to recruit and train new teachers continuously (Alvy, 2005; Hughes, 2012). Campus administrators who lead schools during this critical climate of school improvement have to create and implement a vision which takes into consideration the varying needs of teachers (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007). It is vital that campus leaders implement data-driven action plans, ensuring the academic success of their campuses (Daresh & Alexander, 2015). Principals use data sources to explain the progress being made toward campus improvement goals. These data sources often are student performance on campus common assessments and teacher-created assessments. Intervention plans are created based on the data received (Daresh & Alexander, 2015). The data sets often do not reflect experiences of teachers.

Due to a variety of societal factors, some students do not begin at the same starting point and thus have more information to learn to catch up with their peers (Britner & Pajares, 2006). Some students need additional time to become motivated academically and to be encouraged to learn the same amount of material as their peers. The approaches used by administrators to address the issue of extra time for teachers and students must account for the cultural factors associated with the school (Deal & Peterson, 2010). Administrators need to approach systemically all campus decisions in a calculated manner accounting for the variables that may exist (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

In this study, I focused on the perceptions of the teachers employed at a school that changed school schedules from the semester schedule to the trimester schedule. Specifically, I explored teachers' experiences of their time tutoring and remediating students as well as their experiences planning and having a collaborative culture with colleagues on a trimester schedule verses the semester schedule. The goal was not to evaluate the trimester schedule, but to gain knowledge of the teachers' experiences through change. This knowledge of how teachers experience change will aide in determining areas to consider for future leaders who may be contemplating an exact or similar organizational change.

Methodology

For this study, the qualitative tradition of phenomenology was used to explore teachers' experiences of change as they move from working within a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. The areas of focus included campus culture, tutoring, and remediation of students. Unlike quantitative methods that are used to help explain the relationships between variables, qualitative methods can be used to help explore the meanings of experiences and cultures of individuals (Connelly, 2010; Finlay, 1999). Phenomenology is a qualitative approach that can be used by researchers to find meaning of an event through the lens of the person who experienced the event (Connelly, 2010; Finlay, 1999). This research was designed to describe the experiences of the teachers who underwent

the schedule change from the semester schedule to a trimester schedule (Finlay, 1999).

As a research method, the practice of phenomenology has been defined to include two main approaches: transcendental (descriptive) or hermeneutic (interpretive) (Connelly, 2010; Finlay, 1999). Transcendental or descriptive phenomenology is used to study the meanings of a lived experience of a concept or phenomenon. Hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology involves interpreting text that in modern times could be electronic messages such as social media posts or blogs (Connelly, 2010; Finlay, 1999).

In this study, I used transcendental phenomenology as defined by Husserl (Bernet, Welton, & Zavota, 2005). Husserl's approach of transcendental phenomenology progresses through various steps. The first step of the research is to make sure that the descriptive phenomenology approach is best suited for this study (Creswell, 1998). The second step involves bracketing my experiences, thoughts, and ideas to preserve the pure expressions of the participants (Creswell, 1998; Glendinning, 2008). Phenomenological research requires the process of coding for themes, to be absent of any personal feelings or interpretations of the researcher (Creswell, 1998; Glendinning, 2008). Bracketing my personal experiences required the use of reflexivity. Reflexivity is the ability to evaluate myself, so I could prevent personal biases and preconceptions from contaminating the data (Berger, 2015; Englander, 2012).

Collection of Data

The reflective interview was the main method of data collection for this transcendental phenomenological study (Creswell, 1998; Englander, 2012; Flood, 2010). The process of collecting data through interviews is one of the challenges of phenomenological research (Moustakas, 1994). The use of phenomenology requires the researcher to conduct interviews until the details about the experience being examined have been gleaned completely from the research subject (Creswell, 1998; Englander, 2012).

Researchers must choose study participants who will lend insight into the research (Connelly, 2010). There must be enough participants to provide a true reflection of the overall groups being discussed as part of the research (Connelly, 2010). The participants who were interviewed for this study represented a sample of the teachers in the school as well as the associate principal. Characteristics considered for research participants was their years of education experience, as well as the subject they taught.

I interviewed ten teacher participants as well as the associate principal, until data saturation was reached (Creswell, 1998). Prior to the interviews, I conducted initial meetings with each of the research participants. The goal of the initial meetings was to establish trust and ethical considerations between the researcher and the participants (Englander, 2012; Seidman, 2013). During the initial meeting, I presented each participant with consent forms and asked

everyone to read the research questions. The goal of giving the research questions to the research participants in advance was to provide the participants with an opportunity to think about their experiences. I hoped that sharing the research questions early would result in a richer interview (Englander, 2012; Seidman, 2013).

The interviews were conducted within a few days of the initial meetings. Both the initial meeting and the interviews were held in locations that were chosen by the interviewee. It was important for the participants to focus on the interview questions and share memories of their experiences (Creswell, 1998). To ensure that the experiences shared by the teachers were captured, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each participant had a chance to review his or her transcribed interview (Connelly, 2010). The participants were provided with an opportunity to provide input if they felt that the transcriptions did not accurately capture their experiences (Giorgi, 2009). All of the participants were satisfied with the transcripts.

Each interview with the teachers and the associate principal lasted 60-90 minutes. Each interview began with introductory, open-ended questions followed by probes (Giorgi, 1997; Snöbohm, Friedrichsen, & Heiwe, 2010). During the interviews, my role as researcher was to listen actively to each respondent and ask probing questions (Glendinning, 2008). Notes from the interviews were taken and later reviewed for themes. During notetaking, I noted my personal reflections, so

that I could bracket them during my reflections (Glendinning, 2008). Interviews were conducted until data saturated.

I wrote analytical memos after every third interview. The memos were used to help collect my thoughts about the interpreted data from the interviews while the process was progressing (Glendinning, 2008). I did not want to wait for full analysis at the end of the interviews (Creswell, 2008). The memos were coded for themes.

Treatment of Data

Approaches for interpreting, and reviewing data used in phenomenology research are varied (Bernet, Welton, & Zavota, 2005; Connelly, 2010; Finlay, 1999; Giorgi, 2009; Glendinning, 2008; Moustakas, 1994). However, there are three common stages for phenomenological research review: epoche, horizonalization, and imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). Epoche is the process through which the researcher suspends or brackets prior preconceived feelings emotions or knowledge about the topic being researched (Finlay, 1999). The researcher must understand the data as they are presented and process the information as new experiences. Using previous assumptions or presuppositions about the data can discredit the research (Finlay, 1999). During this stage, I took deliberate steps to make notes about areas where my previous experiences could play a role in the interpretation of the data.

Next, I analyzed the data collected from the interviews. This phase required horizonalization of the data in search of significant statements (Giorgi, 2009). Horizonalization involves two major aspects. First, I made the facts in my research equal, then I arranged the data and viewed it from a position where I could see the themes without assumptions or bias (Moustakas, 1994). I built on the data from each of my research questions by highlighting significant statements that provide clarity for the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 1998). These significant statements were clustered into groups of similar meanings that represented the themes (Giorgi, 2009).

I was receptive to each statement from each interviewee (Moustakas, 1994). The goal of being receptive to every comment was to facilitate a natural flow of the interview (Moustakas, 1994). I combined similar significant statements into common clusters of meanings. These clusters of meanings were used to support the writing of the structural description or the imaginative variation about the context and the setting of each participant's experience.

This coding process required me to read the transcribed interviews and generate initial ideas. This process of coding through the data happened multiple times, with each pass over the data resulting in condensing codes into themes (Creswell, 1998; Englander, 2012). The coding of the data was verified using triangulation. I compared the themes generated from coding each interview. Through the triangulation process I determined if I had an emerging pattern from

each interview (Creswell, 1998; Englander, 2012). As the former leader of the school and the lead researcher, it was important for me to see the data as the subject intended, not as I would like for the facts to exist. The goal was to see the research from each participant's point of view (Finlay, 1999). The following terms were used in this study.

Definitions of Terms

The following are definitions of terms that I used during this study. They are listed in alphabetical order.

Bracketing/Epoche. Bracketing or epoche is a process of setting aside personal experiences, biases, and preconceived notions about the research topic, including previous research findings and theories (Creswell, 1998).

Collaborative school culture. A collaborative school culture is the ideal culture for a school to have (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). The characteristics of a collaborative school include: teachers working collaboratively together to improve pedagogy, teachers observe each other to analyze teaching methods, teachers focus on student achievement, teachers help, support, trusting, and respect each other while pooling their knowledge and resources together (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

Comprehensive high school. A comprehensive high school is a high school that is not a specialized school. A comprehensive school is not focused on

one or two areas of studies such as a fine arts or science magnet school. The school offers multiple areas of interest for a variety of students (Wraga, 1994).

Horizonalization. Horizonalization is a process of reviewing data and placing equal value on statements. The process is continued when the statements are combined to create an understanding of the themes present in the interview (Creswell, 1998).

Reflexivity. Reflexivity is the ability to evaluate oneself. Personal bias and preconceptions are reviewed to ensure they are not being used to interpret or make personal interpretations regarding the data (Berger, 2015; Englander, 2012).

Semester school schedule. A semester school schedule is a schedule in which the school year is divided into two semesters, fall and spring, during which students take seven to eight classes each semester (Winn, Menlove, & Zsiray, 1997).

Trimester school schedule. A trimester school schedule is a schedule in which the school year is divided into three trimesters during which students take five classes each trimester. One trimester is equivalent to one semester of the traditional seven-period day, fall and spring semester schedule (Winn, Menlove, & Zsiray, 1997).

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Limitations

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In this study I examined the experiences of teachers who worked within a semester bell schedule and then transitioned to a trimester bell schedule. This

research was conducted using transcendental phenomenology. Historically, transcendental phenomenology has four limitations. The first limitation is the ability of the researcher to recruit participants who all have shared the phenomenon being researched (Klein & Westcott, 1994). A goal for phenomenology research is for the researcher to have enough participants so that the data will saturate (Creswell, 1998; Englander, 2012; Finlay, 1999). For this study, I interviewed ten teachers and one associate principal. The data from the associate principal provided experience from the point of view of a campus administrator who oversees tutoring, remediation of students, and teacher professional growth. Each interviewee was employed at the school during the change from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule.

The second limitation common with phenomenology is the ability to have enough time to interview the participants to gather substantive data (Klein & Westcott, 1994). The participants initially were interviewed in a one-hour block of time. Additional time to ensure teachers had completely shared their experience of change from working within the semester schedule and then the trimester schedule was not needed. The participants were all able to provide substantive data.

The third limitation is the analysis and interpretation of the data. Data interpretation can pose challenges Time was taken to reflect on the data and generate themes. These themes were reviewed and shared with the interviewees

for clarification. It is important to not misinterpret the experiences of the interviewed participants (Klein & Westcott, 1994). To help ensure my interpretation of the data was accurate, I used bracketing or epoche (Klein & Westcott, 1994). The validity of the research required the elimination of personal bias and interpretation. This also was monitored during the reflection of data with the interviewees. I shared my data with the interviewees to ensure that I captured their experiences accurately. The following section includes information pertaining to the delimitations of this study.

Delimitations

Delimitations in research are the variables of the project that are under the control of the researcher (Klein & Westcott, 1994). For this research, I only examined the perceptions of teachers from one comprehensive high school. This limits the scope of the research to schools with similar characteristics.

A delimitation specific to this study was the fact that I am the former leader of the school, as well as the person who instituted the trimester schedule at the high school. It especially is critical for the researcher who is the leader of the school to bracket personal bias (Creswell, 1998). Participants must feel free to respond openly and freely without any hesitation or fear. In the following section I describe the assumptions of this study.

Assumptions

The teachers selected to participate in this study were asked to share their experiences about their work after the school schedule was changed from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. The teachers had to feel comfortable telling their truths about their experiences. The goal was for the interviews to provide insight into the experiences of teachers who were a part of the school schedule change. I assumed that the teachers in this study remembered their experiences about changing schedules from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule accurately. I assumed that the participants would be open, honest, and candid when sharing about their experiences. The following section includes descriptions of the role and background of the researcher.

Role and Background of the Researcher

The campus principal has the leading role in school reform and shaping school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1990). I served as the principal of the school at which the prospective participants work. I am currently the executive director of student services in the same district. My education certifications are in the areas of mathematics, mid-management administration, and the superintendence. I have been trained and educated per the competencies of the state of Texas for principal as well as superintendent. I understand that it is the responsibility of the leader of the school to make decisions in an unbiased way without presuppositions. My goal as a campus leader was to make sure the academic culture of the school

meets the needs of the teachers and the students in the learning community (Deal & Peterson, 1990). My professional experience includes 25 years in public education. All my educational work experiences have been at the secondary level (grades 7-12) or at the district level. I have worked as a math teacher, coach, assistant principal, dean of instruction, principal, and now executive director. The following section represents the organization of the dissertation chapters.

Organization of Dissertation Chapters

The chapters for this study include information about the experiences of teachers who went through the change of school schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. Chapter 1 includes an introduction to the problem facing public education with respect to teacher frustrations with their inability to plan with colleagues and the inability to provide effective tutoring and remediation for students.

Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature. The literature review personifies the work of previous research aligned with the topic (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Included in Chapter 2 is current literature about the historical background of education in the United States with respect to tutoring and remediation of students. Literature is presented with respect to teacher collaboration, school culture, and school-level factors that influence student learning. Chapter 2 concludes with the introduction and explanation of the trimester schedule.

Chapter 3 includes the explanation of the design of the research. The description for a transcendental phenomenology research method is defined in the chapter. Chapter 3 also includes the description for the use of change theory as the lens used to view this research. Chapter 4 includes a presentation of the findings and data analysis of the interviews with the teachers and the associate principal. In Chapter 5 is a summary of the findings and a description of how the findings address the research questions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of professional educators who participated in the changing of a school schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. The specific points of interest were in the areas of the culture of professional collaboration with peers and the culture involving the ability to tutor and remediate students who have academic need. This chapter is divided into sections that are related to those points of interest. Each section is highlighted below with a full description to follow later in the chapter.

Teacher attrition has been a long problem facing public education (Betancourt-Smith, 1994; Certo & Fox, 2002; Cherniss, 2016). Teacher turnover has a potential negative impact with continuity of staff as well as the impact of retraining new faculty members of the systems and culture of the campus. The data presented in the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study of 2007-2008 conducted by the United States Department of Education provide information about teacher attrition and mobility in education during the time span of 2007-2012 (Gray & Taie, 2015). During the window of time for the report, 35% of the teachers voluntarily left their school to work on another campus (Gray & Taie, 2015). During the same period, 24% of the teachers left involuntarily due to their contracts not being renewed (Gray & Taie, 2015).

Attrition of educators who voluntarily leave the profession of education

has been partially attributed to the teacher work day (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

The teacher workday is comprised of instructional time and student learning. The

teacher work day is complete with task that often overrun the standard eight hour

a day work schedule (Jalongo, Isenberg, & Gerbracht, 1995). A culture of teacher

collaboration in the form of professional learning communities, supports teachers

mastering their responsibilities (Marzano, 2003). Teacher collaboration or the

lack thereof is a contributing factor to teacher attrition (Hong, 2012).

School culture is contagious; it is important to ensure school culture is

collaborative and able to sustain teacher and student needs (Jones, 2007).

Researchers have supported the need for a healthy school level culture (Gruenert

& Whitaker, 2015). Toward the end of the chapter, three different school

schedules are introduced. The semester, A/B block, and trimester schedules all

have appeal as options to support teacher development and student academic

improvement

Teacher Attrition

The teaching profession has not maintained the same pace as other

professions for retaining individuals in the profession after three years

(Betancourt-Smith, 1994; Certo & Fox, 2002; Cherniss, 2016). The current trend

of teacher attrition exists within school types rather than across school types

(DeAngelis & Presley, 2011). Teacher attrition is not just a problem for

disadvantaged or urban schools. Teacher retention is a concern for all schools (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011). Thus, it is critical for all educational leaders to keep, maintain, and support their teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Teachers have sighted as their reasons for choosing to leave the profession of education variables such as teaching conditions, student self-efficacy, external support, and salary (Hancock & Scherff, 2010). Authors of the 2012-2013 Teacher Follow up Survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education classified teachers as *stayers* if they chose to stay in the field of teaching and remain at their current school. Teachers were classified as *leavers* if they left the field of education and as *movers* if they changed schools but remained in the field of education. Of the teachers with 1-3 years of experience, 80% stayed in their current school, 13% moved to another school, and 7% left the field of education (Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014).

Researchers have shown that teachers who are at the age of retirement but still are very capable of teaching choose to leave the profession of education instead of remaining in what they consider a climate of failed school reforms due to insufficient planning (Alvy, 2005). In this age of accountability, teachers also have left schools who have a large population of at risk, low socioeconomic populations (Boyd et al., 2011). These teachers struggle with the challenge of delivering effective lessons to struggling students (Hong, 2012). Per the work of Donaldson and Johnson, teachers have cited poor working conditions such as

resources and the ability to collaborate effectively with peers, as reasons they have left the profession (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). When asked, few teachers who leave the profession of education regret their decision (Buchanan, 2010). Teachers lose hope that the problems they experienced will change so they do not regret their decision (Buchanan, 2010).

Teacher Workday

The teacher workday is complex and filled with time-intensive requirements (Jalongo, Isenberg, & Gerbracht, 1995). Teacher perceptions of their workday could impact their decision to leave their current school or the profession of education (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). More is being required for teachers to accomplish, however the amount of time in their workday has remained the same eight official hours (Richardson, 2016). Teachers are required to plan with their peers and deliver rigorous lessons to diverse groups of learners (Jalongo, Isenberg, & Gerbracht, 1995).

To accomplish lesson planning, teachers often work long hours and feel underpaid for doing so (Quicke, 2018). Researchers have shown that if the teacher workload can be altered to reduce task or provide extra time during the school day to accomplish tasks, more teachers would remain in the profession (Hughes, 2012). Additional variables that impact teachers' feelings about their workload include the teachers' sense of belonging, emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Prior to and following instruction, it is important for teachers to plan effectively and review their lessons (Jalongo, Isenberg, & Gerbracht, 1995). This process involves reviewing student data and the curriculum that the teacher taught or plans to teach. Planning time during professional learning meetings offers teachers the necessary support from their fellow group of educators to ensure their lessons are rigorous. Teacher planning must account for the diverse group of students they serve. This time consumption has teachers bringing more work home to complete (Richardson, 2016).

Teachers have classrooms with learners who are coded as at-risk, gifted and talented, special education, or simply struggling due to a variety of issues that can be academic or socioemotional (Jalongo, Isenberg, & Gerbracht, 1995). Some of these students' individual needs require teachers to participate in special meetings such as academic review or Admission, Review, Dismissal (ARD) meetings. Many struggling students who require extra time meet with teachers before or after school.

In rhis research study I seek to explain the experiences of educators in the areas of teaching, tutoring, and remediating students after the change of school schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. I also discuss how teachers experienced spending time professionally planning and collaborating with their fellow teachers after the change of school schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule.

Instructional Time and Student Learning

Instructional time is the period that teachers are at work and not on a district-recognized break such as lunch. Researchers have supported additional time for subjects like math and reading can benefit the student (Brown & Saks, 1986; Shaffer, 2014). Researchers also have supported that additional instructional time is not the only answer to school reform (Patall, Cooper, & Allen, 2010). Simply providing more time to do the same thing the wrong way is not the answer teachers need as they try to work together in a professional learning community (PLC) to support struggling students (Patall, Cooper, & Allen, 2010). Struggling students with additional time under the same inadequate level of instruction benefit less than high performing students (Huebener, Kuger, & Marcus, 2017). The additional time must include quality tier-1 instruction (Patall, Cooper, & Allen, 2010).

Due to a variety of societal issues, students show up to school in various stages of academic need (DeVries, 2014). It is common for students to need academic support to reach learning goals (DeVries, 2014). Struggling students learn best from individual instruction (Chi, Siler, & Jeong, 2004), however the design of school instructional time does not support one-on-one instruction for the masses. The solution to academic deficiencies of students often is provided in the form of tutoring and remediation (Marzano, 2003). Serving multiple students across multiple class preparations presents a serious challenge for teachers as they

attempt to provide students with academic interventions in the form of tutoring

and remediation (Certo & Fox, 2002; Kelley, 2004; Lasagna, 2009).

Teachers have several state standards that they are required to teach their

students. When these standards are placed on an academic calendar, it becomes

evident that instructional time is valuable. Most academic school calendars are

created with no room for missed school days. All days are needed for instruction

or assessment (Certo & Fox, 2002; Kelley, 2004; Lasagna, 2009). The natural

breaks in school such as inclement weather days, sick days, and personal days for

teachers and students make class time essential for focused teaching and learning

(Certo & Fox, 2002; Kelley, 2004; Lasagna, 2009).

Tutoring and Remediation

Researchers have shown that students who participate in tutoring and

remediation programs have an increase in overall grade point average (Chi, Siler,

& Jeong, 2004). To provide academic support for struggling students, an effective

tutor must categorize accurately the error a student is making (VanLehn, Siler,

Murray, Yamauchi, & Baggett, 2003). For academic remediation to be effective,

students need regular feedback (James & Folorunso, 2012). Teachers need to

ensure students receive routine formative assessments and remediation based on

student performance data (James & Folorunso, 2012). Remediation requires

teachers to focus on the learner errors that led to incorrect answers (Skelding-

Dills, 2013; Williams, 1992). Once the errors are identified, a tutoring plan can be implemented to address the issues.

Teachers should identify, interpret, and engage the learner and address the error through tutoring and remediation (Skelding-Dills, 2013). Teachers first must notice the academic error a student is making (Skelding-Dills, 2013). The interpretation of the error helps the teacher to understand the rationale for the student error (Skelding-Dills, 2013). The final stage of engagement requires the teacher to address the student error with a solution to fix the student error (Skelding-Dills, 2013).

Academic intervention for students is mandated at both the state and the federal levels. In 1987, a legislative mandate required the Texas Education Agency to institute tutoring inventions for every school district to address potential dropouts (Wixson & Valencia, 2011). This was done to help schools meet the 95% graduation rate goals for the 1997-1998 school year. Response to Intervention (RTI) and The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act were funded at the federal level in 2004 (Searle, 2010). The goal of RTI was for teachers to provide remediation and support for students in math and reading before the students fall behind their peers (Searle, 2010). The information contained on an RTI plan can be used by the teacher to provide academic support for struggling students (Wixson & Valencia, 2011).

RTI has a three-tier system approach (Harlacher, Walker, & Sanford, 2010). The first tier of instructional support occurs in the classroom where students receive differentiated instruction and support. In the second tier, students receive additional time for tutoring and remediation in smaller groups of six to eight students. In the third tier, students receive the most support in smaller groups of four to six students.

For this research, the focus is on the support and experiences of teachers as they implement Tier 1 instructional support for students. This is significant due to the level of frustration teachers experience trying to provide daily academic support. Teachers have expressed that lack of collaboration time and insufficient planning time are barriers for their effective implementation of RTI (Isbell & Szabo, 2014). This lack of time for collaboration and planning feeds into the frustration teachers experience as they attempt to execute their students' remediation plans.

Teachers can show greater professional growth and can be better able to meet the needs of students when they collaborate and work together to develop best practices for instruction (Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen, & Grissom, 2015). Researchers have supported the use of effective professional learning communities (PLCs) (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). Teacher collaboration through the implementation of professional learning communities is necessary for effective tutoring, remediation, and continuous improvement (Williams, 2013).

Researchers have found that students benefit academically from teachers who participate in professional learning communities (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). However, proper implementation of an effective PLC takes time (Gideon, 2002). An environment must be created where all teachers' voices are heard (Gideon, 2002). Characteristics of a professional learning community include group norms for behavior, a group focus on student learning, and a commitment to reflective dialogue, which produces professional growth (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). When effectively implemented, professional learning communities create opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively (DuFour & Mattos, 2013).

Professional learning communities have a positive effect on the culture of a school due to the focus on teacher collaboration, student learning, teacher authority, and continued teacher professional growth (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). A standard objective of a professional learning community includes weekly meetings by department or subject (Hord, 2009). During these meetings, teachers bring in their calendars, lesson plans, and examples of student work (Hord, 2009). Each of these items is used to reflect on previous lessons and discuss the effectiveness of teacher instruction. Through the implementation of PLCs, teachers can experience a shift in mindset, and habits for daily operations regarding tutoring and remediation (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008).

Tutoring and remediation plans are stronger when there is collaboration between teachers (Vescio et al., 2008). When teachers collaborate and oversee

their progress there is ownership of professional growth and instructional development (Vescio et al., 2008). During reflective conversations in their PLC, teachers can build off each other's strengths and support each other's areas of needs. When a beginning teacher is given keys to a classroom and a roster of more than 100 students, he or she needs a supportive culture to assist them with curriculum design and lesson planning (Vescio et al., 2008). The same can be said for a veteran teacher who experiences a change in state curriculum.

It is not enough for a school seeking a collaborative culture to offer staff development for teachers at the beginning of the year and then provide additional staff development within the built-in staff development days of the school year. Teachers need support with pedagogy and curriculum on a regular, systematic basis to be effective with their students (Rowe, 2004). Teachers need a chance to refine their instruction on a routine basis throughout the year (Rowe, 2004). This refinement should be based on data (Rowe, 2004).

Researchers have posited that professional learning communities have a positive effect on the culture of a school (Vescio et al., 2008). Through the implementation of PLCs, teachers experience a shift in mindset, and habits for daily operations regarding tutoring and remediation (Vescio et al., 2008). The specific aspects of the PLC that contribute to this improved culture are collaboration, a focus on student learning, teacher authority, and continued teacher professional growth (Vescio et al., 2008). Both the semester schedule and

the trimester schedule are designed with opportunities for professional learning communities. In this research I seek to understand the experiences of the teachers who participated in the PLC of a trimester schedule school after the schedule change from a semester schedule.

School Culture

Schools are more efficient when a collaborative culture exists (Jones, 2007). In their book *School Culture Rewired How to Define, Assess, and Transform It*, Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) listed the stages of culture in order of least effective to effective as: toxic, fragmented, balkanized, contrived collegial, comfortable collaborative, and collaborative. A healthy school culture exists when faculty members are effectively and efficiently working toward improving student academic performance (Marzano, 2003). Schools must maximize all of the resources within the building before seeking external support to improve student achievement. Schools cannot afford to have pockets of individual success within the same building; instead, a collaborative culture is needed.

To support teacher's pedagogy needs, it is important to have more than a high-performing school; campus cultural issues also must be addressed (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Organizational theorists have said that paying attention to culture is the most important action a leader can perform (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). Educational theorists also have supported strongly paying attention to culture as the most important action a leader can perform (MacNeil et al.,

2009). It is important for a principal to distinguish power over people, from power with people (Giancola & Hutchison, 2005). It is the responsibility of the principal of a school to understand and address issues in a systemic manner for optimal success and teacher retention (Boyd, 2011). True understanding of the effectiveness of the school systems comes from qualitative conversations with everyone involved in implementing the systems in question (Brucato, 2005).

Federal requirements such as No Child Left behind (NCLB) or Every Student Can Succeed (ESCS) set requirements for student performance on standardized testing (Deal & Peterson, 2016). Teachers often are equipped insufficiently to manage 180 students with various academic and socio-emotional needs such as English as a second language (ESL), economically disadvantaged, special education, and at risk (Washburn, Joshi, & Cantrell, 2010). It is possible to have a successful school in any community with a supportive school culture (Deal & Peterson, 2016). Both teachers and students require a school culture that fosters collaboration as well as a school schedule that can provide a systematic solution to the problems of teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Hargreaves, 1995).

To provide students with a quality education, school leaders must study the culture of the school and plan with a purpose (Hargreaves, 1995; Licklider, 1997; Rhodes, Stevens, & Hemmings, 2011; Wenglinsky, 2000). Those campus intervention plans often include how to organize the school day. The ideas for

improving student performance, or providing students with a quality education, can include several targeted areas of school improvement (Hargreaves, 1995; Licklider, 1997). However, these plans often do not include the experiences of teachers.

There are many ways for school leaders to organize their school day and establish a collaborative culture for teachers that will produce quantitative academic success for students with measurable outcomes related to state or federal rubrics for the students. However, all too often the methods for obtaining success are at the expense of the professionals serving the organization (Jones, 2007). A school culture defined by academic performance at all costs, supported by an overabundance of test taking strategies, while successful in the short term, is not a systematic approach for school improvement (Jones, 2007). Academic success under this type of leadership often is not sustainable (Hanson, 2006; Malloy & Allen, 2007).

For this reason, the factors that contribute to the culture of a school must be addressed. Factors addressing the culture of a school are divided into school-level factors, teacher-level factors, and student-level factors (Marzano, 2003). Marzano listed five categories of school level factors. The most important of the list is "guaranteed and viable curriculum" (Marzano, 2003, p. 22). Some students require additional time to master material, while other students benefit from a flexible schedule that provides additional opportunities for a rigorous course load.

A school should have a flexible schedule that will benefit students with academic risk of failure as well as students who are academically advanced (Gavigan, Pribesh, & Dickinson, 2010).

School Culture for Teachers and Students

There are optimal school culture conditions for teachers to grow professionally and for students to learn. Teachers struggle to grow professionally and meet the needs of students if they are in a school that does not have a collaborative culture (Deal & Peterson, 2016). Culture influences student learning (Deal & Peterson, 2016). The first culture-changing condition should account for school level factors by providing opportunities for students at the secondary level to earn additional course credits during the school year. The condition exists for students who need remediation as well as for students trying to get ahead in their academic career. The second condition should account for teacher-level factors that include professional development with respect to pedagogy and curriculum (Marzano, 2003). The time spent working collaboratively with other teachers during the school day should be practical for supporting teacher professional growth.

The design of this practical culture must include the most important variable in education. It is important to ensure that the teacher is considered as a part of the design of the school culture (Hollins, 2015). Teachers are responsible for making decisions about their instructional design, the pacing of their class, as

well as for modifying the curriculum. After school planning time is a challenge for teachers who also are involved with extracurricular activities. There also is an additional cost for teachers' time after normal work hours. Teachers who sponsor activities or coach sports usually will have requirements with those activities after school (Hollins, 2015).

The third condition of school culture should account for student-level factors for students who need additional time for academic support due to lack of motivation or lack of background knowledge about the subject (Marzano, 2003). Time to offer remediation after school and or during Saturday school is limited due to the number of students who can or will attend the sessions (Williams, 1992). While activities that take place after school or on weekends can be effective, often students experience challenges with transportation issues, the need to work to support the family, or commitments to participate in extracurricular activities (Marzano, 2003). During the school day interventions are beneficial to a larger number of students because they do not have obligations such as work or caring for younger siblings (Williams, 1992). For this reason, it is best for the students to have the opportunity to tutor and remediate students built into the school day (Williams, 1992).

A common solution to the problem of inadequate school performance has been extra time for student tutoring and remediation (Jones, 1994). The additional time occurs in the form of after school tutoring opportunities, Saturday school

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opportunities, and pullout programs. After school tutoring requires students to make alternate arrangements for transportation home from school unless the school implements a tutoring bus. Some schools provide snacks for students who stay after school. Saturday school requires staff members to open the school on Saturday for students in need of support. These students may receive district transportation if it is arranged. These students may also have breakfast set up for them. In a pullout program, students are pulled from one class and placed in a support class to receive extra time in a subject of which they are in need (Williams, 1992). These tutoring and pullout programs require students to work with teachers during extra time outside of the regular class period. While these approaches could improve academic success, they levy significant cost to the campus, teachers, extracurricular programs, and students (Olsen, Belenky, Aleven, & Rummel, 2014).

Researchers have supported the need for administrators to have teacher input with ideas regarding school improvement (Datnow, Park, & Kennedy Lewis, 2013; Dembo & Gibson, 1985). Bureaucracies in which administrators are the only people with input on decisions are threats to education (Giancola & Hutchison, 2005). The teacher is closer to the student than the administrator. The voice of the teacher about their professional experiences is necessary to truly enhance the learning environment (Ingersoll, 2001; Marzano, 2003). Teachers have individual experiences with curriculum implementation, instructional best

practices, practice assessment data review, and academic interventions. Providing

teachers with a voice in campus decisions helps to nurture and support teacher

efficacy (Datnow, Park, & Kennedy Lewis, 2013; Dembo & Gibson, 1985).

Teachers need to know they have input and control over the learning environment

(Datnow et al., 2013; Dembo & Gibson, 1985). Teachers' stories are central to the

type of inquiry and reflection that lead to professional development and personal

insight (Jalongo, Isenberg, & Gerbracht, 1995). The absence of information from

teachers creates a void for planning professional development. The goal of this

research as it relates to voice is to provide data about the experiences of teachers

who changed schedules from the semester schedule to the trimester schedule. The

experiences were focused on teacher professional collaboration and student

tutoring and remediation.

School Schedules

Most information regarding the effectiveness of different school schedules

is anecdotal (McCreary & Hausman, 2001). Scientific research supporting the

effectiveness of one schedule over another is minimal (McCreary & Hausman,

2001). Existing research showing comparisons of effectiveness between various

school schedules must be reviewed with caution due to the number of possible

variables that impact the data (McCreary & Hausman, 2001).

Research that does exist regarding school schedules exist about the

appropriate start time for students. Conclusions have been drawn regarding the

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appropriate start time for elementary, middle and freshman students (Rivkin &

Schiman, 2015). Sleep deprivation has become a rising topic of school scheduling

conversations (Rivkin & Schiman, 2015). Researchers have shown that only 70%

of students are receiving the proper amount of sleep each night (Rivkin &

Schiman, 2015).

Information about the academic performance of students who attended

schools within a semester, A/B block, and trimester schedule is available.

However, these data show the heavy factor of how the teacher implemented the

use of time (McCreary & Hausman, 2001). Thus, the data are not for or against

the use of a schedule, but rather serve to highlight the impact of teacher time

while working within the schedule (McCreary & Hausman, 2001). The most

significant data regarding the effectiveness of the various school schedules are

with respect to the percentage of students who score well on their American

College Testing (ACT) or Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). There also are data

highlighting the number of students who earn as on their report cards (McCreary

& Hausman, 2001).

Semester Schedule

The semester schedule is commonly used by many schools (Hackney,

2015; McCreary & Hausman, 2001; Patall, Cooper, & Allen, 2010). The semester

schedules use is not based out of effectiveness but rather out of familiarity

(Hackney, 2015). The semester schedule was first called into question by the

report A Nation at Risk (Hackney, 2015). The report highlighted the negative performance of American students compared to students from other countries who were as industrialized as the United States (Hackney, 2015). Conclusions in the report considered the semester schedule as an attempt to create an industrial model in the classroom (Hackney, 2015).

The semester schedule is a schedule that is divided into two halves of the year; the two halves usually are referred to as fall and spring. The schedule usually has a six-, seven-, or eight-period day (Hackney, 2015). The six-period semester schedule often has classes designed for 50-60 minutes of instruction (Hackney, 2015). The seven-period semester schedule includes classes designed for 45-52 minutes of instruction (Hackney, 2015). The eight-period semester schedule generally has classes designed for 40-48 minutes of instruction (Hackney, 2015).

Within the design of the semester schedule, students could earn seven or eight credits a year and 28-32 credits during the students' four years of high school (McCreary & Hausman, 2001). General concerns with the semester schedule include students having multiple subjects of homework each night. Class periods of 45-55 minutes do not support labs and project-based learning due to the amount of time required to set up, execute, and then clean up, most lab activities (McCreary & Hausman, 2001). Semester schedules often do not have additional room for multiple electives or for students to retake classes they have failed

(McCreary & Hausman, 2001). The major benefit of the semester schedule is reserved for campus leaders and counselors who are accustomed to scheduling students on a semester schedule. Another benefit of the semester schedule is the curriculum units which are often designed for 45-55-minute class periods.

The semester schedule is a challenge for students due to the number of classes' students take at one time (Brower, 2000; Stumpf, 1995). In a college setting, seven or eight classes equal a 21-hour or 24-hour course load; this is considered a large course load at the college level (Brower, 2000; Stumpf, 1995). It is a challenge at the high school level as well. Students working within a semester schedule have the struggle with the addition of multiple passing periods and overcrowded lunches. Students who take seven or eight class periods per day often will have homework in at least four to five of those courses each night (Brower, 2000; Stumpf, 1995).

Traditional A/B Alternating Block Schedule

The traditional A/B alternating block schedule is another common schedule type used by many schools (McCreary & Hausman, 2001). This schedule is used as an attempt to have longer instructional class periods (Hackney, 2015). The schedule was mentioned by the National Commission on Time and Learning after the release Prisoners of Time (Hackney, 2015). The goal of the commission was to have educators focus on learning and not time.

In the A/B block schedule, students have different classes on A days and B days. Each day has four periods through which students rotate. Class periods are usually 80-90 minutes long. Students can earn eight credits a year or 32 credits over their high school career (McCreary & Hausman, 2001). This is six credits more than the required 26 credits for distinguished graduation. This is beneficial for students who need additional room in the school schedule for various course offerings.

General concerns about using the A/B block schedule include the cost of additional staff, the lack of quality instruction if teachers do not use the entire period for instruction, and the potential for students to fall behind if they miss one day of class per week (Hackney, 2015). Teachers must be trained to align curriculum and instruction to a longer period of instruction (Hackney, 2015).

Compared to a semester schedule where students attend all classes each day of the week, in the A/B block alternating schedule students attend the same A day classes on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and attend a different set of B day classes on Tuesday and Thursdays. Each week the classes alternate the first day of the week as an A day or B day. If students miss a Thursday class on this schedule, their next time to have that class will be the Monday of the following week.

The benefits of this type of schedule include longer periods for conducting labs, reduced classes per night for homework, and fewer class period transitions

each day (McCreary & Hausman, 2001). The A/B block schedule also has

opportunities for innovative scheduling to help students earn extra credits.

Typically, during their senior year. Students are given the chance to take classes

over to earn credits.

Trimester Schedule

An alternative to the semester schedule and the A/B block schedule is the

trimester schedule. The trimester schedule has some of the same characteristics as

both the semester schedule and the A/B block schedule. The trimester schedule

includes the same amount of instructional time as the semester schedule (Brower,

2000). The trimester schedule is set up to allow students to take five classes each

trimester (Brower, 2000). Students will see each class every day (Brower, 2000).

Teachers teach four out of five classes each trimester (Brower, 2000). The classes

are 70-75 minutes long (Brower, 2000).

The longer class periods provide time for teachers to engage in active labs

and instructional activities much like the block schedule. The 70-75-minute

periods provide time for teachers to engage in meaningful professional

development much like the block schedule. Within the trimester schedule there

exist an option for weekly 70-minute professional development periods. Staff

members use this piece of time an opportunity for collaboration and planning.

On the trimester schedule, students could earn 7.5 credits each school

year. Over four school years, students can earn 30 credits. The goal for most

Texas students is to earn 26 credits to graduate (Texas Education Agency, 2017). The extra four credits of a trimester schedule provide students with an opportunity to retake classes they may have failed, such as Algebra and English I during their freshman year. The additional opportunity to earn credits is critical to support students graduating on time (Texas Education Agency, 2017).

The major difference between the trimester and semester schedules is the number of classes that require the attention of the teacher and the students. With the semester schedule, teachers generally must teach seven or eight periods a day, while under the trimester schedule teachers teach five classes a day (Brower, 2000).

The solution to the cultural, systematic, and educational problems listed traditionally has been additional time before, or after school, and on the weekends, during which students and teachers work to improve students understanding (Geismar & Pullease, 1996). The trimester schedule offers a chance to build in systemic support for teachers and students to address student academic performance issues without requiring the same amount of time before and after school or on Saturdays (Geismar & Pullease, 1996). The ability to incorporate the additional time into the school day without adding additional time to the school day or the school year meets both the needs of the students and the teachers.

Wrap Classes

Another option for schools to use to support students on the trimester

schedule is the wrap class (Brower, 2000). In this scheduling method, students are

identified in the 8th grade as at risk and in need of academic support. These

students are scheduled for Algebra I during the first and second trimester of their

freshman year. This allows time for academic intervention in case a student fails

one trimester of the course and helps to ensure that these students will receive the

full course prior to the spring administration of their state assessment (Brower,

2000). This is a response to intervention feature.

The wrap class is for students who pass both trimesters of Algebra I. It is

used the 3rd trimester (Brower, 2000). The goal of the wrap class is to provide

students with academic support during the school day (Brower, 2000). The wrap

class is a math models class that starts with Part A of the math models class the

third trimester of the students' freshman year and finishes with Part B of the math

models class the first trimester of the student's sophomore year (Brower, 2000).

Teachers use the curriculum of the math models class during the third trimester, to

support students needing additional academic support for the end of course (EOC)

exams.

The semester school schedule is the most used school schedule for many

secondary schools (Gandara, 2000; Patall, Cooper, & Allen, 2010). The trimester

schedule offers a way to support teachers and students without adding to the

campus personnel budget. Both the semester schedule and the trimester schedule, have teachers teaching 12 classes over the course of a year. The semester schedule is designed with two semesters and a teacher teaching six classes each semester. The trimester schedule is designed with teachers teaching three trimesters and 4 classes each trimester. The amount of instructional time is the same for the semester and the trimester schedule. Both schedules provide students 9000 minutes of instructional time each year. Students must take two semesters of a course to earn one credit and two trimesters of a course to earn one credit.

A school schedule that has class time of 45-50 minutes with seven to eight periods a school day provides 35-40 minutes a day for teachers to address teacher collaboration. This time is calculated after transition for teachers is taken into consideration. A 45-50-minute block of time with transition time creates a rushed conversation for collaborating teachers (Gandara, 2000; Patall, Cooper, & Allen, 2010). A 7-8 period a day schedule is equivalent to a college load of 21-24 hours with each class worth three hours (Geismar & Pullease, 1996). This equivalence comes from the idea of each class on a 7-8 period a day schedule being worth three credits. This schedule also means that students must learn how to adjust to seven to eight teacher personalities at one time.

Teachers under the semester schedule have more students to work with at one time than do teachers with the same number of students on the trimester schedule (Geismar & Pullease, 1996). Teachers on the trimester have the same

number of students per class but less students per trimester than do teachers on a semester schedule (Geismar & Pullease, 1996). Within the trimester schedule, teachers have time to go more in depth with fewer students.

In the trimester schedule, teachers are developed in a systematic way, thus ensuring the potential for the organization to experience success in the future (McCreary & Hausman, 2001). The schedule offers intentional time for collaboration and planning (McCreary & Hausman, 2001). This systemic approach used to develop teachers within the trimester schedule is designed to support a collaborative campus culture in which fewer educators choose to leave their school for another school that is perceived to be less challenging, or leave the profession of education entirely (Jones, 2007). The culture created within the trimester schedule has built-in opportunities for students to be successful, rather than relying on after school, Saturday school, or summer school learning opportunities to provide additional time for student growth (Brower, 2000).

A sustainable collaborative school culture, designed to provide students with a quality education, occurs when results are gained in a systematic way (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). A collaborative, systematic approach to improving school culture should create an environment that produces less stress for students and teachers yet still be beneficial and effective for both groups (Thessin & Starr, 2011). The school culture created by implementing a trimester school schedule must account for the most significant factor, the teachers.

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Teachers represent the most important resource for improved school performance (Marzano, 2003). No schedule alone can solve the problems affecting educating students. Variables that contribute to improved school performance include textbooks and technology, however teachers are the constant variable in the education equation (Marzano, 2003).

Summary

Education is facing a problem with student achievement gaps (DeVries, 2014). Not all students from multiple ethnicities are performing at the same level. School administrators work relentlessly to try to improve school cultures and academic rigor to ensure teacher success toward adding academic value with their students (Leithwood, 1994). Unfortunately, during the push for academic excellence, schools often experience high teacher turnover rates from teachers leaving to go work in another school or from teachers leaving the profession of education (Santavirta, Solovieva, & Theorell, 2007; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Teachers cite among their reasons for leaving the profession of education or changing schools a lack of quality time for professional collaboration with their peers and a lack of structures and resources needed to meet the academic needs of students who need tutoring or remediation (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). The exit of teachers from the profession of education is not the answer that education needs. For a school to be systemic in its effectiveness with educating students,

there should be a process in place to recruit, support, and retain effective teachers (Inman & Marlow, 2004).

   There is an economical benefit for schools to retain effective teachers. There is a cost attributed to have teachers trained in various programs such as Advanced Placement (AP), International baccalaureate (IB), Gifted and Talented (GT), English as a Second Language (ESL). Teachers who receive these trainings and then leave within two years means someone else must be trained unless the school is fortunate to recommend for hire someone who holds the same credentials as the departing teacher. This recurring cost to the campus budget takes away from other opportunities to support students. In Chapter 3, the method that was used to conduct this study is explained. I share the method for the procedures that were used to collect, interpret, and process the data.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Teachers are the most important variable in the education of a student (Marzano, 2003). However, due to the rising pressure for student achievement and challenging conditions in which they work, many teachers move from one school to another to work in areas that are less challenging or leave the profession of education altogether (Keigher, 2010). This research was conducted with teachers and an administrator at a school where the schedule was changed from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule as attempt to address the concerns of student achievement and teacher professional growth. The goal of this research was to capture the experiences of teachers who worked in a school where the schedule was changed from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. It was important to choose a method that elicited those experiences.

To educate at-risk students, educational leaders often examine the school schedule to determine the opportunities teachers have within the schedule for professional collaboration and providing academic support for students (DuFour & Marzano, 2015). Educational leaders use data sets such as student performance on state and federal assessments to determine if their plans for student success worked. This study took place in a Texas public school. In Texas, school performance data compiled by the state are presented yearly on the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR). However, data from reports such as the

Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) are limited regarding the experiences of the teachers who participate in improvement plans.

Data pertaining to the experiences of teachers who implement campus initiatives can provide information needed for school improvement. Teacher experiences are not a part of most data reports used to determine effectiveness of campus plans. The absence of teacher input leaves out the most important variable in the education formula (Marzano, 2003). Data pertaining to teacher experiences during change will offer a complete data picture for understanding the best way to improve a process.

A phenomenological study was conducted to explore the experiences of teachers who worked in a school that was underperforming on state and federal assessments. As a part of the campus plan to alleviate low student academic performance, educational leaders at this campus chose to change the school schedule from a seven-period-a-day semester schedule to a five-period-a-day trimester schedule. This chapter includes the rationale for choosing a qualitative research method and a description of the participants. The methods for data collection and analysis also will be outlined. In the next section, the design of the study will be presented.

Design of the Study

This study was not designed to understand the superiority between the semester schedule and the trimester schedule. This study was designed to explore

the experiences of teachers in the areas of professional collaboration, student tutoring and student remediation as they transitioned from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. The interest in this research was the lived experiences of the teachers. Everyday people have experiences that often go ignored (Finlay, 1999). I sought to understand those experiences from the teachers of the study who went through the change of schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. My goal was to discover what the experience was like to live the change of schedules from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule, not just the person's reaction to the experience (Connelly, 2010).

The exploration of the experiences had by teachers who experienced the change of school schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule was best served by a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach for research is used to describe the meanings people attach to experiences in their lives (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). According to Creswell (1998), when statistics do not answer the research questions, a qualitative approach is better. This study required a qualitative design to explore the experiences of teachers who collaborated professionally while working in a semester schedule and then a trimester schedule.

Phenomenology focuses on the nature of the event from the perspective of the person who experienced the phenomenon (Connelly, 2010). The goal of using phenomenology for this study was to understand better the lived experiences of

the teachers who experienced the change of the semester schedule to the trimester schedule (Finlay, 1999). In this study, the qualitative approach of transcendental phenomenology was used to research teachers who experienced the change of schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule.

The interview as the main source of data collection represents an opportunity to hear other people's stories (Seidman, 2013). Interviews represent the response to talking and thinking (Creswell, 1998; Englander, 2012; Seidman, 2013). The data from this study represent the accounts of the live experiences of teachers. The following section includes an explanation of the research questions used for this research.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do teachers perceive the change to the trimester schedule impacted their ability to participate in professional development with colleagues?

2. How do teachers perceive that built-in opportunities for student remediation in a trimester schedule impacted student learning?

3. How do teachers perceive the school's culture of collaboration was affected during the change of schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule?

Instrumentation

A gap in the research of school improvement exists around teacher experiences of change (Hong, 2012; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). In this study, I sought to add to the existing research involving the experiences of teachers who went through a change of school schedule. A qualitative approach was chosen to examine this area due to the direct opportunity to have a conversation during the interview with the teachers. I conducted one-on-one interviews using an interview protocol that was reviewed and refined by educational leaders (Creswell, 1998).

As the lead researcher, I was the instrument collecting data during the interviews (Creswell, 1998). The style of the interview involved the researcher and the interviewees having a conversation. The goal was to create an environment that was safe and inviting for honest conversation (Giorgi, 2009). Open-ended interview questions were used to gather complete responses about how teachers and the associate principal experience change (Creswell, 1998). The purpose for the open-ended questions was to encourage the interviewees to use full sentences, and stories as they gave insights to their experiences with peer collaboration, student remediation, and professional development after the school schedule was changed from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. The open-ended interview questions for the teachers and the associate principal are presented in Appendix A and Appendix B.

The interview questions were reviewed by the interviewees. The research questions were designed to extract information from teachers regarding how they experienced the change of schedules from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. The interview protocol was supported by probing questions. The goal of using probing questions was to have the interviewee provide additional depth and reflection to their answer (Creswell, 1998). Probing questions varied depending on the responses from the research participants. The additional goal of using probing questions was to ensure that the essence of the experience was completely shared by the interviewees. In the following section, I describe how participants were selected for this study.

Participants

After I obtained school district and university Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission, I sent an email to teachers to ask for their participation. Individuals who met the criteria of having experienced the schedule change from the semester schedule to the trimester were invited to participate. The participants were selected using purposeful sampling so that at least one teacher was interviewed from each core department of the school at which the teachers were employed (Seidman, 2013). The goal was to work with a completely heterogeneous group, which reflected the diversity of the campus faculty (Giorgi, 1997, 2009). I selected participants who had experiences which represented a reflection of the experiences of the other faculty members (Creswell, 1998;

Englander, 2012). The goal was to select participants, both men and women, who lived through the experience of working on a campus where the school schedule was changed from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. First-year teachers or teachers who did not experience the change of schedules from the semester schedule to the trimester schedule were not included in the study.

Defining the number of participants to interview was the next step in the participant process (Giorgi, 1997, 2009). I interviewed ten teachers and one associate principal. The teachers represented the areas of math, science, English language arts, social studies, special education, fine arts, and career and technical education. The teacher participants were current teachers at one campus. The teachers being interviewed had experience with students who needed academic tutoring and remediation and experience with professional growth and development opportunities with colleagues during the change of schedule from the semester schedule to the trimester schedule.

The administrative participant was the associate principal. This administrator was responsible for curriculum and instruction for the campus and has knowledge of teacher instructional, tutoring, and remediation challenges. The associate principal was asked to be a part of this study to add the experience of a campus administrator who was responsible for coordinating professional development, teacher collaboration and student remediation. The teachers and the campus associate principal were asked to share about their experience of changing

schedules from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule, with a goal of

gathering complete information of the experience from each participant

(Connelly, 2010). The following section includes an explanation of the study site

used for this study.

Study Site

All of the teachers and the campus administrator invited to participate in

this study were employed at a traditional high school in Texas. The campus where

the teachers were employed had a schedule change to the trimester schedule at the

start of the 2014-2015 school year. The campus remained on the trimester

schedule for the 2015-2016 school year. Following the 2015-2016 school year the

campus was changed back to the traditional semester schedule. According to the

Texas Education Agency (2013), campus performance data on state and federal

assessments showed that the school was performing below academic levels of

schools within the school's comparison group. Teacher mobility at this school

was at 20% in 2012-2013. During individual as well as group meetings with

teachers from the campus, teachers expressed discouragement with their inability

to reach the students who needed extended tutoring and remediation. The school

needed a change to prevent the school from achieving the same or worse student

achievement results.

The change had to support the various programs the school offered. The

campus offered students courses from multiple areas of interest including college

preparatory options in the form of dual credit, International Baccalaureate (IB),

Advanced Placement (AP), Career and Technical Education (CTE), fine arts, and

athletics. The school had over 2000 students in grades 9-12. The campus was 80%

economically disadvantaged with an approximate 75% at-risk population. The

campus had a 95% graduation rate, with several students earning appointments to

military academies as well as scholarships to major universities throughout the

Midwest. The school did not require an application process for enrollment

consideration. Students were eligible for attendance if they lived within the school

attendance boundaries set by the district. The graduation and attendance rates of

the school were above average for schools in the state of Texas.

The campus leadership responsible for coordinating day-to-day operations

included a single head principal who was supported administratively by one

associate principal and five assistant principals. The campus at which the

participants were employed had four counselors and academic support for the

core subjects in the form of master teachers who did not have instructional

responsibilities. The role of the associate principal was to support teaching and

learning through curriculum design, data meeting facilitation, and leadership for

all department meetings for their subjects. The following section includes the data

gathering methods used for this study.

Data Gathering

This study was designed to gain an understanding of the experiences of teachers who worked within a semester schedule and then worked within a trimester schedule. The experiences being studied were those related to the tutoring and remediation of students as well as teachers' ability to plan and professionally collaborate with their peers. Data were collected via individual, face-to-face interviews with ten teachers and an associate principal.

The participants in this study responded to open-ended interview questions (Creswell, 1998; Englander, 2012; Seidman, 2013). The purpose of the open-ended research questions was to encourage freedom of expression, so teachers could share meaningful experiences (Creswell, 1998). These questions helped me gravitate back to the true essence of the study. The questions were designed to avoid a single-word or short answer (Creswell, 1998).

Prior to the collection of data, I conducted an individual meeting with each prospective participant. During this initial meeting, the prospective participants were given a copy of the consent form to sign. The participants also were encouraged to read the research questions before the interviews. The goal of previewing the questions was to answer all questions from the participant being interviewed so that the actual interview could have depth and be rich with content (Palaiologou, Needham, & Male, 2015).

The interviews took place in a location chosen by each participant. The location needed to be one with minimal background noise due to the digital recording being made of the interview. Each interview lasted 60-90-minutes. Data from each of the interviews were coded. The initial prompt for each interview was, "Please describe what it was like changing from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule." Other questions for the teachers and associate principal centered on the topics of teacher collaboration and student remediation. Additional questions for the associate principal focused on administrative responses to teacher needs with teacher collaboration and student remediation. I asked probing questions during the interviews, based on participants' responses to previous questions (Palaiologou, Needham, & Male, 2015). Each time I interviewed three participants, I paused interviewing and wrote an analytic memo. The need for the analytic memos was so that I could review the data immediately, rather than waiting until the end of the process. This provided me with time to process the information and develop additional probing questions.

Treatment of Data

The objective of this research was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of teachers who experienced the change of school schedule from the semester schedule to the trimester schedule. I interviewed the teachers to gain the data for this research. The data from the associate principal provided evidence of how the administrator who oversees tutoring, remediation of students, and teacher

professional growth experienced the change of schedules. Each interview was recorded. Interviews were listened to repeatedly to help ensure deep understanding. I took notes based on the conversations from the recorded interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Each interview was transcribed verbatim (Creswell, 1998). I printed the transcribed interview with margins large enough for notes to be added (DeVault, 2016). The transcribed interviews were reviewed, and inaccuracies were corrected (DeVault, 2016). Each transcribed interview was read in its entirety to get an overall sense of the data (Creswell, 1998). The data from the interviews were read and reread repeatedly so that I could look for significant statements, patterns, themes, and categories (Palaiologou, Needham, & Male, 2015).

 I took notes as I listened to the recordings and read the transcribed interviews, I paid attention to any moments of personal bias (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The notes provided me with data to review. The goal of analysis was to reduce the text into codes and patterns creating data from the interview (Palaiologou et al., 2015). I coded the data from the interviews for clarity (DeVault, 2016). The initial codes were read to determine additional frequent ideas in the transcripts.

Themes were developed from the coded data (Creswell, 1998). I reviewed the memos for themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The goal was to see what emerged from the documents. I looked for common themes throughout the

interview and grouped them in sets (DeVault, 2016). The themes from each

interview were triangulated to establish validity (Creswell, 1998). I continued this

process looking for finer relationships (DeVault, 2016). My process with the

document was complete when I felt I had understood all combinations of themes

available from the information (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

My goal with the data was to understand and accurately document the

experience of the interviewee. Analytical memos and condensing of the material

were used to help me understand the data from the interviews (Miles &

Huberman, 1994). The memos provided me with a summary of where I was with

my research at that present moment. The memos were a collection of my findings

as well as reflections and observations. These summaries of my thoughts about

the interviews were created throughout the process. The relevance of the memos

was to ensure my focus on the volume of data.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research consists of answering questions of

credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (DeVault, 2016;

Shenton, 2004). Trustworthiness involves presenting enough information about

the fieldwork, so that the reader can find familiarity in the research (DeVault,

2016; Shenton, 2004). Credibility is established after prolonged exposure and

triangulation of the data, thus ensuring that a true representation of the data is

reported (DeVault, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Triangulation occurs when different

study participants are asked the same set of research questions (DeVault, 2016; Shenton, 2004).

Transferability involves being able to take the findings from the research and apply them to different situations (DeVault, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Qualitative research has multiple pathways for implementation and multiple ways to address quality (Ravenek & Rudman, 2013). Confirmability requires the presentation of the research findings in their purest form void of any personal reflections (DeVault, 2016; Shenton, 2004). I presented a true picture of the events as they were provided to me from the teachers (Creswell, 1998) and bracketed my own bias and feelings about the topic so that the findings of the research were based on the data collected (Creswell, 1998). My recording of the research was conducted in a way to ensure that I present the findings and not my own persuasions on the research (Shenton, 2004).

To support the process of coding my data, I practiced reflexivity. This process involved reflecting on my personal bias and preconceptions at the beginning and throughout the study to ensure that I did not interpret data in a way that would create biased research (Berger, 2015; Englander, 2012). I also dialogued with a colleague about the stages of my research and the potential bias, experiences, or past knowledge about the research that could have led to issues of untrustworthy results (Englander, 2012). I used a bracketing journal to take notes of potential thoughts as they arose (Englander, 2012).

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to present a case for using phenomenology as my research method for examining the experiences of teachers who worked under a schedule that transitioned from a traditional semester schedule, to a trimester schedule, and then back to a traditional semester schedule. I framed and organized my justification for using phenomenology as my qualitative approach for conducting this study and explained how phenomenology allows the researcher to develop meaning from the interviews with teachers. The information from the interviews provided an understanding of the feelings of the participants of the study who experienced the phenomena of changing school schedules from the seven-period-a-day schedule to the trimester schedule. The purpose of this research was to gain an understanding of the experiences of the teachers who participated in the change of schedule from the semester schedule to the trimester schedule. This information was relevant in the conversation of organizational change.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

The response to data-driven policies in education has created an environment of continuous improvement (Cohen-Vogel, Cannata, Rutledge, & Socol, 2016; Darling-Hammond & Plank, 2015). Education leaders routinely review data and implement initiatives designed to improve educational outcomes with respect to student performance (DuFour & Marzano, 2015). This era of continuous improvement has created an environment where teachers must experience changes to their work environment (Cohen-Vogel, Cannata, Rutledge, & Socol, 2016; Darling-Hammond & Plank, 2015).

This study was designed to understand the perceived experiences of ten teachers and one administrator as they dealt with a change intended to improve student performance. The high school at which they all were employed is an urban school serving grades nine through twelve. The campus was considered a comprehensive high school because students had multiple co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities in which to participate. The goal of the interviews with participants was to understand their experiences with the change from a semester school schedule to a trimester school schedule.

This chapter will include the findings of the study. I will introduce each of the participants and discuss the four major themes that emerged during the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Hammersley, 2012). Finally, I will show how the

themes relate to the research questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Hammersley, 2012).

Participants

I used purposeful sampling to ensure that the participants represented a variety of academic departments (Creswell, 1998; Finlay, 1999; Glendinning, 2008). The core subjects of math, science, social studies, and English were represented. I also included the participation of a teacher from the career and technical education area as a representative of campus electives. The goal was to select participants from the school, both men and women, who lived through the experience of changing from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule, then back again. First-year teachers or teachers who did not experience the change of schedules from the semester schedule to the trimester schedule were not included in this study.

Ten secondary teachers who represented the subjects of math, science, career and technical education (CTE), social studies, and English were interviewed. I also interviewed one associate principal. The participants had experience with students who needed academic tutoring and remediation. Each participant experienced professional growth and development opportunities with colleagues during the change from semester schedule to trimester schedule. I sought to work with a heterogeneous group that reflected the diversity of the campus faculty (Giorgi, 1997, 2009).

Participant Background

The participants were a diverse group of individuals. The range of ages for the participants was 30-49. The age of six of the participants was 30-39. The remaining five participants had ages in the range of 40-49. All of the participants held bachelor's degrees, and four of the participants held master's degrees. Three of the participants were pursuing a master's degree. One of the participants held a master's degree and was pursuing a doctoral degree. All of the participants' advanced degrees were related to the field of education. Seven of the participants identified their race as African American, and four of the participants identified their race as White. Seven of the participants were female and four of the participants were male.

Eddie

A native Texan, Eddie worked under a semester schedule as a high school and college student. He did not go to college to become a teacher. His goal was to find success in the "business world." Eddie worked in the private sector before switching to education to become a teacher. Eddie was a career and technical education (CTE) teacher with 24 years of experience. Eddie taught the same subject before and after the change to the trimester schedule.

Until the decision was announced to change the schedule of the school, Eddie had never heard of the trimester schedule. As a professional educator, Eddie had experience working under semester and A/B block schedules. Eddie

designed his classes for project development, like the corporate world with which he was familiar. He was passionate about providing students' classroom experiences like those they may have after graduation. Eddie was motivated to provide the students with an exemplary learning experience. When referring to ensuring his students were prepared for life after high school, he frequently said, "My class gets them ready."

Sophia

Sophia completed her college education in her home state of Louisiana. She heard of the trimester schedule from relatives who lived in Michigan, but until arriving at the school she never worked within the trimester schedule. As a high school student, Sophia attended a private school. Her school operated under a modified block schedule. In college Sophia attended a school that operated on a semester schedule. Following college, she moved to Texas and was hired to teach English. She had only worked in one school.

Sophia had 24 years of experience as an English teacher. She taught the same subject before and after the change to the trimester schedule. According to Sophia, her years of experience allowed her to be very familiar with her subject matter. For the past ten years she had taught seniors and was served as a senior class sponsor. Sophia shared that she always had great relationships with her seniors. She was motivated to become a teacher because of her elementary school teacher. She says they still have a great relationship.

Pam

Pam was a native of Texas. She was not aware of the trimester schedule before the schedule was introduced at the school at which she worked. The high school Pam attended operated on an A/B block schedule. The college she attended operated on a semester schedule. Pam attended college in Texas and began teaching immediately following college. She was a second-generation educator, who did not plan to become a teacher. According to Pam, "It just happened." Pam said that she felt "called" to teach and felt this career path was what she was "born to do."

Pam had 20 years of experience as a math teacher. She said she chose math as a subject because the logic "felt right." Pam admitted to being "left brained verses right brained." As a math teacher, she was responsible for preparing students for the state assessment as well as post-secondary academics. Pam said she was acutely aware of the variables and time differences between the semester schedule and the trimester schedule. She taught the same subject before and after the implementation of the trimester schedule at her campus. Prior to working at her current school, Pam had worked at a middle school in the same district for five years.

Bridgette

Bridgette was a native of Arkansas who moved to Texas after graduation from college. Bridgette was not aware of the trimester schedule until it was

introduced in the school in which she was working. During her high school and college years, Bridgette experienced the semester schedule.

Bridgette was a business major who moved to Texas was for business opportunities. However, after an unsuccessful business experience, she realized education was her passion. This realization came from her time spent training colleagues when she worked in the business sector. The motivation to teach also came after spending time helping her nieces with their homework. Bridgette said that she appreciated teaching because it gave her the opportunity to do something she enjoyed. She had nine total years of education experience, with four of those years spent as a substitute teacher and five years as a certified classroom teacher. Bridgette changed teaching assignments after the implementation of the trimester schedule, however, she remained in the CTE department.

Tonya

Tonya was not a native Texan. She moved to Texas with her family at the age of five. She had relatives who taught in high schools that operated on the trimester schedule, however, her high school and college operated on a semester schedule. Tonya had 18 years of teaching experience. All of her professional education experience had been as a social studies teacher in three different school districts. Tonya always had worked in campuses with a semester schedule. She taught the same subject before and after the change to the trimester schedule.

Tonya said that she always knew she wanted to be a teacher. She had experience teaching at-risk students, which made her a leader in the department. Tonya's goal was to raise the social consciousness of her students. Her passion for social studies was her motivation for teaching. Tonya said that she felt that social studies was more important than many people realized. She took pride in the design and planning of her lessons. Tonya's classroom frequently was used as a model classroom where campus administrators took visitors to observe quality instruction.

Janet

Janet was a native of East Texas. She was specific in including "east" due to her love for the east Texas country lifestyle. She said that her goal was to return someday as school district superintendent to the town in which she had grown up. Janet attended high school and college in Texas. The high school she attended was small, however, she attended a large college. Janet's high school and college operated on the semester schedule. She said that she had heard of the trimester schedule from college friends who attended high school in other states.

Janet's original career path was toward medicine. She wanted to be a pediatrician. Education was a "pleasant surprise" for Janet, a "stop before medical school." Janet said that she was glad that she made the stop and had never regretted not pursuing a career in the medical field.

Janet earned her master's degree in science and was planning to move into an administrative position in education. She served as an adjunct instructor at a local community college. Janet had eight years of teaching experience as a science teacher in a public-school setting. Her entire professional career has been spent in the education profession.

Rodney

Rodney was from Texas and had attended a high school that operated on the A/B block schedule. The college he attended operated on a traditional semester schedule. Rodney said that he was unaware of trimester schedules before the topic was introduced at the school at which he was employed. Rodney had been a teacher for 25 years. All of his experience had been attained at the secondary level, teaching grades 9-12. Rodney had spent most of his educational career teaching ninth-grade algebra. He served as a ninth-grade math teacher before and after the school schedule change to the trimester schedule. Rodney said that he considered math as the "foundation of the world." He shared that he was dedicated to "developing the mathematician" in each of his students.

Rodney often would have class outside of the traditional classroom. He would put colored tape on the floor in the hall and turn the floor into a XY coordinate plane. Rodney used project-based learning with his students. He shared that students in his class often said that his class was fun and did not seem like algebra. Rodney believed that his creativity had results because his students often

performed at the top of their class on benchmark assessments and state assessments.

Joe

Joe came from a family of educators. He attended both high school and college in Texas. The only schedule that Joe had experienced as a student and professional was the traditional semester schedule. His mother and father worked as educators in a neighboring district to where Joe was raised. Joe said that he chose to teach math because his mother had been a math teacher. He said he knew early on that he wanted to be a coach and a teacher. He remembered following his father, "the coach," around on the football field when he was a young boy.

Joe had 12 years of teaching experience. His experience in education had been in three different school districts. At one of his prior school districts, Joe had experienced the semester schedule; he worked under an A/B Block Schedule at the other campus. Joe had knowledge of the trimester schedule from conversations with fellow coaches around the state whose schools operated on the trimester schedule.

Brenda

A native of South Texas, Brenda attended both high school and college in the area. The schools she attended had semester schedule systems. After college, Brenda moved north to "get away" from home, however she stayed in the state of

Texas. Brenda taught social studies teacher for 16 years. She earned a master's degree in history.

Brenda was extremely passionate about composite social studies. She said that she specifically enjoyed teaching government, political science, and U.S. history. Brenda strove to encourage students to understand their past, so they could avoid making the same mistakes others in history have made. She served as a class sponsor and reported having great relationships with her students, which enabled her to plan activities that students liked and in which they wanted to participate.

Dwight

Dwight was a math teacher with 11 years of experience. He was from Louisiana and attended high school and college there. Dwight had not previously experienced the trimester schedule. He graduated from college with an engineering degree and worked for three years in the field of engineering. After careful consideration, Dwight said that he decided he wanted to teach high school math. He said that he did not regret his choice.

Dwight reported having great relationships with his peers. He also had great relationships with his students. Dwight served as a mentor for several of his students. According to Dwight, students were eager to take his elective class. He routinely used project-based learning lessons with emphasis on teamwork and collaboration among students.

Rita

Rita was a native Texan who attended high school in Texas and college in Louisiana. She had 26 years of experience in education. Rita had served as a math teacher, department chair, and, most recently, as a campus administrator. Her career had been spent in two school districts. She had worked under both semester and A/B block school schedules. She served as an associate principal during the transition from the semester to trimester schedule, then back to the semester schedule.

Rita had knowledge of the trimester schedule from her time as a campus academic coordinator. She attended International Baccalaureate conferences and routinely had conversations with fellow educators from other states where she said the trimester schedule was more prevalent. Rita was excited to transition to the trimester schedule because she believed that possibilities for teachers to collaborate would increase. She said that the potential improvement would be a significant benefit for students.

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Themes

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Four themes emerged following a review of the interview data from the teachers and the associate principal. The themes included: 1) teachers did not feel prepared for the pace of the trimester; 2) teachers perceived that students who took ownership of their learning were academically successful on the trimester schedule; 3) trimester scheduling hindered relationship development with

students; and 4) a strong sense of teacher collaboration existed under both the semester and the trimester schedules, but suffered when planning and training times were not shared. The themes were reinforced by the associate principal who, in her role as instructional leader, was aware of the teachers' experiences.

The first theme, teachers did not feel prepared for the pace of the trimester, was exemplified from the teachers' repeated descriptions of how they felt teaching under a trimester schedule compared to teaching under a semester schedule. Lesson pacing was a strong concern for all of the teachers. The teachers reported feeling rushed to teach and cover their content while on the trimester schedule.

The second theme was teachers perceived that students who took ownership of their learning were academically successful on the trimester schedule. Student ownership for learning is significant as educators strive to ensure students are college and career ready (Conley & French, 2014). All of the participants acknowledged opportunities within the trimester schedule for students to earn additional credits or gain remediation. However, the participants perceived that the students had to be self-motivated in order to take advantage of the opportunities available within the trimester schedule.

The third theme was that trimester scheduling hindered relationship development with students. All of the teacher participants expressed feeling rushed to develop relationships with students under the trimester schedule. The

teachers said that they considered the development of relationships critical in helping students be academically successful. They expressed the need for their students to get to know them and for them to get to know their students. The teachers shared that they did not feel that they had time to get to know students' motivations while on the trimester schedule.

The fourth theme was that a strong sense of teacher collaboration existed under both the semester and the trimester schedules, but suffered when planning times were not shared. The introduction of a trimester schedule did not have a positive or negative impact on the collaborative culture of the teachers. In both scheduling systems, collaboration was part of the school's culture. However, the participants perceived that if the teachers did not have common planning times, collaboration suffered. When without common planning periods, the teachers had to meet before or after school, making collaboration more difficult.

Theme 1: Lack of Preparedness for Trimester Schedule

The semester schedule was designed to provide teachers with 50-minute classes over 18 weeks, which equaled 4,500 minutes of instruction (Brower, 2000; Geismar & Pullease, 1996). The trimester schedule was designed to provide teachers with 75-minute classes over 12 weeks, which also equaled 4,500 minutes of instruction (Brower, 2000; Geismar & Pullease, 1996). While the minutes of the semester schedule and the trimester schedule offered the same instructional time, all the participants reported feeling rushed to cover the required curriculum

with the students under the trimester schedule. They expressed a need to plan their lessons differently under the trimester schedule so that they could ensure that they covered the required course material.

Bridgette experienced positives and negatives with respect to time during the trimester. She said she felt that the pacing seemed rushed, which limited her ability to assess and reteach students properly. While Bridgette said she felt that the longer class times under the trimester schedule allowed for additional hands-on, project-related activities, she shared that she could not cover the material with the students before the end of the trimester adequately.

Eddie also had strong feelings with respect to time with the trimester schedule. He shared that teachers had additional time to plan and execute activities while on the trimester. However, he said teachers were not prepared to, "take advantage of the time offered." Eddie said that that he appreciated the additional class time of the trimester schedule, but stated that teachers needed additional support to plan effective lessons designed to capitalize on the time.

Professional development. Participant perceptions varied regarding the effectiveness of professional development aimed at preparing teachers to work within a trimester schedule. Some of the teachers thought that the time was effective, while others said that they believed that the professional development missed the mark. Sophia was appreciative of the professional development designed to support time management. She said that the sessions held during the

back-to-school training were designed to cover multiple variables of the trimester schedule, however she said that she felt that the sessions did not adequately prepare the teachers.

Brenda said that she appreciated professional development opportunities aimed at helping teachers understand the concept of the trimester. She also appreciated the professional development that focused on lesson planning and understanding a trimester pacing calendar. However, Brenda said that she felt the curriculum pacing was fast because the teachers had to cover more material during the 75-minute blocks of class. She said that sometimes the teachers did not feel that students could master 75-minutes' worth of content, so they shortened the lessons and students fell behind. According to Brenda, staff development that was designed to address this issue was the most beneficial.

Some of the participants had positive experiences with professional development during the common planning periods. Dwight felt that campus professional development "aligned" him with other teachers who were experiencing success. Rita agreed that the ability to collaborate with teachers during the professional development was a benefit. The professional development Janet received prior to the implementation of the trimester schedule was viewed as sufficient.

Bridgette said she felt that the professional development designed to prepare teachers for the trimester schedule was not specific enough. She wanted

to know before the start of school how to organize classroom instruction time down to the "specific minute." Bridgette said that she would have appreciated a model to follow. Eddie believed that the time built into the trimester for professional development was not sufficient to meet his training needs. He said that he did not have common planning with other teachers who taught similar subjects.

Adjustments by teachers. The trimester schedule was not the typical schedule for the teachers. The implementation of the trimester schedule created the need for a paradigm shift for the teachers. The change to the trimester schedule created a need for teachers without experience with the trimester to adjust to the variables of the schedule. They had to adjust their teaching to utilize the additional 45-minutes of class time each day. The natural break of a 45-minute class period no longer existed. The teachers already had lessons created for the 45-minute semester class period and now had to plan for 90-minute classes.

Pam shared that a challenge she experienced after the change of schedule from the semester schedule to the trimester was "maximizing the time of instruction in the classroom." According to Pam, "It was important to review data and adjust how she taught the same subject when she retaught it during the second or third trimester." For Pam, a major adjustment after switching from the semester schedule to trimester schedule was creating lesson plans. She already had lesson

plans designed for the semester schedule. Pam had to update all her lesson plans to a 75-minute class period from a 45-minute period.

Dwight believed that switching to the trimester schedule was a challenge for several of his peers who were struggling with the issues of time management and pacing. Janet also viewed the 45-minute class periods of the semester schedule as important. She said that under the semester schedule she had a better understanding of how much content her students could absorb. On the trimester schedule, Janet felt that her students reached a "saturation point." She said that this put her in an uncomfortable position because she felt that she lost instructional time during the moments of saturation. During the times when Janet felt her students were overwhelmed with the volume of work, she would slow her pace of instruction. However, because of the slower pace, Janet fell behind in following the district scope and sequence. Joe said that when the campus was on the semester schedule, teachers could slowly roll out their content, then as the year progressed teachers would finish strong by having "bell-to-bell" instruction with no breaks. Joe said that he felt that the trimester required teachers to start off teaching fast, a feeling that led to the creation of an environment in which teachers felt rushed.

Pam said that adjusting instruction to the 75-minute class period required covering almost twice as much material in a trimester class period compared to the semester schedule. Tonya said that some teachers had additional preparations

under the trimester schedule that forced an adjustment from teaching a single subject on the semester schedule.

After the switch to the trimester schedule, Janet experienced discomfort with the longer class periods. She felt that her lessons did not fit into the scheduled time, and she fell behind in providing instruction. After mastering the new pacing, Brenda said that she preferred the trimester over the semester schedule because the trimester schedule provided additional time for in-depth learning. She did not have to stop instruction in the middle of a learning activity, as she sometimes had to under the semester schedule system.

Theme 2: Ownership of Learning

The trimester schedule was implemented by the campus educational leaders as an attempt to improve student performance on state and federal assessments. According to Rita, the trimester schedule offered "innovative opportunities" for tutoring and remediation of students through the wrap classes. Rita said that the schedule offered ways for students to gain credits due to the additional credits offered within a trimester each year, however Eddie, Tonya, and Pam realized that true academic success comes from within and that if students are not focused and do not set goals for themselves, they will not make appropriate decisions and experience academic success to the best of their potential. These feelings are supported by researchers of college and career readiness of students, who stated that students who are successful in college arrive

on the college campus prepared to do college level work (Conley & French, 2014; Jackson & Kurlaender, 2014). Eddie felt his purpose was to prepare his students for college success with no excuses. He did not see a school schedule as an impediment to learning. Eddie said, "The students are capable of making decisions for their own learning, and the students who made positive decisions were successful on [both] the semester [and] the trimester schedule." Dwight agreed with Eddie. Dwight said he felt that high school students who are focused and "control" their education will be successful after high school.

Pam said that she could determine the level of ownership for learning of her students by their notetaking. She believed that the students had to "adjust to the trimester schedule by taking better notes during the extended class time." Pam saw the quality of students' class notes as an issue on the semester schedule as well on as the trimester schedule. Tonya expressed how both the semester schedule and the trimester schedule had tutoring times with teachers-built in. She shared that it was up to the students to take advantage of those tutoring opportunities. Tonya believed that the students who had ownership for their learning would show up for tutoring, regardless of their school schedule.

Janet was concerned with motivating the students to succeed regardless of the schedule. She approached the trimester schedule as if she was instructing the students on a college schedule taking college courses. The faster pace, in Janet's opinion, forced students to become more mature and focused. Janet said that she

had the same expectations for her high school seniors that she did for her college freshmen. She said that students who failed to mature fell behind. Janet said students who felt rushed while on the trimester schedule were encouraged to take advantage of her tutoring hours.

Tonya's experience with student success after the switch to the trimester schedule remained the same. She shared that the students who were focused on their own success made time to come to tutoring with both the semester schedule and the trimester schedule. Tonya felt that students focus was dependent on their motivation to succeed rather than the schedule.

It was not uncommon for students on the trimester schedule to have two different teachers for Parts A and B of a subject. Joe said that some students on the trimester schedule took ownership for choosing to go to a classroom for tutoring of a teacher they "liked" after the first trimester of a two-trimester course. These students took charge of their education and made a point to attend tutoring with the teacher with whom they felt they could receive the most help.

Opportunities to earn additional credits. The participants believed that the opportunity for students to earn additional credits was a positive outcome of the trimester schedule. Eddie talked about students who understood "the gift of education" and those students who aggressively sought ways to earn credits toward graduation. However, he also was aware of the students who fell behind and needed additional opportunities to earn credits toward graduation. Bridgette

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explained that the opportunity for students to earn additional credits was a safety net that allowed them to stay on course to graduate.

Pam and Rita agreed that the chance to earn credits by retaking classes failed during the school year was a benefit of the trimester over the semester schedule. Rita said that she liked the additional opportunities for students to stay on track for graduation. As associate principal, she was aware of the number of seniors who needed to recover credits.

Opportunities for in-class remediation. Students were able to receive remediation during the school day in the wrap classes in which they were struggling academically. The teachers and associate principal were excited to have time built into the regular day for student remediation. Sophia experienced the benefit of students being able to retake classes their senior year while under the trimester schedule. She said that doing so helped many of her senior students obtain credits needed to graduate. Pam considered the opportunity for in-class remediation for students on the trimester schedule to be one "two significant opportunities" for students. The other was the chance for students to earn additional credits toward graduation.

Both after school and Saturday school tutoring were implemented when the school was on the semester schedule and the trimester schedule. Bridgette felt that her students needed less after school or Saturday school remediation when the trimester schedule was in place. Rita shared that students benefitted most from the

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trimester schedule's opportunities for tutoring in the wrap classes and earning credits. She said that having students in need of remediation as a captive audience "did not leave to chance a student showing up for tutoring before or after school." All of the participants said that they perceived that seniors used the trimester schedule to earn extra credits more than students from lower grade levels did.

Potential to have two teachers per course. While working within the trimester schedule, students often were taught by different teachers for a course. This opportunity was considered a negative for teachers such as Sophia and Janet due their feelings regarding the need for continuity between teacher and student to develop student relationships. However, other participants felt that having multiple teachers was a positive. Brenda said that she felt that students benefitted from having multiple teachers during the school year for the same course. Joe shared this sentiment. He said that after being exposed to two different teachers for the same course, students could choose their favorite teacher for tutoring. Teachers did not limit tutoring sessions to serve only the students they currently were teaching, but instead they worked with all students who came to their classrooms for tutoring.

Brenda perceived that the students with whom she worked liked being able to change teachers and meet different students on the trimester schedule. She considered it beneficial if students attended tutoring with someone who was not their current teacher, rather than not attending tutoring at all. Joe agreed that it

was beneficial for students to have tutoring and remediation options. Dwight said that his students enjoyed have classes with new teachers during different trimesters if the teacher they previously had was, in their opinion, not a good teacher. However, according to Dwight, if students had a teacher who they liked, they did not want to leave the teacher's class to move to the second teacher. Dwight said that the dislike of leaving the class of a favorite teacher was balanced by students' enjoyment of meeting new students each trimester. This, in his opinion, "fed the need" some students had to make more friends to add to their social media accounts.

Theme 3: Trimester Schedule Hindered Relationships

According to the Texas Education Agency (2017), the school at which the participants were employed had at-risk population of over 85%. McGrath and Van Bergen (2015) and Murray and Zvoch (2011) posited that at-risk students do best when they feel there is a positive teacher-student relationship. Several of the teachers (Joe, Dwight, Janet, and Sophia) said that they felt that the trimester schedule did not provide an opportunity for positive teacher-student relationships to occur. Sophia said that she did not feel like the trimester schedule gave the teacher the same amount of time to build relationships, even though the number of minutes of student interaction was the same between the semester and the trimester schedule (Brower, 2000; Geismar & Pullease, 1996). She said that having the students in class every day during the semester offered an opportunity

for a better mentoring relationship with students. Sophia said that she felt that success with teaching the content to her students required a positive relationship. She wanted the students to "give her permission" to teach them. Sophia said she felt that this permission came after trust was built.

According to Sophia, the impact of the trimester schedule on the teachers was mixed. She shared that the teachers did not like losing students in the middle of a course. This occurred when a course was split between the first and third trimesters. When that occurred, Sophia said she believed that the teachers lost ground in positive academic relationships they had developed with students. Sophia acknowledged that students who had access to their teachers after school and who were able to retake classes they struggled with within the same year were benefits of the trimester schedule. On the other hand, Sophia said that her students did not express the same feeling.

Other teachers (Joe, Janet, and Dwight) agreed that the time configuration made them feel too rushed to develop relationships with students. Joe felt that the greatest change from the trimester to the semester schedule was his change of class rosters after each trimester. Joe said, "Working within the trimester schedule felt like working within a college atmosphere because of the lack of continuity with students." Janet shared Joe's feeling. Janet believed that the teachers saw themselves as working on a college schedule with a focus on the pace of the class and the curriculum.

The feeling that the trimester schedule hindered relationships was shared by all of the teachers except for Dwight. Dwight said that he appreciated the ability to work with more students during the school year. The need to develop strong relationships with the students also was ruled out by Rita, the associate principal, who said that she felt that other academic benefits of the trimester schedule such as the wrap class, opportunities to earn additional credits, and the ability to monitor instruction between teachers far outweighed any of her concerns.

Classroom management. The trimester schedule did not fix classroom management or make classroom management easier to accomplish. However, there were some opportunities of the schedule design that some of the participants (Sophia, Joe, Dwight, and Janet, Bridgette, Pam, Tonya) believed made a positive difference. Sophia expressed the benefit of not having a challenging class of students for 18 weeks, the length of courses under the semester schedule. She preferred 12 weeks, the length of trimester schedule courses. The teachers said that they shared best practices for discipline with each other during the second and third trimesters under the trimester schedule. Dwight considered the sharing of information among teachers extremely valuable. It was important for him to hear other teachers' successes with students. Janet perceived that there was a struggle to maintain her students' attention span over 75-minutes versus the 45-minute class periods of the semester schedule.

Other participants (Rita and Bridgette) did not experience the same benefits. Rita perceived that teachers consistently had to reestablish classroom norms and procedures while working under the trimester schedule. She said that starting over and reestablishing classroom procedures every new trimester with a new group of students made classroom management more difficult. Bridgette divided the impact of the experience of changing schedules from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule into positive and negative experiences. Bridgette said that an exemplar of positive experiences was the "ability of students to switch to new classes more frequently to avoid restless behavior and classroom management issues as a definite benefit of the trimester schedule." However, Bridgette shared, "having challenging students switch classes took away the opportunity to build a positive relationship with the students."

Theme 4: Strong Sense of Collaboration

Collaboration among fellow teachers under the trimester schedule was noted as a strength by the participants. Researchers have shown that strong teacher collaboration is necessary for leaders to facilitate turning schools into effective, efficient learning organizations (Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen, & Grissom, 2015; Vangrieken, Dochy, Raes, & Kyndt, 2015). The participants said that they respected and valued opportunities to share ideas and work together for the benefit of the students. Tonya recalled a "strong sense of collaboration among the teachers before the trimester was implemented, after the implementation, and

after the switch back to the semester schedule." Eddie did not have built in time for collaboration with his peers, but believed there was a need for it. He appreciated the time he had to collaborate with his peers.

As the teachers' conversations continued to evolve while working within the trimester schedule, they shared best practices for student success. Rita discussed how conversations evolved during common planning meetings held under the trimester schedule. A new discussion topic for teachers during the second and third trimesters was the students they had in common. According to Rita, the shuffling of students created student-based conversations among the teachers during collaboration times. Due to the new familiarity of students from the previous trimester, teachers were able to discuss with fellow teachers topics like academic strengths and academic needs of students. They also had conversations about best practices for motivation of students. This level of collaboration was different than collaboration on the semester schedule due to the teachers' familiarity with additional students.

Rodney said that his fellow teachers always had strong collaborative relationships. Teachers in his department sought ways to support each other with challenging students. While working under the trimester schedule, Brenda felt that teachers had a greater sense of collaboration. She said that under the trimester schedule teachers better utilized professional learning communities and their cluster planning times to develop lessons.

Collaboration part of the school's culture. All the core teachers

acknowledged efforts made in the school before the implementation of the

trimester schedule to ensure that teachers worked together to find best practices

for educating students. Teacher planning during the trimester schedule was seen

by the teachers (Rita, Sophia, Brenda, and Tonya) as a benefit because the

teachers had 75 minutes of common planning time each day, rather than 45

minutes.

Rita acknowledged intentional efforts to ensure professional learning

communities and academic cluster periods were a part of the school culture. Janet

said that the science teachers intentionally worked as a team, so the transition to

the trimester schedule was "as comfortable as possible" for the teachers and

students. Sophia shared that she felt that the teachers in her social studies

department naturally collaborated on various projects; however, while on the

trimester schedule, there was "deepened collaboration." Sophia attributed this to

the longer periods available for coaches to meet. Brenda felt that the trimester

schedule promoted a culture of collaboration as the teachers worked together to

develop creative activities to adjust to the pace of the schedule.

For Tonya, collaboration among the teachers remained the same after the

changing of schedules from the semester schedule to the trimester schedule and

back again. She was very complimentary of her teachers and the efforts they put

into planning and working as a team. During planning and collaboration time,

Janet experienced the same frustrations with other teachers who had the same level of experience she had. However, she shared, "Teachers who had more experience, especially those who worked under different schedules like the A/B block schedule, were able to adapt to the trimester schedule's 75-minute classes."

While the core subject teachers enjoyed common planning periods and beneficial collaboration, the elective teachers said that they did not experience the same. Because Eddie did not have a common planning time, he had to meet with colleagues before or after school. Dwight and Bridgette agreed that "collaboration was a school norm and expected," however, they had to work harder to see it materialize due to not having a common planning period. Eddie said that when the teachers did meet, the extra time was well used.

Bridgette saw the lack of common planning time for some of the elective teachers as a detriment. She considered the lack of common planning a serious concern. Instead of meeting to discuss the needs of individual students, planning time conversations centered on how to keep up the pace so that instruction would not fall behind.

Rita agreed that the "lack of common planning time for the elective teachers was a concern for the administrators." She acknowledged that "common planning time was a conversation held during the building of the master schedule." Rita said that the administrators had a goal of building a trimester schedule that would include common planning time for the elective teachers. This

did not happen due to the logistics of building the schedule. Rita said that the first and second year of building the master schedule for the trimester offered new learning opportunities. The goal for the third year was to do a better job of supporting the electives with common planning periods, however the schedule was changed back to the semester schedule before the third year of implementation.

Summary

This qualitative study was designed to explore the perceptions of teachers after their school schedule was changed from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. The schedule was changed as an attempt to provide time for academic intervention for students due to their underperformance on state and federal assessments. The experiences of teachers are an area of interest to educational leaders because initiatives for continuous improvement in education often are evaluated by looking solely at student performance data from state and federal assessments (DeVries, 2014). Data regarding teacher experiences often are not a part of continuous improvement plans (DeVries, 2014). This is a concern because the teacher is the most important variable in educating a child (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Marzano, 2003). Chapter 5 includes a summary of the study, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Under the state accountability practices guided by the 2001 federal law "No Child Left Behind" or the 2009 update "Race to The Top," school systems had goals for success that were based almost entirely on student performance on state and federal standardized testing (Darling-Hammond & Plank, 2015). The premise of these laws was that schools were in crisis and the way to fix them was with standardized testing (Rose, 2015). In this era of school improvement, schools are consistently adjusting their best practices as an attempt to improve student performance on state and federal assessments (Perryman, 2011). Continuous improvement efforts are ongoing as changes and initiatives are consistently being monitored by campus and district administrators. Teachers are on the front lines of implementing change initiatives. Out of frustration with multiple change initiatives, teachers often change schools or leave the profession of education altogether (Keigher, 2010; Lasagna, 2009; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Researchers have identified that teachers are leaving the profession of education (Buchanan, 2010). This loss of personnel in the field of education is occurring at a rate much faster than in other professions (Buchanan, 2010). Part of the reason educators choose to leave the teaching profession is working conditions (Buchanan, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). It is

important for educators to work in a collaborative environment (Buchanan, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Donaldson & Johnson, 2011).

Data on teacher working conditions are not typically considered by education leaders seeking to improve student performance (DuFour & Marzano, 2015). The typical data pertaining to the effectiveness of school improvement initiatives relate to how students are performing in individual teachers' classes on mock or authentic assessments (DuFour & Marzano, 2015). While the mock or authentic assessment data show which teachers have students performing better than their peers, they do not always tell why or what the experience of student preparation was like for the teacher. The answers to the questions of why and what the experience of student preparation was like for the teacher can guide administrators in the replication of the successful improvement initiatives with other teachers or schools.

In this study, the data from the participants indicated that the campus was following the circular organizational change model described by Kurt Lewin of unfreeze, change, and refreeze (Burnes, 2004). The school leaders unfroze and rethought their practices due to the overall performance of the students on their state assessments. The students performed at levels below students at schools with similar demographics. The intervention response of school leaders to the underperformance of students on their state assessments was to change the school schedule from the semester schedule to the trimester schedule. The school then

had a refreeze and remained on the trimester schedule for two years before transitioning back to the semester schedule.

Summary of the Study

Due to the pressures for increased student performance, teachers sometimes choose to work in different school environments or leave the profession of education altogether (Coburn, Hill, & Spillane, 2016; Grissom, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2015). The education profession is losing more teachers than those who choose to enter it (Coburn, Hill, & Spillane, 2016; Grissom, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2015). This situation has created a crisis in which educational leaders must ensure student performance while retaining professional educators (Coburn, Hill, & Spillane, 2016; Grissom, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2015). This study was designed to examine the experiences of teachers who went through a campus schedule change initiative designed to improve student performance on state and federal assessments. The campus schedule was changed from the semester schedule to the trimester schedule.

To help me understand the experiences of teachers who participated in the change of a school schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule, I chose to use phenomenology as my method for research. My goal was to learn about the experiences of changing schedules from the participants. I used purposeful sampling to ensure my 11 participants represented each of the core subjects of math, science, social studies, and English, as well as the career and

technical education area (Creswell, 1998; Finlay, 1999; Giorgi, 2009). Each

participant was a faculty member who worked in the school before the trimester

schedule was implemented, during implementation, and after the schedule

transitioned back to the semester schedule.

I used the interview process to gather data from each participant. The

interview process allowed each participant to reflect on their experiences with the

semester schedule and the trimester schedule. Each transcribed interview was read

and coded (Creswell, 1998; Finlay, 1999; Giorgi, 2009). Using analytic memos

and triangulation, major themes from the interviews were discovered (Creswell,

1998; Finlay, 1999; Giorgi, 2009). I shared the transcripts of the data with the

participants to ensure that I was accurate in my understanding of their experiences

and feelings as they experienced the change in schedule.

Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of the

participants who participated in the implementation of the trimester schedule at

their campus. I chose a qualitative approach for this project in order to gain a

picture of the participants' experiences. The research questions for this study were

designed to facilitate the exploration of experiences which were described in the

literature as relevant characteristics teachers look for in a collaborative, efficient

work environment. In the next section, I present answers to each of the three

research questions with supporting data from the participants of the study.

Research Question 1

A strong professional development plan is critical to ensuring the systemic growth and productivity of best instructional practices in a school (Keigher, 2010; Lasagna, 2009; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). All of the core subject teacher participants felt that the school had a strong culture for professional development. The core teachers felt this culture for professional development continued after the change of schedule to the trimester schedule. Rita shared that the teachers of the core subjects had weekly professional learning community meetings and cluster meetings during their common planning periods. She also said that master teachers for the core subjects led the meetings.

Rita said that, due to the way the master schedule was built, the core subject teachers who worked within the trimester schedule and did not have a common planning period experienced challenges. This occurred when teachers had more than one subject to prepare for and the master schedule was not built for them to have the same professional development period as the rest of their team. These teachers would try to catch up with professional academic planning after school. This created additional work for the master teacher to lead multiple professional development meetings and cover the same topics with all of the teachers.

Under the trimester schedule, the career and technical education teachers did not have the same level of professional development leadership from a master

teacher or a large group of fellow teachers who taught their same subject. Their

professional development was not as systemic as that received by the core

teachers. Bridgette felt they "could have used more support for the change to the

trimester schedule even though the extra time in the classroom was better for their

classes because of the project-based environments and the need for more time to

clean up before the end of class." Eddie echoed the feelings of Bridgette. He said

that "The professional academic support was not there for the elective teachers."

He stated that the elective teachers "did not have the support of professional

development like the core teachers experienced." Leadership and support from

fellow teachers is necessary to improve teaching and learning (Fairmen, 2015).

When I asked Sophia about how the trimester schedule affected

professional development, she said that she "was not a fan of campus-based staff

development for her subject." She said she that she did not experience a

significant change of professional development between the semester and the

trimester schedules.

Rodney experienced professional development leading up to the

implementation of the trimester schedule that focused mainly on lesson plan

development. His lesson plans were all designed for the 45-50-minute class

periods. He had to transition his lessons to the 75-minute class timeframe. Rodney

said, "professional development was always rigorous because algebra is a state-

tested subject that caries significant weight toward the campus accountability."

He was familiar with looking at data reports that included student performance and made improvement plans based off the data. Rodney stated that, prior to the trimester schedule, professional development, was based on "how to remediate the students in the class period or special pullout situations." Rodney also stated that both options frustrated teachers because they thought their algebra class was designed to "teach to the test" and the students often resented being pulled from an elective they enjoyed having for additional time for algebra preparation.

The trimester schedule offered a remedy for his concerns regarding student remediation. Rodney said that professional development after the implementation of the trimester schedule offered additional options for student remediation. Rodney appreciated the wrap classes for students who needed remediation. The students were identified and scheduled into a support class. He said, "The professional development for teaching the wrap class did not take away from a teacher teaching their regular algebra class." This allowed for the algebra class to "remain pure" in the eyes of the teacher and not a test preparation course.

Research Question 2

The need to provide student remediation is a driving factor for teachers who choose to leave the field of education or transfer to another campus (Certo & Fox, 2002; Kelley, 2004; Lasagna, 2009). Some of the participants believed that the opportunities for student remediation were beneficial for students. Some of the participants saw the trimester schedule having negative effects on student tutoring

and remediation. Two of the participants perceived that the implementation of the trimester schedule had a neutral response on students.

Sophia was one of the participants who perceived that remediation under the trimester schedule led to positive opportunities for her students. She said, "Students definitely benefited from being able to access their teachers after school for tutoring and with the ability to retake classes for credits sooner than the following year." Brenda said that the teachers recognized that students with more teachers per subject had a better chance to find tutors. Joe shared that the opportunity to be taught by additional teachers gave students more chances to find a teacher with whom they related. Rodney believed that before the trimester schedule was implemented, teachers had to blend state test tutoring and remediation in their algebra classes. The wrap class on the trimester schedule provided a separate class for students with academic needs. Rodney considered the wrap class a benefit. He said that with the wrap class in place, teacher conversations could focus on algebra content and the wrap classes could focus on state accountability.

Other teachers had different experiences than Sophia, Brenda, Joe, and Rodney. Dwight felt that the loss of time to build positive relationships with some of the students hindered remediation efforts. Tonya experienced students' ability to repeat a course in the same school year as "an excuse that some students may abuse [remediation opportunities] by giving up before the class [was] finished,

knowing they can just take the course again." Eddie said that the option to repeat a course in the same school year could have a negative effect on students who did not understand the value of extended time.

The participants agreed that true opportunities for success were not dependent on the trimester schedule, but rather the maturity of the student. They believed that each student had to place individual value on their education, personal goals, study habits, and time management. Eddie based the effect of student remediation while under the trimester schedule on the students' level of maturity. He said, "I feel the additional class time of 75 minutes each period within the trimester schedule could lead to additional time for student studying or more time to procrastinate." Eddie said, "I feel it is up to the student to perform academically based on his or her academic maturity." He believed students should not miss out on the trimester schedule benefit of earning extra credits due to having to repeat classes. Eddie also held teachers accountable for being effective at providing instruction within the additional time provided by the trimester schedule. He considered it critical for teachers to be mature enough to manage the trimester remediation time wisely.

Research Question 3

Many teachers prefer to work in schools where there is a strong sense of professional collaboration (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Schools without a strong collaborative teaching and learning environment can lead teachers to choose to

change schools (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Ingersoll, 2001; Theobald, 1990). The participants of the study felt the school received "high marks" for their culture of collaboration. Sophia expressed that collaboration is a natural part of what her department has traditionally experienced; however, she said that "Collaboration deepened because of the additional time provided by the trimester." The teacher participants of this study did not feel the change to the trimester schedule from the semester schedule had a negative impact on the culture of collaboration within the school. They felt the systems that were in place before the trimester was implemented—systems such as common planning, hallways by content, master teachers, and administrators assigned to a specific content—carried over once the trimester was initiated, supporting a collaborative school culture.

Bridgette considered the culture of the school as a function of change. She said that newly-implemented changes "can initially have a negative impact on culture as everyone has to embrace the change." In Bridgette's experience, when change happens, there must be direct planning for the culture to remain collaborative. She said, "Teachers need information leading up to the change, so they can prepare, and the culture of collaboration can improve."

Rita perceived that the administrative team believe that the change of school schedule would not negatively impact the culture of the school. Rita said, "Teachers were meeting for professional learning communities and department

cluster meetings prior to the implementation of the trimester schedule and those

meetings carried over when the trimester schedule was implemented." Rita

believed there was not enough support provided for teachers after the

implementation of the trimester schedule to ensure that they did not experience

frustrations with pace, and student-teacher relationships. Pam mentioned how,

"The culture of collaboration increased on the trimester schedule due to teachers

having conversations about specific students." While working within the trimester

schedule, situations such as one teacher teaching a student one trimester and a

new teacher teaching the same student during another trimester created

opportunities where each teacher would seek support and strategies from the other

to facilitate a better learning relationship with their current student.

When the school transitioned back to the semester schedule, Janet's

experience with the culture of the school was that it did not decline. Teachers

were still collaborative and worked with each other. They were going back to

something that was familiar. The experience of switching back to the semester

schedule was a relief for Joe. He shared that as a teacher you are better doing

something with which you are experienced and comfortable. The semester

schedule was comfortable, so he was happy to move back to it. The students Joe

worked with also were ready to move back to the semester schedule. Joe believed

that the students felt that the trimester schedule was too much content at a pace

that was too rapid.

A key variable that all of the participants shared was a need for collaboration and common planning for the participants. The participants felt that significant collaboration occurred during the subject cluster meetings and professional learning community periods. Elective teachers did not have common planning time. Eddie said, "Teachers who did not have the common periods built into their daily schedule had to catch up with email minutes or meetings before or after school." He said he felt that "These catch-up meetings did not have the same results of collaboration as the opportunities where teachers were in the same common planning time because the teachers were not all present as a collective group."

Discussion

This section contains the discussion of the data analysis of the various themes created from the teacher experiences. The themes from this study highlight different areas of teacher experience with the change of school schedule from the semester schedule to the trimester schedule. This section includes the analyzed findings of the collected data from the participants of the study and a description of the experiences of the teachers as they changed working environments from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule.

Teacher Voice

A goal for this research was to bring the voice of teachers to the conversation about school improvement, specifically in the conversation of

changing a school schedule. Teachers are the most important variable in the

education equation (Berliner & Glass, 2014; Marzano, 2003). The voice of the

teacher in decision making should not be marginalized (Kahlenberg & Potter,

2014). Researchers have found that the inclusion of teachers in decision making

with administrators results in a better school climate and improved student

achievement (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014).

In this study, teacher voice was highlighted in the areas of relationships

with students, time for professional development, and professional collaboration.

Teachers offered valuable experiences from different perspectives. The data

indicated that a strong difference existed between the experiences of the core

teachers and the elective teachers regarding professional development. However,

the participants had similar perceptions of student remediation and teacher

collaboration.

All for One and One for All

As exemplified in this study, teachers have strong emotional ties to their

work and their colleagues (Löfgren & Karlsson, 2016). The participants in this

study demonstrated leadership skills as they spoke of their experiences navigating

within the trimester schedule. It is important for these relationships and spheres of

direct and indirect influence to exist among teachers (Fairmen, 2015). The

participants' individual experiences with success on the trimester schedule did not

overshadow their colleague's lack of success. This was evident during the

participants' concerns during times that everyone in their subject did not have the same planning time. The participants saw that even one teacher who only may have had two sections of a subject needed to share planning time with the group to maximize opportunities for success. The teachers experienced the benefit of working together as a group sharing the same resources.

Conclusion

School leaders often make changes to meet the demands of public education (Brucato, 2005). These changes include decisions designed to improve the performance of students on state and federal assessments (Brucato, 2005). In this study I used a phenomenological approach to examine the experiences of teachers who worked in a school in which the administrators made a change of school schedules from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule, then back again. The school schedule was changed in an attempt to meet the needs of the underperforming school resulting from low student performance on state and federal assessments. School leaders often measure school improvement initiatives using student performance data from state and federal assessments (Brucato, 2005).

The plan of action to implement an idea, measure its outcome for growth, and, if there is growth, repeat the process in other areas, is a conventional approach to problem solving. The challenge for school reformers is that classrooms, schools, and teachers have unconventional variables (Alvy, 2005;

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Rose, 2015). It is not good enough to say that if an initiative worked with one

teacher the same initiative will work with another teacher. In the 1900s, the world

was approximately 90% agrarian and 10% of our population was unconventional

(Korem, 2015). The society of the time was conventional. Life was predictable

and rhythmic, with time set aside for preparing the soil, planting seeds, and

harvesting crops (Korem, 2015). Today society is about 75% unconventional

(Korem, 2015). This shift means that we cannot approach all change initiatives in

a conventional manner. We must take all variables into consideration before we

plan to initiate change.

Implications

School improvement reports often use student data to monitor progress

(Darling-Hammond & Plank, 2015). Teachers responses often are not a part of

data sets representing school improvement (Darling-Hammond & Plank, 2015).

Teachers are the most important resource in education improvement (DuFour &

Marzano, 2015). The following sections highlight how the results from this study

have implications for research, practice, and theory for future education change

initiatives.

Implications for Research

All of the participants in this study experienced the change of school

schedules from the semester schedule to the trimester and back again to the

semester schedule. These teachers were able to share their experiences of change

with teacher collaboration, tutoring, and remediation of students and their experience of the school culture after the change of schedules. The data showed that differences of experiences with collaboration were split between the elective teachers and the core teachers. Additional research can be conducted to address the difference of experiences had by the core and elective teachers during the transition of schedules from the semester schedule to the trimester and back again. Further opportunities for research could analyze how long campus improvement plans that include changing the schools schedule last before an additional change to the schedule is made.

All of the teachers and the associate principal shared a concern about the lack of time for relationship building with students when they were on the trimester schedule. The teachers felt rushed and unable to develop the teacher-student relationships that were positive and motivating to the students. It is extremely important for at-risk students to feel like they have a connection with their teachers (DuFour & Marzano, 2015). These healthy relationships often motivate the student to find the grit to persevere through academic adversity. Additional research can be conducted to determine if this was the same feeling held by the students. Researchers also could address the variables that comprise a healthy teacher-student relationship and how are those variables impact students and teachers on semester and trimester schedules.

Implications for Practice

Based on the findings, the core teachers were satisfied with the professional development they received for the implementation of the trimester schedule. However, the elective teachers did not experience the same level of professional development support for the implementation of the trimester schedule. The data indicated that the teachers sought positive relationships with their students. The positive relationships were lost for some of the participants during the change to the trimester schedule. The amount of time teachers had with students was the same under both schedules, however participants in this study still felt rushed to cover material.

These concerns from the participants revealed an opportunity to revisit lesson planning and curriculum design for teachers on alternate schedules. While this was covered during the implementation of the trimester schedule, it was not covered to the point where teachers felt comfortable teaching lessons with the time allotted on the trimester schedule. Teachers should be able to maximize time spent with students to ensure that they are making a positive impact.

Further opportunities for research could analyze how long campus improvement plans which include changing the schools schedule last before a change to the schedule is made. Additional research could also analyze why the changes are made.

Implications for Theory

The implementation of organizational change theory is critical for school leaders who seek continuous improvement for their organizations (Hussain, Lei, Akram, Haider, & Ali, 2016). I used organizational change theory as described by Kurt Lewin as the theoretical lens of this study (Schein, 1996). The theory consists of three stages for organizational change (unfreeze, change, and freeze). Change theory is not a linear expression of change, but rather a cycle that starts with unfreeze and progresses through change and freeze and then repeats itself after receiving additional external pressures (Burnes, 2004; Schein, 1996).

Through analyzing the data from the participant interviews, it was clear that the participants experienced the stages of unfreeze, change, and freeze when the schools schedule was changed to the trimester schedule. It also was also evident from the interview data that the participants experienced the change theory cycle again as the schedule of the school was changed back to the semester schedule.

Initially the school experienced unfreeze due to the pressure placed on the school from low student performance on state and federal assessments. Further research could be conducted to identify the variables aside from student performance that were considered before the decision was made to pursue implementing trimester schedule. It was confirmed from the interviews with the

participants that student performance on state assessments was a driving factor in the administrative unfreeze of the school schedule leading to the change.

The change engaged to address the concern of unsatisfactory student performance was the implementation of the trimester schedule. The act of the school leadership making a change to the school schedule as an attempt to address unsatisfactory student performance confirms the second phase of change theory because a change occurred due to external pressure. The school refroze and operated on the trimester schedule for two years. Refreeze is the conclusion of a complete cycle of change theory. However, within continuous improvement the organizational change process continues (Burnes, 2004; Schein, 1996). After additional external pressures, the school unfroze and returned to the semester schedule. This unfreeze confirmed that the change theory process is a cycle which repeats itself.

Critics of Kurt Lewin's organizational change theory cite its simplicity and reliance of top-down leadership for decisions to be made (Burnes, 2004; Fossum, 1989; Schein, 1996). The participants I interviewed did not take issue with the top-down leadership approach, however additional conversations between school leaders and the teachers may have impacted the concerns teachers experienced as they went through the change of schedules. Further research could focus on how administrators define the variables they consider prior to making a change designed to improve student performance.

Summary

The participants of this study embraced their opportunity to improve student academic performance. Their enhanced pedagogy and success with students was supported by a strong campus culture of teacher collaboration. The trimester schedule was not a factor in their collaboration. Their collaborative culture was present while they worked under the semester schedule and the trimester schedule. The findings of this study present an analysis of how teachers dealt with collaboration among peers, student tutoring, and remediation. The voices of the teachers were shared.

Data sets for school improvement often do not have information regarding experiences of teachers (Cohen-Vogel, Cannata, Rutledge, & Socol, 2016). My goal for this study was to introduce additional voices of teachers in the school improvement conversation. Missing from the school improvement conversation was the experiences of teachers, the most important variable in the education equation. The need for an understanding of teacher experiences to support campus change initiatives is critical for systemic continuous school improvement (Cohen-Vogel, Cannata, Rutledge, & Socol, 2016).

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Biographical Information

Joseph Showell began his postsecondary academic career at East Texas State University (ETSU) (now Texas A&M University-Commerce) where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics. Following completion of his Bachelor of Science in Mathematics degree from ETSU, he attended the University of Texas Arlington (UTA) where he earned his Master of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and completed Texas principal and superintendent certification programs.

Joseph has over 24 years of experience in public education. He has held the positions of teacher/coach, assistant principal, dean of instruction, and principal, and executive director of student services. These positions have been at the secondary level in middle school, junior high school, high school campuses as well as central office. His experience has been in the North Texas area, serving the Hurst Euless Bedford Independent School District, Grapevine Colleyville Independent School District, Dallas Independent School District, Cedar Hill Independent School District, Grand Prairie Independent School District, and Lancaster Independent School District.

Appendix A

Teacher Interview Protocol

Appendix A

Interviewee Pseudonym_____

Date_____

Location of the interview_____

Start Time_____

End Time_____

1. How long have you been teaching or working as an educator?

2. What was your professional title/role before the change of schedule from
    a semester schedule to a trimester schedule? What was it after the change
    to a trimester schedule? What is it now?

3. Describe your job as a teacher before and after the change of schedule
    from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. (Probes: Was your
    professional development impacted? If yes, how and to what extent? Tell
    me about your experience with professional development before the
    implementation of the trimester schedule. Tell me about your experience
    with professional development after the implementation of the trimester
    schedule. Tell me about how you participated in professional development
    with your colleagues before and after the schedule change.)

4. How do you think your fellow teachers were impacted by the change of
    schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule?

5. Please tell me about the training and support you received to prepare for the change of schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. (Probes: What types of training did you attend? How often were the trainings held? Were there any trainings that you did not attend? Was the training you received sufficient? Why or why not?)

6. Tell me about the student experience on your campus before and after the change from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. (Probes: How were students tutored and remediated before the implementation of the trimester schedule? What impact did the remediation have on student learning? How were students tutored and remediated after the implementation of the trimester schedule? What impact did the remediation have on student learning?)

7. Tell me about the culture of the school before and after the change of schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. (Probes: Did the culture of collaboration change? If yes, tell me about the level of teacher collaboration on your campus before the implementation of the trimester schedule. Tell me about the level of teacher collaboration on your campus after the implementation of the trimester schedule. Was there an impact on teacher attrition? If yes, how and to what extent?)

8. Describe your job as a teacher after the return to a traditional schedule. (Probes: Was your professional development/learning impacted? If yes, how and to what extent? Was your workday affected? If yes, how and to what extent? Do you think the workday of your fellow teachers has been affected? If yes, how and to what extent)

9. Tell me about the student experience on your campus after the return to a traditional schedule. (Probes: How are students tutored and remediated now? What impact does the remediation have on student learning?)

10. Tell me about the culture of the school after the return to a traditional schedule. (Probes: Did the culture of collaboration change? If yes, how and to what extent? Are there any effects on teacher attrition? If yes, to what extent?

Appendix B

Associate Principal Interview Protocol

Appendix B

Interviewee Pseudonym_____

Date_____

Location of the interview_____

Start Time_____

End Time_____

1. How long have you been working as an educator?

2. What was your professional title/role before the change of schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule? What was it after the change to a trimester schedule? What is it now?

3. Describe your job as an associate principal before and after the change of schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. (Probes: Was your professional development impacted? If yes, how and to what extent? Tell me about your experience with professional development before the implementation of the trimester schedule. Tell me about your experience with professional development after the implementation of the trimester schedule. Tell me about how you participated in professional development with your colleagues before and after the schedule change.)

4. How do you think teachers were impacted by the change of schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule?

5. Please tell me about the training and support you received to prepare for the change of schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. (Probes: What types of training did you attend? How often were the trainings held? Were there any trainings that you did not attend? Was the training you received sufficient? Why or why not?)

6. Tell me about the student experience on your campus before and after the change from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. (Probes: How were students tutored and remediated before the implementation of the trimester schedule? What impact did the remediation have on student learning? How were students tutored and remediated after the implementation of the trimester schedule? What impact did the remediation have on student learning?)

7. Tell me about the culture of the school before and after the change of schedule from a semester schedule to a trimester schedule. (Probes: Did the culture of collaboration change? If yes, tell me about the level of teacher collaboration on your campus before the implementation of the trimester schedule. Tell me about the level of teacher collaboration on your campus after the implementation of the trimester schedule. Was there an impact on teacher attrition? If yes, how and to what extent?)

8. Describe your job as an associate principal after the return to a traditional schedule. (Probes: Was your professional development/learning impacted? If yes, how and to what extent? Was your workday affected? If yes, how and to what extent? Do you think the workday of your fellow teachers has been affected? If yes, how and to what extent)

9. Tell me about the student experience on your campus after the return to a traditional schedule. (Probes: How are students tutored and remediated now? What impact does the remediation have on student learning?)

10. Tell me about the culture of the school after the return to a traditional schedule. (Probes: Did the culture of collaboration change? If yes, how and to what extent? Are there any effects on teacher attrition? If yes, to what extent?