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Experiences Of Beginning Teachers In A Resident Teacher Program: A Phenomenological Study

Emmanuel Adjei-Boateng

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EXPERIENCES OF BEGINNING TEACHERS IN A RESIDENT
TEACHER PROGRAM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

By

Emmanuel Adjei-Boateng
Bachelor of Education, University of Education, Winneba
Master of Arts, University of Education, Winneba
Master of Education, Minot State University

A Dissertation

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of the

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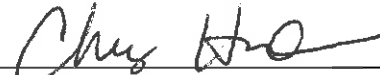
Dr. Bonni Gourneau, Chairperson



Dr. Pamela Beck, Committee Member

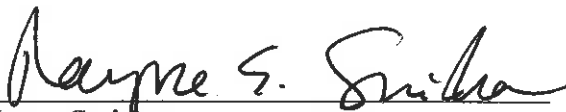


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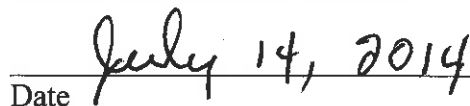


Dr. Cheryl Hunter, Committee Member

This dissertation is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.



Wayne Swisher
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies



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Degree Doctor of Philosophy

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Emmanuel Adjei-Boateng
July 9, 2014

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To my wife Vida and our children Annabella, Gifty, and Justin

For being my constant companions through all these years.

ABSTRACT

There has been considerable attention and focus, in the field of education, on development support for beginning teachers. Beginning teachers are very important to the success and future of education. Their success in the classroom is very critical. The Resident Teacher Program or a teacher residency is a comprehensive means of providing beginning teachers with developmental support. This initiative is usually organized through the concerted efforts of a college of education and school district. Within this dissertation, attention is given to the potential or real benefits and to the successes and challenges of an existing Resident Teacher Program. In a review of the current literature, the voice of the resident teachers has not been heard. Therefore, lived experience in such a program has not been known. The purpose statement of this phenomenological study was to explore the perspectives of beginning teachers regarding their experiences in a Resident Teacher Program. This was to help in understanding what is meant to be a resident teacher. Six beginning teachers enrolled in a Resident Teacher Program were selected as participants and interviewed on two different occasions. The outcome of the study shows that resident teachers' experiences is characterized by double commitment with a lot of responsibilities but double support; ability to bring what's learned in graduate courses into classroom teaching; and confidence to transition into regular classroom teaching. Minor issues of concern to participants are discussed and future recommendations are offered.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Beginning teachers' experiences have received considerable attention in educational literature (Jensen, Sandoval-Hernández, Knoll & Gonzalez, 2012; Ball, Knobloch, & Hoop, 2007; Romano & Gibson, 2006). Educational researchers and other stakeholders in the education industry have shown interest in the induction, mentoring support, and guidance that beginning teachers need to experience to ensure successful entry years and retention in the profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). The Resident Teacher Program or teacher residency, a recent phenomenon, is a comprehensive program of teacher development and support for beginning teachers in schools. It is a mutual collaboration between school districts and colleges of education in universities (Solomon, 2009), and has received considerable attention both in theory and practice, due to its huge potential.

The attention in the literature has centered on the programs perceived impact, (Berry, Montgomery, Curtis, Hernandez, Wurtzel, & Snyder, 2008) the success or impact on success, and the challenges of the program (Sawchuk, 2009). Attention has also focused on universities and school districts, which have embraced the Resident Teacher Programs, the core principles that guide effective establishment and organization of the programs (Solomon, 2009; Berry et al., 2008) and funding for the programs (Sawchuk, 2009). However, a missing link in the discussion and literature about Resident Teacher

Programs has been the lived experiences of beginning teachers, who are the main recipients of this program of intervention. Despite the fact that much is written about Resident Teacher Programs, equal attention and consideration of the actual experiences of beginning teachers in such programs are basically unknown.

Purpose Statement

The purpose statement of research reveals the overarching focus of the intended study and its connection to the research topic and problem under study (Creswell, 2012). It also refers to the practical as well as intellectual goals guiding the study (Glesne, 2011). Apart from serving as justification for the study, the purpose statement also helps in identifying the research approach that would be germane to the study.

The purpose of phenomenological research focuses on discovery of the meaning of a particular phenomenon (Englander, 2012). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perspectives of beginning teachers regarding their experiences in a Resident Teacher Program. This is important since there is a vacuum in the literature about the perspectives of beginning teachers in teacher residency programs.

Theoretical Framework

“Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 38)

It is important for researchers to make clear their philosophical assumptions they bring to bear on the design and implementation of both basic research and evaluation studies (Patton, 1990). A paradigm constitutes a worldview or philosophical perspective of the real world. It portrays our theoretical and epistemological assumptions concerning the nature of reality (Patton, 1990) According to Sinclair (2007) “[a] theoretical

framework can be thought of as a map or travel plan” (p. 39) which guides the pursuit of a particular area of research. It can also be seen as the philosophical perspective that anchors and justifies the design of a study (Crotty, 2012) and its coherence.

An important part of the research design is the consideration of relevant theories, models, and concepts, which support the knowledge associated with the phenomenon that one wants to study (Sinclair, 2007). Therefore, according to Sinclair (2007) developing a theoretical/conceptual framework in research refers to an attempt to look for a theoretical understanding relevant to the phenomenon being studied and how it can be translated into meaningful practice. The theoretical framework also serves as an attempt to justify the methodology for the study design (Crotty, 2012) and providing a basis for methods used.

Many useful theories, models, concepts guided the design and conduct of this phenomenological study, which focused at exploring experiences of beginning teachers as resident teachers (RTs). The theory of experiential learning by Kolb (1984) and phases of first-year teaching life by Moir (1990) guided this study as they provided knowledge and understanding on beginning teacher experiences and learning. Methodologically, constructionism, and phenomenological philosophy undergirded the design of the study.

Experiential Learning

Kolb’s theory of experiential learning offered perspective on the concept of learning different from what is postulated by behavioral theories of learning (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning focuses primarily on the dynamic relationship existing among learning, work, life activities, and the construction of knowledge and understanding in the context of education (Kolb, 1984). That is, it is an all-inclusive paradigm of learning, which encompasses experience, perception, cognition, and

resultant behavioral changes (Kolb, 1984). This type of learning, according to Kolb (1984) is experiential because of its emphasis on the centrality of the conscious experience in the learning process, which accordingly makes this form of learning fundamentally opposed to ideas of other rationalists and cognitive theories about learning, which is based on acquisition, manipulation, and mere recall of abstract facts. It also differentiates from behaviorist theories of learning since those theories downplay the importance of consciousness and experience in the learning process.

Experiential learning emphasis on the centrality of experience and importance of the relationship between experience, work, life activities, and construction, in the learning process, made a useful guide for this study on the experiences of beginning teachers in a residency program. The theory of experiential learning originated from models of learning by theories of Lewin and Dewey (Kolb, 1984). These theories, which emphasized learning as a dialectic process involving experience, observations, concepts, and action (Kolb, 1984) also offered common ideas relevant to beginning teachers' experience, learning and growth.

Lewin's model of learning. In the Lewin's model, effective learning, behavioral change, and growth are enhanced by the integration of current and contextualized experience, observation, and systematic collection of data (Kolb, 1984). The data obtained is analyzed and conclusions are used to modify the behavior of the people involved. This model views learning as a cycle with four stages, starting with one's current/immediate experience serving as reason for observation, and reflection as the second stage. This is followed by construction of concepts and generalizations, and their application in different situation (Kolb, 1984) to see how it fits.

This model was relevant to the experiences and learning of beginning teachers since according to Kolb (1984), in this model, immediate personal experience serves as the focal point for learning, giving life, texture, and subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts and at the same time providing a concrete, publicly shared reference for testing the implications and validity of ideas created during the learning process. When human beings share an experience, they can share it fully, concretely, and abstractly (p. 21).

Another aspect of Lewin's model, which was important for a study on beginning teacher experiences and learning, was the premium it placed on feedback as a learning tool. Lewin considers feedback as useful social learning and for the problem-solving process the information that is generated both helps in determining whether or not we are reaching goals, and also serves a tool for continuous improvement efforts (Kolb, 1984). Mentors and universities advisors aid resident teachers on how to use information about their experiences for continuous improvement.

Dewey's model of learning. Dewey's model of learning, though akin to Lewin's, focuses on learning as a developmental process, whereby "learning transforms the impulses, feelings, and desires of concrete experiences into higher-order purposeful action" (Kolb, 1984, p. 22). Though, not explicitly stated, the developmental process of learning can also be inferred from feedback in Lewin's model. Dewey's model involves three steps, in which purpose is seen as the intellectual process that demands the observation of one's environment and situations, knowledge of similar situations, in the past, which can be obtained from many sources, and useful judgment (Kolb, 1984).

Characteristics of experiential learning. Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984) involves several key features, which are based on similarities among various models of experiential learning. They also provide knowledge and understanding on an experiential view of learning and human/professional development (Kolb, 1984), which are relevant to understanding beginning teachers experience and learning. Some of these characteristics are shown in Figure 1.

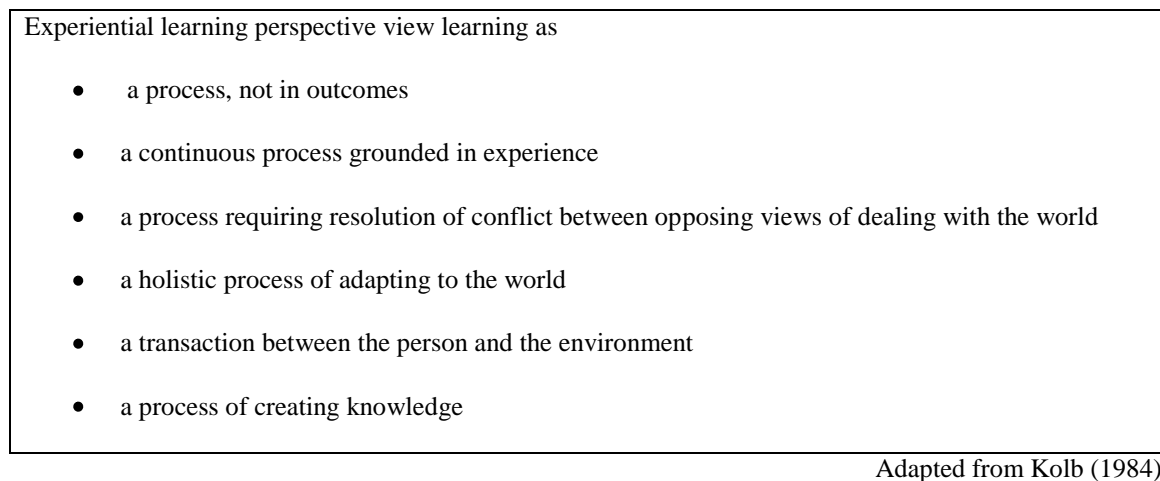


Figure 1: Characteristics of experiential learning.

These characteristics are relevant to the experiences and learning of beginning teachers because, teacher learning and experience involve a continuous process that continues after college education. It is also grounded in experience, which makes student teaching and developmental support like mentoring, induction, and resident teacher programs even more relevant.

Constructionism

Qualitative research aligns very well with the theoretical assumptions embodied in constructionism (Greene, 1994) and phenomenology (Patton, 1990). Therefore,

constructionism and phenomenology constituted the philosophical foundation of this qualitative study, designed with a phenomenological lens.

Constructionism falls under an interpretivist philosophy, which encompasses different approaches, concerned primarily with the understanding and experiences of human beings (Williamson, 2006). Though sometimes used interchangeably constructionism and constructivism do not carry the same meaning. Constructionism extends the notion of constructivism. While “constructivism casts the subject as an active builder of knowledge, constructionism places a critical emphasis on the particular construction of the subject that is external and shared” (Shaw, 1996, p. 177).

That is, constructivism is the individual’s meaning making process through engagement with objects in the world, while constructionism focuses on the broader socio/cultural imperatives in meaning making (Crotty, 2012). As Shaw (1996), puts it “[s]ocial constructionism highlights the notion that through the construction of shared outcomes and artifacts, a subject engages in a developmental cycle in a social setting” (p. 177). Constructionism, as a theoretical paradigm, influenced my choice of methodology. Constructionism embodies assumptions that are brought to bear on methodology (Tuli, 2011) and its appropriate methods for the study.

Constructionists’ assumptions. Ontologically, constructionism is linked with relativism, in relation to reality, and it assumes multiple, locally constructed and contextualized realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It rejects positivists’ contention of naïve realism, which presupposes existence of a single, true, or objective reality outside of human consciousness, which can be apprehended, identified, and measured (Crotty, 2012; Tuli, 2011; Ponterotto, 2005; Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002) with appropriate

instruments. Instead constructivists believe in relativism of reality rather than existence of one objective reality (Ponterotto, 2005).

Epistemologically, constructionism rejects positivist-objectivist assumptions of human knowledge, understanding, and reality. Constructionism with a foundation in interpretivism assumes there is no objective truth to be discovered by man. It assumes that meaning is constructed and that it is impossible to have meaning without directing your mind and consciousness to an object (Crotty, 2012). The constructionist paradigm asserts that meaningful reality is socially constructed through human-human interaction and engagement with objects in the world, and how they interpret it. Therefore, meaning does not just exist in objects to be identified and cannot be seen as objective in nature (Crotty, 2012).

What it means is that this paradigm does not reject realism, neither does it support claims that meaning is discovered or created, rather than being constructed. It assumes relativism in relation to reality, believing that humans construct reality and understanding through engagement and bringing consciousness to bear on objects. Construction of reality also happens in a social milieu. The process of construction of reality results in an existence of multiple realities, contextual in nature (Greene, 1994, Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, there are no true realities.

This paradigm also rejects the positivist epistemological stance of dualism (Cartesian dualism), which presupposes that the researcher and object are independent entities and that it is possible to study an object without influencing it and vice versa (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Rather, this paradigm assumes social construction of meaning and that the relationship between the knower and known or to be known is interactive,

and inseparable. Each contributes to the meaning-making process since meaningful reality is constructed through human engagement with objects in the world.

It also accepts multiple perspectives, (Greene, 1994; Crotty, 2012; Yilmaz, 2013). This shows how human consciousness and interaction are the basis for construction of meaning, understanding, and reality. Because knowledge is constructed through human-human interaction and engagement with objects in the world, there are multiple realities (Crotty, 2012). In other words, there is no single objectified reality since people construct meaning differently based on a given phenomenon.

Part of social construction of meaning is the notion of social-cultural impact on meaning making. This is because human beings do not just construct meaning from a space when we come in contact with phenomena. The processes by which we make sense of the world are social-cultural since we rely so much on conventions and shared wisdom available to us in the culture. Culture provides a medium through which we make meaning since it provides context for conscious actions. Again, apart from the fact that we inherit a social system that provide a lens for meaning making, we do not live alone, we make sense of the world through interaction in the social environment (Crotty, 2012).

It is also the belief of constructionists that as much as culture provides a means by which we make meaning, it can put us in a box and be restricting. It is for this reason that the application of phenomenology makes sense. If we need new insights beyond what is bequeathed to us by culture, or confirm what we know we need to bracket our assumptions and go back to the things themselves. We need to gather information on the unique experiences of people. This is important since the social world is constructed, reproduced through conscious actions, and continually evolving through human

interpretation. Understanding human experience and meaning making requires double hermeneutics or two tier interpretations. That is interpretation in people's own laymen understanding and the social scientific approach (Crotty, 2012).

Phenomenology as a Theory

Phenomenology, linked to the constructionist paradigm was also used as a theoretical perspective. Epistemologically, the premise of a phenomenology stance stems from a constructionist paradigm. As Crotty (2012, p. 12), rightly posits:

“[c]onstructionism and phenomenology are so intertwined that one could hardly be phenomenological while espousing either an objectivist or a subjectivist epistemology.” Intentionality of human consciousness and experience with objects, which is the bedrock of phenomenological thought, is also the foundational stone of construction.

Consciousness is always about something and there is an important relationship between conscious subjects and objects. From existentialist perspective intentionality relates to interdependence between subjects and their world. Constructionism requires investigators to be bricoleurs. They need to be preoccupied with the objects, with open minds and suspended assumptions, in order that they may possibly obtain new or enhanced understanding through interpretation and reinterpretation (Crotty, 2012) of the experience.

Phenomenology is also chosen for this purpose because it is a complete concept and can be seen as both a theoretical perspective and methodology (Crotty, 2012). This point was rightly echoed by Ehrlich (2005, p. 1) when he indicated that “phenomenology has been conceptuali[z]ed as a philosophy, a research method and an overarching perspective from which all qualitative research is sourced.” In other to build consistency

in using phenomenology research, Finlay (2009) recommends that it is advisable to use phenomenology as theory when using it as a methodology.

Phenomenology as a philosophical perspective emphasizes the importance of returning to the things themselves, as researchers. If people are able to hold aside their perceived notions on phenomena, as conscious beings and move closer to the things themselves and experience them, it is possible for human beings to get new insights or confirmation on the meanings they already hold (Crotty, 2012). It focuses on bringing researchers close enough to be in touch with or have experience with individual and social realities, in order to ascertain the many and varied dimensions involved in a phenomenon (Kupers, Manters & Statler, 2013).

Generally, phenomenology aims at describing what is experienced by us and others, which appears to be the case. But phenomenologists also do interpretation because of the assumption that description of experience can reveal useful facts about human consciousness and the world and how it is experienced by human beings (Roche, 1973). Phenomenology calls for direct, firsthand experience and grounded contact with the object in order that one can retain a sensibility and awareness of the phenomena (Kupers, Manters, & Statler, 2013) in question.

According to Davis (1995) phenomenology, as a philosophy, is primarily based on the principle of intentionality of reality, meaning human beings direct their consciousness toward objects. Meaning is not sitting and waiting to be discovered but meaning is constructed through human conscious engagement with objects in the world. Phenomenology also emphasizes on returning to the objects for first-hand data for authentic understanding of a phenomenon.

Relevance of constructionism and phenomenology. Constructionism was important for this study, because it offers basis for the phenomenological arguments. For instance the ideas of meaning as constructed through human engagement in the natural world, multiple perspectives, rejection of positivism and objective reality, are important to this phenomenological study. The idea of social constructionism is also important and relevant to this study. For instance, Bell and Gilberts' (1994) model of teacher development shows that teacher learning, as an adult learning process, is congruent with the ideals of constructionism, in terms of how it occurs, how professional development should be organized, and how teachers accept student learning and construction of knowledge.

Through professional development activities like talking to colleagues, taking university courses, and reading relevant materials, teachers construct new ideas, obtain new skills and resources relevant to their problems on how best to respond to learning needs of their students (Bell & Gilbert, 1994). Teachers also accept the knowledge and contribution of learners in construction of meaning and understanding (Bell & Gilbert, 1994).

Teachers also need to learn to collaborate with others in order to construct ideas and solve problems. Teachers' learning and work is transactional in nature, and emphasizes on multiple perspectives. It also means our culture or giving knowledge is useful in the meaning making process. They provide foundation through which understandings are framed. We also construct knowledge by interacting with the social environment. As much as culture provides a lens for a meaningful reality, it also confines

us to a box (Crotty, 2012). All these ideas are important to the study, because knowledge construction is social and cultural in nature.

Phenomenological philosophy constitutes an important theoretical foundational thought and is relevant to this current study. Phenomenological ideas of returning to the things themselves, intentionality of relation with objects and rejection of positivist objective reality, are also important and germane as the study explored the resident teaching experiences of beginning teachers. It presupposes that there was a need to go to the beginning teachers, in residency programs, themselves to gather information about what it is like to be in such a situation. It also means the experiences of beginning teachers are conscious reality and that there may be a shared reality, though constructed out of their individual experiences, there is no one single objective reality out there to be identified.

Again, teachers are conscious of the problems, experiences with their job, and importance of learning/development opportunities (Bell & Gilbert, 1994). They are also conscious of the need for students to have the best learning opportunities (Bell & Gilbert, 1996) and they intentionally make efforts to learn new ideas and try new techniques, to enhance their students' learning (Bell & Gilbert, 1996, 1994) and their own effectiveness.

Research Questions

There is a need for researchers to specifically state the research questions of the study. It is important to agree on limited number of questions (Muraskin, 1993) since the purpose of research questions is to help narrow down the purpose statement to what the study specifically plans to achieve (Glesne, 2011). Since qualitative research is "best at contributing to a greater understanding of perceptions, attitudes, and processes" (Glesne,

2011, p. 39), the overarching research questions that guided this study were: How do beginning teachers in a resident teaching program perceive their resident teaching experiences? How do beginning teachers in a Resident Teacher Program understand and interpret their experiences? These were supported by the following sub questions:

- What are the resident teachers' perspectives on the classroom teaching component of the program?
- How do the resident teachers perceive their mentoring experience in the residency program?
- What are the resident teachers' perspectives on returning to college, as graduate students, in the residency program?

Significance of the Study

The study would honor the voices of beginning teachers, in Resident Teacher Program, regarding their experiences. Gathering, describing, and interpreting the “conscious experience” (Wertz, Charmaz, McMullen, Josselson, Anderson, & McSpadden, 2011, p. 52) of beginning teachers in a resident teaching program and how they experience it, would provide better perspectives on what it is like or what it means to be a resident teacher, in the beginning year of teaching. The study aimed to reveal new understandings on the experiences of beginning teachers in resident programs and also provide further impetus to our understanding of the experiences of beginning teachers, in general. The insiders' perspectives on what it is like to be a resident teacher, can help to ensure “great experience across” (Verhoef, Lemon, Parasuraman, Roggeveen, Tsiros, & Schlesinger, 2009, p. 31) the different levels of the program for beginning teachers.

Though the purpose of the study was to explore the beginning teachers' perceptions on their experiences in a resident teaching program and how they experience it, and not to evaluate the program itself, it was anticipated the outcome could contribute to improvement in the existing Resident Teacher Program. Again, since outcomes of qualitative inquiries are transferable, it anticipated the outcome of this study would serve as guide for the implementation of a resident teachers program in new settings. Ultimately, the study was to contribute to the holistic understanding of beginning teacher experiences and how best they can be supported with their induction, learning, and success.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

An existing body of knowledge guided this study on beginning teacher experiences, teacher development/learning, and support systems for beginning teachers. Ideas on support for beginning teachers included, and were not limited to, mentoring and induction support and Resident Teacher Programs. Studies on beginning teacher experiences encompass a large spectrum of areas concerned with the lives of beginning teachers.

Importance of Quality Teaching

There is always a need for highly qualified and competent teachers (Bartell, 2004) since teachers are very important (Haycock & Crawford, 2008) to the success of educational enterprises in every country. Even in the age of technology the position of teachers in education will still be non-negotiable. As Leu (2005, p. 22), rightly posited, “[i]f the school is the important functional locus of efforts for improving quality, certainly the most critical factor within the school in facilitating student learning is the teacher...” (p. 22). This confirms the importance of teachers.

One fundamental truth in education is that, to a large extent, quality education delivery depends on the quality of teachers in the classrooms. Despite all other inputs, success of education is not guaranteed if teachers are unskilled and incompetent (Jibril, 2007). Put in this way, “[t]eacher quality is still the most powerful school-related

influence on children's academic performance” (Barnes, 2006, p. 93). Teacher quality matters because quality teaching impacts positively on students’ learning outcomes as well as their life chances. The impact of good teaching on students can even offset the effects of factors that relate to a student’s background income, education of parents etc. (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005). The importance of quality teaching brings into focus the issue of teacher education and how best teachers are prepared to be able to support the education of all learners. It also brings into focus the kind of experiences teachers; especially beginning teachers, go through. As it is in most professions, sustainability of teaching as a profession depends on the success of its members, especially the new entrants.

Beginning Teacher Experience and Learning

The importance of the nature of experience to learning, understanding, and construction of meaning has received attention in the writings of the legendary John Dewey. For Dewey, genuine understanding results from experience, and the difference lies in the quality of the experience. He also thought that the immediate experience has influence on later experiences (Ansbacher, 1998). The kind of experiences beginning teachers go through is important to their overall well-being and success as teachers. As with all newcomers into a profession, beginning teachers’ experiences are generally marked by change, contrast, and surprise (Quaglia, 1989).

Change, according to Quaglia (1989) relates to the difference between the old setting and the new one a teacher finds himself or herself. The nature of the differences in the experience can either be privileging or daunting to the novice teacher. Contrast refers to incompatibility between one’s past experience from old setting and new experience, in

a new environment. This difference between past and present settings comes with its own influence on the novice teacher's later experience. The surprise, according to the author, relates to the difference between one's anticipations or expectations and the actual experiences in a new setting. Unmet or unfulfilled expectations can be a source of frustration and vice versa.

Phases of Beginning Teaching

A model of the beginning teaching trajectory by Moir (1990) offers a very good insight into experiences of beginning teachers and serves as a guide to this study.

According to Moir (1990) teachers, especially, first-year teachers move through stages, which involve movement from anticipation, to survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, reflection, and to anticipation again.

Anticipation stage. According to Moir (1990) the anticipation stage begins during the period of student teaching and travels to the first few weeks of beginning teaching life in school. This is the period where prospective teachers are so eager to complete college and have their classrooms, as teachers. Beginning teachers are full of passion, energy, and enthusiasm. They begin teaching at the peak of their professional commitment and desire to make positive change in the life of students.

Survival stage. According to Moir's model (1990) beginning teachers begin feeling overwhelmed within a few months of entry into schools. This is because they begin feeling the complexities of classroom teaching and dealing with issues they are not prepared to handle. Their time and attention are consumed by their teaching responsibilities, with no time left for reflection on their experiences.

Disillusionment phase. From the challenges of the survival stage, teachers enter a phase of disillusionment after six to eight weeks of entry into teaching, according to Moir (1990). They begin to question their commitment to teaching and get worried about additional demands and responsibilities of being a teacher. These worries are aggravated when they realize things are not going to be easy with the challenges of classroom management, parent teacher conferences, and the fear of the first performance evaluation by the principal.

Rejuvenation phase. During the rejuvenation phase, beginning teachers begin to gain confidence and build a more positive attitude towards teaching. This stage begins in January, and the winter break helps teachers cool down and reorganize themselves and their materials for a new beginning. According to Moir (1990), teachers at this stage gain a better understanding of the system and develop new coping strategies. However, also at this time teachers also begin to worry about their students' performances on standardized tests and their ability to complete the required curriculum.

Reflection stage. The reflection stage of a beginning teacher's life begins around May and at this time teachers start taking stock of their year's activities, categorizing them into those that went well and others that were not successful. This exercise brings mix-feelings. They are happy the year is ending, but the anticipation phase once again begins rearing its head, when they start thinking about the upcoming year.

A model of teacher development by Bell and Gilbert (1994) offers useful insights into the experiences and developmental trajectory of teachers, especially beginning teachers. Bell and Gilbert (1994) see teacher development as a learning process, whereby teachers consciously, purposively, and continuously develop their ideas, beliefs, and

skills about teaching and classroom practice. Teachers learn about professional development, how they learn, the change process, and how to attend to their feelings in respect of the changing circumstances. According to Bell and Gilbert (1994) teacher development involves metacognition and purposeful inquiry, as teachers look into problematic aspects of their teaching, which require change and also as they conceptualize the idea of teacher development and learning.

In their model of teacher development Bell and Gilbert (1994) indicated that teacher development and learning has three features. First, teacher learning has three types of development comprising professional, personal, and social development, with each phase containing different levels. The different types of development are summarized in Figure 2. Secondly, teacher learning and development occurs within a framework consisting of effective components of professional development. Last but not least, there is not strict dichotomy among the different aspects of teacher learning. There is interaction in learning that go on among them, which calls for flexibility in how teacher development and learning is viewed, designed, and implemented.

These ideas are relevant to the experiences and development of beginning teachers, as all will face initial challenges that require further learning and development in many areas. As much as teachers recognize their problems and make effort to change things, a well-coordinated professional development opportunity is quite helpful, since effective teacher development happens through effective professional development support (Bell & Gilbert, 1994).

Social Development Collaboration and relation with others	Professional Development Cognition and ideas	Personal Development Attention to feelings
Level One Begin to feel isolation in one's classroom and with teaching as problematic	Level One Learning to try out new activities in classroom	Level One Recognition and acceptance that aspects of teaching is problematic
Level Two Learning to work collaboratively with others	Level Two Development of new ideas and classroom practice	Level Two Learning and development of capacity to deal with restraints, feelings, and concerns with teaching
Level Three Conscious effort to initiate collaboration with others	Level Three Consciously taking steps to initiate other professional development activities	Level Three Feeling empowered, confident, and responsible for their development and practice

Adapted from Bell & Gilbert (1994)

Figure 2. Teacher development.

Beginning Teacher Challenges

One aspect of beginning teaching experience that is consistently featured in the literature is the challenges and frustrations teachers go through (Fry & Anderson, 2011). The first years of teaching is a time of survival because it is both the most difficult and at the same time critical period in a teacher's professional life (Quaglia, 1989). Research has provided evidence regarding the kind of difficulties beginning teachers will experience (Watson, 2006).

The varied challenges will include such things as issues with standards and accountability, diversity of students, and absence of support or mentoring (Van Hover & Yeager, 2004). By their vulnerability and lack of voice, novice teachers get the most unpleasant assignments. They are most likely to be assigned large classes, low performing students, difficult to manage students, and be given the most undesirable extra-curricular assignments (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Quaglia, 1989) all while struggling with classroom management (Quaglia, 1989).

Veenman (1984) did a meta-analysis of studies on beginning teacher experiences in the classroom from different countries. The review involved a sample of 83 studies. Though most of the studies used questionnaire, in the form of rating scales, some of the studies also involved checklists, and open/closed questions. A few studies used interviews to gather data. Respondents in the studies were asked to respond to the items on the questionnaire by rating on a scale to indicate the degree to which a problem was encountered. Outcomes of the review showed that beginning teachers experienced challenges related to management of classroom discipline, how to motivate students, management of individual differences, assessments, teacher-parent relations, organizing class work, teaching materials, and supplies.

Hung and Smith (2012) used a case study approach to identify challenges that first year teachers who are alternatively certified face. Outcomes of the study show that the teachers were faced with challenges connected to students' motivation, accountability, and support from parents. Other challenges related to classroom management, availability of resources, diverse student learning abilities, and lack of support from administration and colleagues. The novice teachers harbored fear of unpreparedness and five participants indicated their desire to quit teaching in the near future, with only one intending to remain in the profession. According to Lang (2001) beginning teachers felt nervous prior to teaching and they experienced a reality shock that affected them in diverse ways.

Good Beginning Teaching Experience

While many studies on beginning teaching experiences have largely portrayed the phase of a teacher's professional trajectory as characterized mainly by challenges, others

have also tried to provide a complete picture of the beginning teaching experience. There are some positive experiences associated with beginning teacher life, and their experience is not only marked by difficulties and frustrations. Some beginning teachers have reported receiving a great amount of support from other teachers and administrators in the schools, which was a great help for them. Others teachers reported having experienced very good relationships with students and parents in their teaching (Watson, 2006). A study by Onafowora (2004) portrayed both sides of beginning teacher experiences. According to her, while the beginning teachers expressed confidence concerning their teaching efficacy, they had less confidence regarding teaching experiences, because they felt challenged with discipline issues, which affected their teaching moral.

Romano and Gibson (2006) have also shown that beginning teaching experiences are not only marked by challenges and frustrations. There are possibilities of success as well. Their qualitative research study, focused on an in-depth examination of a novice teacher's successes and challenges. This was an instrumental case study analysis, which was conducted for one participant in a study involving examination of successes and challenges.

Methods for data collection included monthly open-ended interviews and questionnaires given at three times within the academic year. The purpose was to gather information on the experiences of the beginning teacher, in terms of, successes and struggles. It provided insight into the knowledge, expertise, and resources available or which were needed to ensure effectiveness of the teaching experiences. The novice teacher indicated 58 successes and struggles within the first year of her teaching.

Romano and Gibson (2006) made use of modified analytic induction to analyze the interviews and open-ended questionnaire data. This was done to have a model of description that included the themes that emerged from the study. The authors made use of a comparative method to code regularities in the data, as theme surfaced. Then, the categories of the beginning teacher's successes and struggles were formed and included external policy, inclusion and special need student(s), classroom management, personal issues, content and pedagogy, parents, and teacher evaluation. A remarkable point from this study was from each category there were highlighted areas of successes and frustrations that constituted the experience of the novice teacher.

For instance, the participant's first area of success was classroom management, something many studies show that novice teachers struggle with. The participant believed students were learning the classroom procedures and routines and she was able to implement specific management strategies like having a seating chart on the carpet for classroom activities and having "Teacher Lunch" with students who showed positive behaviors, which was very helpful for the smooth running of the classroom environment. The participant also reported success with students' responses to substitute teachers, effective classroom management, advanced planning of activities, positive student behavior, and effective organization during a field trip. These constituted a source of joy and encouragement for the teacher.

The second largest area of the participant's successes was content and pedagogy which included the successful implementation of a specific strategy on teaching addition and subtraction, attendance at a professional development seminar, excitement about the learning gained and plans to implement it into lessons, student performance on

standardized tests, successful class projects, and the students' progress in reading and writing. The teacher's third area of success was in connection with establishment of positive communication with parents.

Impact of beginning teacher challenges. Challenging experiences of beginning teachers do not only affect their feelings of effectiveness but many of these challenges also force a large number of them to resign during their first couple of years of classroom teaching (Odell & Hung, 1998). Watson (2006) for instance, indicated evidence of beginning teacher resignation after a month of entry into classroom, because of inability to deal with classroom management and discipline issues. Hung and Smith (2012) have also reported beginning teachers' decision to quit teaching out of frustration.

Indeed, it is reported that between 40-50% of beginning teachers leave this noble profession between the first five years of entry (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 13) due to lack of needed support, feedback, and guidance on how to help their students succeed (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Goddard and Goddard (2006) summed the daunting experience of beginning teachers this way, "Burnout is the lived experience of a large proportion of teachers at the commencement of their career and this burnout is emphatically associated with beginning teachers seriously contemplating leaving their jobs and their chosen profession" (p. 73). It was worrying to see young and energetic professionals forced to leave a profession of their choice.

Any support for beginning teachers is a step in the right direction, because apart from impacting negatively on student learning, attrition of beginning teachers causes teacher shortage (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). This comes at a cost to both to students and policy makers because students require the best teachers to able to raise the achievement

levels for the students to stand a better chance of graduating and succeeding in life (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005) as well.

Beginning Teacher Learning

While beginning teachers may believe they are well prepared by their college education in content area, several others express concerns about their seeming lack of adequate preparation to manage many of the challenges that surface in the classroom or support other areas of their teaching. Some feel that their college education courses did not adequately prepare them to gain practical experience with regards to planning and management of routine school activities. Beginning teachers express a need for a long period of involvement in the classroom during pre-service teacher education periods (Watson, 2006). Romano and Gibson (2006) echoed this point when they conceded that despite a few successes by some beginning teachers, assessment of the overall experience of novices in the teaching profession indicates that they have a lot to learn in the field and require sustained support to get established and to succeed.

Beginning teachers have learning needs and require continued training and support from other people with many things to ensure their success. Beginning teachers will also require further support with diverse teaching methodologies and understanding subject-matter knowledge (Quaglia, 1989) to be effective. Though according to Davis, Petish, and Smithey (2006) not much attention has focused on how beginning teachers use curriculum materials. Conderman and Johnston-Rodriguez (2009) have indicated that beginning teachers feel less well prepared with skills related to curriculum and assessment.

Therefore it is important beginning teachers have opportunities to examine curriculum materials through continuing support from experienced colleagues and teacher education programs (Grossman and Thompson, 2008). The frustrations that beginning teachers go through against their desire to succeed and their need for learning negates the assumption that college teacher education is all that is needed to assume full teaching responsibility, since the nuisances of actual classroom life can be different from what one thinks or knows (Odell & Hung, 1998) and therefore, demands continuous learning and understanding.

Models of teacher learning and development. Teacher learning does not end with the completion of college education (Mulkeen, Chapman, DeJaeghere, Leu, 2007) since “learning is at the heart of teacher development” (Bell & Gilbert, 1996, p. 1). According to Mulkeen, Chapman, DeJaeghere, Leu, (2007), teacher learning and development is a continuum experience, beginning with initial pre-service teacher education and continues with in-service professional development programs, which support teachers throughout their teaching careers. Odell and Hung (1998) also see the teacher development as continuum involving pre-service, induction, in-service, and renewal stages. Fuller’s (1969) concern-based model of teacher development also has three stages involving concerns about self, concerns about teaching tasks, and concerns about student experience and the impact of teaching (Conway & Clark, 2003).

Knowledge on teacher development shows that the "survival" stage in teaching is likely to travel throughout the first year of teaching, since they start finding their feet after two terms of teaching (Lang, 2001). Teacher recruitment, preparation, in-service continuing professional development, and retention are epistemologically interwoven

together (Olsen, 2008) and the nature of teachers' experience at each level of the trajectory is significant to their success. However, despite the interconnectedness of teacher learning trajectory, teacher education, teacher development, and retention are often conceived and treated as been separate from one another (Anderson & Olsen, 2006) both in theory and practice.

Avenues of teacher learning. According to (Bell & Gilbert, 1996, 1994) teachers continue learning about teaching and learning throughout their professional teaching life, after graduating from a college of education. This is because; teachers are usually concerned about their teaching and also want to provide the best learning experience for their students. Therefore, teachers look for opportunities to improve many aspects of their teaching, including pedagogical skills, content-knowledge, classroom management, and teacher-student relationship. Teachers continue to learn and seek new ideas about teaching and learning through diverse means.

Part of beginning teaching experience involves experiential learning where teachers try to cope with their situations and help to improve students' learning (Grossman & Thompson, 2008) by seeking new teaching ideas, skills, and resources, through their own initiative, time, and expense (Bell & Gilbert, 1994, 1996). For example, some teachers spend a great deal of time searching through curriculum related materials for their classes and the materials they use for their teaching, to a large extent, shape their ideas and perceptions about teaching and classroom practice. They begin by sticking close to their curriculum materials. Over time they become familiar with their students and curriculum and then adapt and adjust to the use of the curriculum. Teachers

also read professional articles to obtain ideas from recent research in their area of teaching (Grossman and Thompson, 2008; Bell & Gilbert, 1994).

Another strategy that some beginning teachers use to further their learning is sharing of ideas with other colleague novice teachers. This is useful since they may have common issues and they can pull resources together (Bell & Gilbert, 1994). In what seems like participatory action research, Watson (2006) reports that some beginning teachers began informal meetings to discuss some of the problems facing them, after some of their colleagues quit teaching. Having realized that they had common challenges with endless paperwork, frequent changes in schedules, classroom management, lack of mentoring support, they formed a support group to help deal with their challenges together. After several meetings and deliberations, they presented a paper to the stakeholders in education, including school level and district administrators, as well as faculty representatives. Recommendations from this effort of these beginning teachers accelerated positive changes.

The process was itself a learning avenue for the novices because it helped them to “recognize the importance of effective, organized instruction during the term of the study, along with the importance of effective classroom management and discipline skills. This included an emphasis on planning, preparation, and adequate knowledge of subject matter” (Watson, 2006, p. 270). Novice teachers also learn from and make use of their past experiences, especially when their past experiences are similar or useful to existing situation (Quaglia, 1989).

Veteran teachers are another source of support for a beginning teacher’s learning experiences. Despite the fact that beginning teachers try to keep to themselves to avoid

perception of incompetence they rely on some of their senior colleagues for support and assistance with learning to teach. Beginning teachers perceive experience as a useful resource in learning about the tricks of successful teaching (Quaglia, 1989). It has been argued that such collaborative and informal learning from veteran colleagues and their former peers, constitute a huge form of support for them (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006).

According to Bell & Gilbert (1994) teachers also learn and construct new ideas, skills, and attitudes about teaching and learning through professional development and in-service activities organized by the school district, association meetings and conferences, and taking courses for university credit. These avenues demand commitment and attendance of teachers. Another formal way of supporting beginning teachers learning is through mentoring and induction programs in the schools and school districts.

Mentoring and Induction Support

Conception of teacher development as developmental in stages has brought to the forefront the need for beginning teachers to have a unique system of support during their first three years of entry into the profession and this has generated discussion on which group should take the responsibility (Odell & Hung, 1998) to help beginning teachers. Induction and mentoring programs in the districts and schools has been a well-known existing formal program of support for beginning teacher learning and successful entry experience. It is a comprehensive and sustained form of support for beginning teachers in schools and has been adopted by many school districts. The importance and need for beginning teacher induction is known to educators and employers alike. Through induction and mentoring support, novice teachers improved their teaching skills, learned

how to resolving issues in their classrooms and with colleagues. They also grew professionally, became socialized into the school environment, and also remained in teaching profession (McCormack & Thomas, 2003).

According to Duke, Karson, & Wheeler (2006) teachers who have opportunity to work with mentors or go through program of induction, in their first year of teaching are known to have greater prospects of becoming professionally committed to teaching, as a profession and occupation. In view of its importance to the success of beginning teachers, the authors recommend that every school district must provide induction with mentoring support for novice teachers. They also recommend that districts should allow a measure of flexibility for each school to adapt mentoring and induction in a way that suit their needs and context.

Some aspects of induction that beginning teachers experience in the schools include, but is not limited to, a combination of these: orientation, teacher induction materials, (which may include a kit, booklet) induction by principal of school, induction by other members of school executive, formal assignment to a mentor, attending formal induction sessions and informal support by colleagues (McCormack & Thomas, 2003). Mentoring constitutes an essential element in induction support system. Mentoring relations help new entrants into teaching transit smoothly and manage the initial shock they encounter. It also supports beginning teacher's professional learning in the induction years. This relationship makes a transition from pre-service teacher education to new school environment less of drudgery for novices (Patterson, Roehrig, & Luft, 2003; Carter & Francis, 2001) which is good for their overall experience.

However, the type of mentor one has matters. A mentor must possess certain characteristics for mentoring relationship to be effective. According to Ferguson (2011) the work of an effective mentor is characterized by having a relational connection, being a strong role model, work group integration, supportive behavior, knowledge sharing, and trust in the relationship. Hudson (2007) also indicated that effective mentors are conscious of their personal attributes and understand the school system requirements, have strong pedagogical knowledge, are able to model effective teaching practices, and provide feedback timely feedback.

Many have, in recent times, argued for a strong collaboration between teacher education programs and schools in this effort of providing induction, mentoring, and continuing professional and practical leaning opportunities for beginning teachers. This is to help bridge the gap between theory and practice. “The concept of mentoring and induction for novice teachers learning and development serves as grounds for enduring collaboration between universities and schools” (Carter & Francis, 2001, p. 249). This collaboration enables the issues of beginning teachers address through concerted efforts.

Patterson, Roehrig, & Luft, 2003 (2003) for instance, have indicated a need for faculty and staff from universities or colleges and school districts to work together in the designing and implementation of induction programs for beginning teachers. The need for a strong collaboration between schools and faculty related to teacher learning and development has also been recommended by American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (2010). This need for partnership between schools and colleges of education for effective teacher development has led to the emergence, acceptance, and popularity of the Resident Teacher Programs, new and enhanced program of support for

beginning teachers, organized principally through school district-university partnership but sometimes by districts own initiative.

Resident Teacher Programs

There has been attention given to the Resident Teacher Programs in educational literature. Residency model of teacher development and support, especially for individuals entering the profession of teaching, is gradually gaining roots as the most promising way to staff city schools with effective and committed teachers (Honawar, 2008). The programs are primarily based in the school districts but some are hosted by the university teacher education departments, while others are independent. However in all cases, there is a strong partnership between the districts and university or the independent organization.

This residency model of teacher development and support for new teachers' learning, success, and retention is a way of adapting the success of medical residency model, to build effective program of teacher development based on district-teacher preparation program collaboration (AACTE, 2010; Solomon, 2009). It is a comprehensive and contextualized approach toward teacher recruitment, preparation, and induction in the school districts (Solomon, 2009). This effort to recruit, prepare, and support teachers through residency, which is modeled after training in the medical field, is a promising way of developing and supporting a cohort of teachers whose training and induction meet the needs of their school district. It is seen as a novel way to consider recruitment, preparation, development, and retention of efficient and effective teachers in school districts in high need of teachers (Berry et al., 2008).

The Promise of Teacher Residency

The Resident Teacher Program holds promise, in that; apart from ensuring successful entry of novices, it helps in developing, and retaining effective teachers in the districts, teachers whose training, skills, and experiences are consistent with the needs of the districts (Berry et al., 2008). Teacher residency program helps in attracting and retaining quality and diverse teachers to high-needs schools in the participating districts (Honawar, 2008). It is aimed at addressing needs of the districts.

It has the potential of preparing and supporting excellent and committed teachers who are willing to stay in the profession for years. Research evidence show that more than at least between 90-95 percent of teachers who enter teacher residencies are found to continue teaching after three years of teaching, when other teaching have left (Honawar, 2008; Berry, et al, 2008). It is a useful school reform that aimed at improving school conditions and high levels of students learning by enhancing the quality of teachers and effective instruction (Honawar, 2008; Berry et al., 2008) in the classroom.

The program and the prospects it holds have received attention and support of the federal government, which ideally would support university/college-based teacher education and high-need schools and districts to build one-year paid residency offering clinical training for pre-service teachers and induction programs to support them once they enter classrooms. The Center for Teaching Quality and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education also recommends that college teacher education programs must quickly embrace the residency concept and work on developing it further (Honawar, 2008). AACTE (2010) also endorses the program and recommends that states

should replicate or support teacher residency programs because of its perceived importance.

Historical Background

The idea of having teacher residency started with the establishment of Boston Teacher Residency in 2003. Dr. Thomas Payzant, the Superintendent of Boston Public Schools wanted to enhance the capacity of the school district so that it could recruit, train, and induct its own corps of teachers relevant to the specific needs of the district. The aim then was three-fold. First, it was to attract teachers to areas like math, science, and special education and teaching English Language Learners. Again, it was an attempt to try to bring diversity in the teaching force, which was mainly made up of whites. Last but not least, it was an effort to stop teachers leaving the classrooms within their first three years of entry since about half of beginning teachers change their profession (Solomon, 2009) and leave teaching.

From this humble but laudable beginning, the concept started spreading to other districts and higher educational institutions. The program may be organized and referred to differently as resident teacher program, teacher residency (Solomon, 2009), urban teacher education (Honawar, 2008), urban teacher residency (Berry et al., 2008a&b) but with common objectives. The numbers and types of teacher residency programs are increasing with some examples including: the Boston Teacher residency (Solomon, 2009), the Academy for Urban School Leadership in Chicago, the Boettcher Teacher Residency, Denver Teacher Residency, the University of North Dakota Resident Teacher Programs, and similar programs at the Bard College, California State University–Chico, and Arizona State University (AACTE, 2010). Interest in supporting the development of

beginning teachers is gaining attention but not too many places have Resident Teacher Programs.

Typical Residency Program Principles, Components, and Characteristics

The components of teacher residencies include: (1) admission into the program; (2) fieldwork in the classrooms, including teaching, interaction with colleague cohorts and veterans; (4) curriculum, comprising the graduate instruction residents receive, interaction with university supervisor or advisor and the whole experience one undergoes in the program; and (5) induction, including mentoring support for the 1-year residency and three years of induction support after one has been hired following completion of the residency program (Solomon, 2009).

Since residencies are designed around classroom placement and graduate course learning leading to the award of a master's degree, residents are assigned a grade with full teaching responsibility for the one-year, under the guidance of mentors while they also take their graduate courses. Normally, they are licensed to teach in the state. They are given financial assistance for their course and offer stipend for living. In the Boston Teacher Residency, for example, residents sign a contract that they will stay and teach in the district for at least three years following completion of residency period (Solomon, 2009).

There are some characteristics or principles associated with these programs, which mark them as unique. One of the principles underlying the set-up of teacher residencies is that the programs are district-based, and geared towards serving teaching staff and educational needs of host school districts. The goal is to recruit committed individuals with excellent backgrounds, offer them tailored training to meet the needs of

their districts, and support their retention as teachers. It affords cities and school districts a useful way to recruit teachers or enhance the capacity of new teachers based on their needs (Solomon, 2009; Berry et al., 2008a; Berry et al., 2008b).

Another principle of practice of these programs is that they integrate educational theory with classroom practice (Berry et al., 2008a; Berry et al., 2008b). This is because the adherents see teaching as academically taught but a clinically practice profession (AACTE, 2010). The programs are influenced by diverse ideas about what it takes to train effective teachers, including the idea behind the professional development school movement. It has also been influenced by the clinical education orientations in other professions as well as the alternative certification movement, though it differs from the alternative certification movement, with all intent and purposes (Solomon, 2009). This model demystifies the producer-consumer dichotomy of the relationship between teacher education programs and school districts (Berry et al., 2008a) and makes them become partners in teacher development.

Because it serves the districts, recruitment or admission modalities, the program priorities are based on the learning needs of students in the districts. Some of the programs focus on recruitment on the high needs areas in the district like math and science. Others focus on giving top-up training to graduates for certification in areas like special education.

While the program recruits are mostly graduates with excellent backgrounds and commitment to the districts, some of the programs focus attention on the graduates from teacher education programs while others recruit graduates from other majors from every reputable college. The recruits are offered intensive, extended one-year long preparation

in the schools and classrooms, instead of short term teaching practice. They also integrate theory with practice while enrolled in graduate level college courses leading to award of a master's degree (AACTE, 2010; Berry et al., 2008a).

The resident teacher programs in general focuses on teacher continuing professional learning under the guidance of trained mentors in the schools; organizes teacher candidates in cohorts to benefit from professional learning communities, so that they can collaborate among themselves as beginning teachers, and provides opportunities to work with experienced colleagues in the schools. Residencies emphasize effective partnership between school districts and institutions of higher education; and offer continuing induction support for residents after they complete the one-year residency in the school. In some residency programs, the resident teachers continue to receive induction support for the first three years after leaving residency and accepting a contract with a school district. They continue to work together as a cohort, even if they teach in separate schools. It also helps identify potentials of veteran teachers and train them to take responsibility as mentors for beginning teachers in residency (Berry et al., 2008a; Berry et al., 2008b).

The ideas contained in the literature review are important as it supports the study. However, since this is qualitative research these ideas are by no means a prediction of the research findings nor will it constraint the views of the participants. This is because the views should emanate from respondents (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, constructionism and phenomenology would serve as the theoretical framework to support the design of the study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The methodology section contains information on the elements that shaped both the design and conduct of this study. This includes methodology and methods of the study. Methodology relates with strategy for the design of the study, which dictates and justifies selected methods. Methods on the other hand deals with actual techniques employed in data gathering and analysis (Crotty, 2012) of the study. These concepts grounded the design and implementation of the study.

Methodology

Phenomenological research design was used as methodology for this study. Phenomenology is viewed and used in qualitative research as both a theoretical perspective and research approach (Flood 2010; Patton, 1990). Again, the current study aimed at gathering and describing the experiences of resident teachers (RTs), to understand the phenomenon of resident teaching, in beginning teaching life. Phenomenological method was an appropriate methodology, since phenomenology emphasizes on descriptive study of human experience (Wertz, Charmaz, McMullen, Josselson, Anderson, & McSpadden, 2011) narrated by the people.

Phenomenological research or approach to research is an attempt to explore lived experience (Norlyk & Harder, 2010) of human beings as they interact with the world. The cardinal purpose of phenomenology is to get authentic understanding of the phenomenon

or at least enhance or confirm our received understanding about the phenomenon (Davis, 1995). According to Russell and Gregory (2003) “phenomenological approach is used to gain a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of the everyday “lived” experiences of people” (p. 36). Therefore, phenomenology focuses on the structure and essence of human experience in respect of a phenomenon. The phenomenon being experienced can be anything including, but not limited to, a program, institution, job, or an emotion issue.

Descriptive phenomenology is normally applicable when the aim of the researcher is to describe the phenomenon (Reiners, 2012). Van Manen (1984) provided a detail description of what phenomenological research entails, which are important and of interest to this current study. For him, phenomenological research is: a study of lived experience; a study of essences, attentive practice of thoughtfulness, a search for what it means to be human, and a poetizing activity.

Almost all phenomenologists would agree that phenomenological tradition provides unique but useful methodology that enables us to study lived experience of human beings, by returning to the things themselves. This differentiates phenomenology from other research approaches (Halldorsdottir, 2000). As Finlay (2009, p. 6) puts it, “phenomenological researchers generally agree that our central concern is to return to embodied, experiential meanings aiming for a fresh, complex, rich description of a phenomenon as it is concretely lived.” This is an authentic way to understand human experience. Phenomenological research has its way of collecting and analyzing data, as far as human experience with phenomena, is concerned. This is highlighted in the methods section below.

Methods

This section describes the procedures that were used for data collection and analysis, in this phenomenological study. According to Englander (2012), the initial process of phenomenological research design involves conscious realization that the aim is to understand a phenomenon from the point of view of the people regarding their lived experience so that meaning can be made out of it. Accordingly, this understanding should form the basis of methods of the study since phenomenology focuses on unearthing of meaning of a phenomenon.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perspectives of beginning teachers regarding their experiences in an Elementary Education Resident Teacher Program (RTP). The vision of the study was to provide a better understanding and perspective on what it means to be a resident teacher, in the beginning teaching years. The study anticipated a potential to reveal new understandings on the experiences of beginning teachers, in an elementary education Resident Teacher Programs, and also provide further impetus to our understanding of the experiences of beginning teachers, in general. The outcome may contribute to improvement in the existing resident program or guide setting up of similar programs elsewhere. Ultimately, the study was to contribute to holistic understanding of beginning teacher experiences and how best they can be supported with their induction, learning, and success.

Research Questions

The overarching research questions that guided the study were: How do beginning teachers in a resident teaching program perceive their resident teaching experiences?

How do beginning teachers in a Resident Teacher Program understand and interpret their experiences? This was supported by these sub questions:

- What are the resident teachers' perspectives on the classroom teaching component of the program?
- How do the resident teachers perceive their mentoring experience, in the residency program?
- What are the resident teachers' perspectives on returning to college, as graduate student, in the residency program?

Participant Selection

Participant selection for this study was based on purposive sampling. Each participant needed to be a beginning teacher enrolled in a Resident Teacher Program. This is because specific group of individuals, that is resident teachers, were needed to satisfy the needs of the research questions of the study. Since phenomenology obliges returning to the things themselves, for authentic information about what it means to be in a situation, it was only fair that RTs were selected for this study. That way they could have opportunity to voice (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001) their experience.

Participants were selected by the principal researcher using snowballing sampling technique (Patton, 1990) where gatekeepers were relied on to get into contact with potential participants, who were considered information-rich key informants or critical cases (p. 176).

After agreeing to be contacted the participants were sent an email correspondence by the researcher with the approved Institutional Review Board (IRB) Consent Form attached to it (See Appendix A). The content introduced the researcher, indicated purpose

of the research, and requested participant's voluntary participation in two separate interviews.

The indicated duration of interview was approximately 60 minutes for each interview. Interviewing each participant on two different occasions for about an hour each was to ensure triangulation and possibly saturation of data. The email informed participants that the attached consent form is attached was for their reading and consent would be required at a later time if they decide to take part in the study.

A total number of six beginning teachers, enrolled in the Elementary Education Resident Teacher Program were selected as participants for the study. The conscious reality of these individuals, on what is like to be a resident teacher, was important to the study. Participants were to be selected for approximately 12 months in order to ensure prolonged engagement and possibility of data saturation (Whittemore et al., 2001). Adequate data, based on insiders' perspectives would enrich the understanding of the phenomenon of beginning teacher resident teaching.

Since the basic purpose of sampling is to represent the phenomenon being explored, the issue of representativeness is a major concern to sampling procedure. But the idea of representativeness, among others, can be conceptualized as the extent to which the findings would richly and deeply reflect the actual situation of the individuals being studied (Patterson & William, 2002). There is always an awareness of the people who will be able to participate in the study, considering the phenomenon. The participant selection procedure normally adopted for phenomenological studies is: Do you possess the experience relevant to this study? (Englander, 2012) or as Creswell (2012) indicates, sampling in qualitative research, is based on "people that can best help us understand our

central phenomenon” (p. 205). In this situation resident teachers were the appropriate option.

The participant selection process required purposive or purposeful sampling and snowballing approach (Russell & Gregory, 2003; Patton, 1990). Among others, purposive sampling strategy includes judgmental sampling where the theoretical or conceptual basis of the study points the researcher to select specific participants, and snowball, network, or chain sampling, where gatekeepers are relied on to connects others for participation (Russell & Gregory, 2003). In connection with sampling procedure is the issue of the total number of sample (sample size) to be selected.

Phenomenological method of inquiry recommends a researcher, at least, uses three participants in a study (Englander, 2012). Creswell (2012) mentions sample size between “1 or 2 to 30 or 40” in qualitative research (Creswell, 2012, p. 2009). Patterson & William (2002) believe that smaller sample allows for employment of data collection approaches that are in-depth in understanding the phenomenon.

Site/Location

The study focused on the experiences of beginning teachers in an Elementary Education Resident Teacher Program organized by the teacher education department, at a Midwest four-year university, in collaboration with local school district. The schools that participate in the program and also the university became the sites for the study. The town-community where the schools and the university are located was part of the site for the study.

Program Description

The Elementary Education Resident Teacher Program has been a part of the University and the Department of Teaching and Learning for over 20 years. Each year, it has provided a cohort of six resident teachers (RTs) with support to enter teaching at the elementary school level. All RTs have completed undergraduate degrees in education with strong academic records. After an extensive interview process, the RTs are hired as full time classroom teachers for one year in the local school district. They have also been accepted into the University's School of Graduate Studies to earn a Master's of Education degree, which is completed during the initial summer session, one academic school year, and then the following summer session. The RTs receive a stipend of approximately \$15,000 and their tuition is covered except for semester fees and course books. The RTs have mentors who are located in the schools where they will teach and a University advisor who oversees the Master degree requirements.

Data Collection Method

In-depth interviews constituted the main means of data collection in this phenomenological study. This included face-to-face in-depth interviews, with semi-structured, open-ended questions. Each participant was interviewed for approximately 60 minutes on two different occasions. Each interview was audio-taped/recorded and transcribed afterwards by the principal researcher. This process was to help in yielding rich and thick data concerning residents' experiences with the phenomenon of resident teaching. Interviewing each more than once, for approximately 60 minutes each, was to foster triangulation, prolonged engagement, and saturation of data.

The interviews were conducted in fall 2013 and spring 2014 semesters. The first and last interviews were conducted on December 16th, 2013 and April 24th, 2014. The interviews were based on semi-structured interview questions with interview protocol that was used for the process. The interview protocols are attached as Appendix B and C. All questions were open-ended. The questions were connected with the phenomenon of Resident Teacher Programs, entry years into the teaching career, focusing on the purpose of the study and research questions. Responses in the first interviews informed questions for the second interviews as follow-up.

All interviews were scheduled and conducted by the principal researcher at a time that was convenient to the participants. At each interview the principal researcher would read the introductory part of the interview protocol. This included a note welcoming and thanking the participant for accepting to grant the interview, the purpose of the study, and duration of interview session. It also included assurance of confidentiality of responses, and anonymity of respondent and his/her affiliated institution. Researcher informed participant that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw their participation at any time if they felt they wanted to do so.

The participants were informed that the interview would be audio-recorded, in order to capture exactly what he or she said. The researcher also informed participant the tape recordings would be locked in a file cabinet in the principal investigator's office and then destroyed by shredding after three years following the completion of the study, which followed IRB's procedures and regulations. Every participant signed the consent forms and agreed to participate in the study.

All interviews were transcribed word-for-word in order to capture exactly what the participant said. The transcripts were sent back to participants for member checking. Participants were given about two weeks, to go over the transcript, for authentication. Participants returned transcripts on due date with minor to no corrections. Transcripts were aggregated to ensure anonymity of participants and their institutions. The audio recordings and consent forms were kept on an external drive and kept with the written transcripts locked in the principal researcher's office.

Though other techniques may be applicable to a phenomenological study, in-depth interviews constitute the main means of data collection in phenomenological study. This is because interviews are useful when seeking information directly from participants about their experiences (Englander, 2012; Flood, 2010; Patterson & William, 2002). Russell and Gregory (2003) recommend using audio-taping and recording of interview as a tool for collecting qualitative data.

A researcher can collect information about a participant's lived experiences, of a phenomenon, either by face-to-face interview or one's written record of the experience. Whatever the approach the data collection should be comprehensive, yielding a complete description of participant's experience of the phenomenon and should avoid concentration on misleading aspects of the data (Englander, 2012; Russell & Gregory, 2003). Face-to-face interview can last longer, usually between one and two hours and therefore has the potential to yield rich and thick data. Written description, though useful, is usually shorter and suitable for undergraduate work (Englander, 2012).

Application of structured and unstructured interview, with open-ended questions in phenomenological studies has been alluded to by Patterson & Williams (2002).

According to Patterson and Williams (2002) preplanned questions have advantage and disadvantages as well. They serve as a guide to both the researcher and participant, making sure relevant issues are covered in the interview. However, following preplanned questions rigidly can impede free flow of conversation and can prevent opportunity to consider other areas of the phenomenon being studied. In unstructured interview questioning is dictated to by the flow of conversation and in relation to the phenomenon and subject-subject relation.

A semi-structured interview is also recommended for phenomenological inquiry. Here, the researcher may have written down at least two questions focused on the phenomenon. The first question should focus on seeking from participation a situation he or she remembers having experienced something in relation to the phenomenon. The second question may focus on what lived impact that experience had on his or her life. However, in-between the main question, there are many opportunities for asking spontaneous questions for further clarifications, contingent on interviewee's responses (Englander, 2012).

According to Patterson and Williams (2002) since phenomenology is an emergent process it is imperative to ask whatever questions, which are relevant in gaining understanding individual's experience with the phenomenon. Patterson and Williams (2002) also recommended that interviewers have interview guide but not interview schedule since they require a measure of flexibility in the conduct of interview. The interview guide contains things to be addressed during the interview, which is based on the purpose of the study, research question and fore structure of understanding. However, a list of questions should only be considered as a guide. This is because interview in

phenomenological research demands that the researcher makes use of follow up questions to probe contextual issues that emerge from the participant's responses in the conversation (Patterson & Williams, 2002).

Focus of attention of phenomenological research is on the phenomenon, as the main object of investigation, not the participant. This is because it is an attempt to attempt to understand a phenomenon, not the person. However, the participant is needed to describe the phenomenon since she or she is the one who has lived with and experienced it. Participant and researcher co-create outcome or meaning in interview in phenomenological studies. It is crucial that a researcher would know how to move back and forth between paying attention to the phenomenon being investigated and paying attention to the subject-subject (participant) relation, during the interview session (Englander, 2012). Contexts matters in phenomenological interview and therefore, it is suggested that initiating the interview conversation by asking participant to describe a situation in which he or her has experienced the phenomenon is important. A situation is seen as experiential concept and not objective reality and therefore, may differ from participant to participant (Englander, 2012).

Data Analysis

Data collected on a phenomenon cannot speak for themselves (Milstein, & Wetterhall, 2000); but meaning is constructed through careful and systematic analysis. There are many methods of data analysis that are applicable in phenomenological studies. However, I implemented an analysis procedure inspired by Moustakas (1994), which considers both the textural and structural descriptions of participants. After the data collection, I followed Moustakas's stages of analysis, which involved data reduction,

horizontalization, and the creation of a final composite of essence of the phenomenon (1994). Reduction and horizontalization required listing every relevant statement made by the participants and grouping similar meaning units into themes then removing overlapping statements.

Next these themes were examined considering how the units represented either a textural description, closely tied to the lived experience and representing what the experience means to the participant, or structural description, representing the underlying dynamics, qualities, and conditions that help account for how the experience was produced, of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, p. 135). Themes were reported and the textural or structural elements in each theme are provided. All this rebuilt to demonstrate the essence, which is a composite of the elements of the experience that were universal to participants and also speak to the essence of the experience (1994) of residents teachers in the program.

Validity Techniques

Qualitative research has different ways and means of ensuring quality, otherwise referred to as validity, credibility, rigor, or trustworthiness (Morrow, 2005). According to Patton (1990) the issue of credibility or trustworthiness in qualitative research comes in three parts. The first part relates with rigor of methods of data collection and analysis, while the second part is about the researcher's credibility, including issues like his or her expertise, experience, and status.

The third part refers to the philosophical perspective that serves a foundation for methodological design of the study. These different components require attention and consideration. Issues of credibility are also important at every stage of qualitative

research, in terms of both design and implementation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the study.

As far as credibility in respect of philosophical paradigm is concerned, I clearly delineated the philosophical perspective, which anchored the research methodology. Phenomenology constituted methodology for the design of this study. Appropriate philosophical paradigms that supported and justified application of phenomenological approach to this study were constructionism and phenomenological philosophy. The researcher is important in qualitative studies. Credibility of the researcher is given attention and consideration under researcher reflexivity, after this section.

Many and varied measures were used to ensure trustworthiness or credibility of techniques and methods used in the study, at various stages of the study design and implementation. Many things were considered with credibility at the design stage. Whittermore, Chase, and Mandle (2001) discuss self-consciousness with research design. I purposefully, decided to use phenomenological approach to design this study since the study purported to explore the experiences of resident teachers. This ensures coherence in design, since the research design used was appropriate for the phenomenon to be studied.

Decisions regarding sampling are also important as far as credibility of study design is concern (Whittermore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). I have clearly described sample procedures and sample size based on ideas on phenomenological research design. That is purposive sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) with snowballing technique was used to select six participants enrolled in an Elementary Education Resident Teacher Program.

At the design stage, I also decided to ensure triangulation of theory by involving different but related theories, constructionism and phenomenology and also different models on teacher learning and development (Patton, 1990). Part of the sampling strategy, relevant to trustworthiness, was the idea of giving voice (Whittermore, Chase, & Mandle 200) to respondents. Beginning teachers with present experience with resident teaching constituted appropriate population for the study.

Many measures have been established to ensure gathering of credible data for the study. First, I have clearly articulated the method and techniques (Whittermore, Chase, & Mandle (2001) I used to gather data for the study. That is, in-depth face-to-face interview, with semi-structured questions was used to gather data. I also decided to engage respondents for 12 months and interview each on two occasions for approximately 60 minutes each, to ensure prolonged engagement and saturation of data, respectively (Whittermore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interviews were transcribed verbatim (Whittermore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001) to ensure credibility of data and trustworthiness of outcome of the study. Transcriptions were given to participants, with adequate time for member checking, to ensure accuracy of data.

Regarding analysis concerned, I have described the technique (Whittermore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001) I used to analyze the data and process involved. I will put my assumptions on hold (Whittermore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001) to allow themes to emerge from data. Again, expert checking (Whittermore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) were used during analysis of data.

Researcher Reflexivity

According to Creswell (2012) reflexivity refers to both the researcher's consciousness of his roles and describing it as a sign of respect to participants and site of study. Again, as evidence of credibility, a researcher needs to state what they bring with them to the study, including their training, experience as well as perspectives (Patton, 1990) they possess. For instance, according to Glesne (2011) it is important that researchers clarify their subjectivity and indicate how it will be bracketed.

I am a professional teacher, who has received teacher education from initial certificate level through Bachelor's and Master's level, and now pursuing teacher education at Doctoral level. I have received education and training in qualitative research methods at graduate level. I also have many years of experience teaching at both elementary and secondary levels of education. Additionally, I have had some experience teaching at college level. Both my teacher education and teaching experience span educational systems in two countries and also in different contents areas.

I have gone through beginning teaching experience before without any form support. I believe strongly that beginning teachers need support to ensure their smooth transition, success, and retention. I believe providing support for beginning teachers through organized collaboration between school district and college of education is an awesome intervention. I am mindful of my education, prior experience, and perspectives on the Resident Teacher Program. I put it aside, and focused mainly on the process and data, so that it not crowds my mind in both data collection and analysis for this study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perspectives of beginning teachers regarding their experiences in a Resident Teacher Program (RTP). This is important since there is currently a dearth of literature about the perspectives of beginning teachers in teacher residency programs on their experiences. The overarching research question that guided this study was: How do beginning teachers in a resident teaching program perceive their resident teaching experiences? How do beginning teachers in a Resident Teacher Program understand and interpret their experiences? This was implemented through these sub-questions:

- What are the resident teachers' perspectives on the classroom-teaching component of the program?
- How do the resident teachers perceive their mentoring experience in the residency program?
- What are the resident teachers' perspectives on returning to college as graduate students in the residency program?

Process of Analysis

The findings presented in this chapter resulted from the organization of the interview data into textural and structural descriptions, the finding of themes within each category of description based on the research questions, and the creation of a composite

of the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). This process involved identification of all relevant statements made by participants and the grouping of these statements into textural and structural descriptions. Structural descriptions are expressions of actual lived experience and structural descriptions related to elements that structure the experience. Categories were found within both textural and structural descriptions of data based on the research questions. Within each of these categories appropriate themes were identified also based on research questions anchoring the study.

Themes were examined by the consideration of how the units represented either a textural description closely tied to the lived experience and representing what the experience meant to the participant, or structural description representing the underlying dynamics, qualities, and conditions that helped to account for the experience of participants (Moustakas, 1994, p. 135). Themes were reported first. Next, the textural or structural elements in each theme were identified based on the descriptions. Finally, this information was reconstructed in order to match the essence of the experience with the phenomenon to constitute a composite of all elements of the experience that were universal to all participants and also spoke to the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994) of those phenomena.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part consists of textural descriptions of participants which center on their actual lived experiences as resident teachers (RTs). Themes within the categories were described with appropriate participants' descriptions of their experiences. The second part focuses on structural descriptions, which are the elements outside the control of participants that structures their experience as RTs. The third part of the chapter describes the essence of the data

based on the themes as a composite of elements of the experience that were universal to all participants and spoke to the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Themes within categories found under both textural and structural descriptions of the data with the overall essence of participants experiences are summarized in Figure 3.

Textural Descriptions		
	Categories	Themes
Textural Descriptions	Teaching Responsibility	1. Overwhelmed with numerous teaching responsibilities
		2. Confidence building and insights as teachers
	Mentoring Support	3. Material support from mentors
		4. Instructional support from mentors
	Graduate Program Coursework	5. Ability to transfer learning to the classroom
		6. Support with graduate courses
Structural Descriptions		
	Categories	Themes
Structural Descriptions	Teaching Responsibility	7. Resident teaching as full time teaching job
		8. Professional development resources and other school personnel
	Mentoring Support	9. Meetings with mentor structured into time
		10. Full time mentors appointed by the University and school district
	Graduate Program	11. Courses commitment /School commitment=Double commitment
		12. Seminar with Advisor structured into time
Essence/Assertions		
The following were drawn as a composite of the essence of the resident teachers' experiences		
Resident teaching experience as double commitments but double support		
Resident teaching as the ability to bring University learning to school teaching/learning		
Resident teaching as confidence building to transition into regular teaching		

Figure 3. Categories and themes within textural and structural descriptions and essence of data.

Analysis Based on Textural Descriptions

Six relevant themes are identified from participant’s textural descriptions of their actual lived experiences in the program. These themes can be found in Figure 4.

	Categories	Themes
Textural Descriptions	Teaching Responsibility	1. Overwhelmed with numerous teaching responsibilities
		2. Confidence building and insights as teachers
	Mentoring Support	3. Material support from mentors
		4. Instructional support from mentors
	Graduate Program Coursework	5. Ability to transfer learning to the classroom
		6. Support with graduate courses

Figure 4. Textural descriptions, categories and themes within textural descriptions.

Teaching, mentoring support, and graduate program coursework constituted categories of data for analysis. Based on the research questions, these categories were used to organize the themes since they were the main areas of the RTP. The participants had classroom teaching responsibilities. They were also graduate students with coursework commitments and lastly the participants also had mentors who were there to help them. By knowing the participants’ experience, a comprehensive understanding of their overall experience can be ascertained. The names of the participants were changed to pseudonyms to protect the privacy of the participants. The six participants’ fictitious names will be Mary, Ann, Mercy, Abby, Martha, and Dan. With limited schools involved in the research, the schools, mentors, and principals were not identified by their names throughout the paper. They were also given pseudonyms.

The following six themes are described within the narratives from the interviews with the participants. The first two themes relate to residents teachers' descriptions of their experience regarding teaching in the RTP.

Theme 1: Overwhelmed With Numerous Teaching Responsibilities

The participants viewed their experiences with classroom teaching as containing numerous responsibilities and their textural descriptions pointed to many facets of their accounts as to why they perceive the classroom teaching responsibilities as both time consuming and overwhelming. The participants thought the teaching job involved numerous responsibilities because they have large amounts of work on their hands.

Narrating what she does as a resident teacher, Mary says:

I am responsible for staying in contact with the parents, or making notes, phone calls, good phone calls or bad phone calls. I did conferences in October, I do report cards, and I plan all the lessons on my own. So from beginning of the day to the end of the day I am responsible for them. I also have to go the district-wide meetings. I am not exempt from any of that just because I am in the program or because I am in graduate school. So I am responsible for all the responsibilities of any classroom teachers.

Mary also stated this on her responsibilities:

I am responsible for the kids all day long and all the planning, so we start off and I make sure that all the kids are here and they are comfortable and ready to go and then we go through reading, writing, spelling, science, social studies, gym, snack, recess.

Mary thought that they have so many duties to attend to with regards to their classroom teaching. The participants understood that their classroom teaching was more involved and all encompassing. Both their perception and the reality of their many responsibilities made their job difficult.

Another participant, Ann, in response to whether some of the teaching responsibilities was challenging said this, “Yeah well it is just time consuming I think that is a challenging enough itself.” Talking about what it means to perform full teaching responsibilities as a resident teacher, Ann stated, “It is awesome but at the same time it is very time consuming and it’s a lot of just responsibility.”

The two statements gave certain clues to Ann’s perceptions and understanding of classroom teaching demands. Despite perceiving the teaching commitments as time consuming, Ann held classroom-teaching experience in high esteem. Talking about what it is like to manage students’ behavior in the classroom Ann stated:

It’s really hard because I just want to teach them to be good people and to respect each other and make good decisions even if everybody isn’t doing that but that’s not always the case. It’s really challenging and I am very patient person and it’s still challenging for me.

The response shows that Ann understands how some aspects of teaching can be challenging. Ann thinks of herself as a patient person and wanted to teach her students to be good people who respect others. Despite her positive attitude and good intention, Ann still recognized how hard it is to manage students.

Considering that the participants saw their teaching job as a lot of responsibility, time consuming, and challenging it was not surprising that they also considered their

teaching as overwhelming. For instance, talking about what it is like to perform the responsibilities of a teacher another participant, Mercy, stated:

I think right away at the beginning of the year it's very overwhelming and it was every little nit-picky thing, every small little detail that you constantly have to remember. Are the students making their lunch choices? Are the students having morning work out? Is your schedule up for today? Those little things run through your head. There are so many little things that you have to plan out throughout the day and I think it was very overwhelming right away as a full time teacher.

Mercy realized teaching involves paying particular attention to many little things and acting on them. It also involved a lot of planning. The participants thought that performing their many and varied teaching duties was overwhelming because they were novices and perhaps unfamiliar with the profession. In response to what it meant to perform classroom teaching responsibilities another participant, Abby, started by saying,

It's overwhelming since this is the first time I have ever done it," and she added, "I think it's just very overwhelming and in my first year teaching a lot of my free time is spent coming into school to lesson plan, to grade, to assess, and to do all that."

One other point where the participants felt overwhelmed about their job as teachers was the issue of sick days. A couple of the participants mentioned that they do not get sick days as RTs. In talking about this issue Abby said:

Something that is interesting about this program, we don't have any sick days because substitute teacher can't come and cover for us because of a lack of funding for the resident teacher substitute teachers. So last week I was sick and if

there were an option for me to have a sub I probably would have gone that route. I just needed time to get better. So I think it would be nice to know if you are really not feeling well you can stay at home.

Abby recounted a situation where she got sick after a week of parent conferences and wished she could have had some sick days to get well. Ann, another participant corroborated this. Despite feeling overwhelmed with teaching duties, the participants were grateful for this opportunity.

Theme 2: Confidence Building and Insights as Teachers

The participants considered their classroom teaching as a great way to get the experience they needed to become an effective teacher. By participating in the program they thought they were becoming more confident about themselves as teachers. They were gaining insights into the world of teaching. Narrating what she has gained from the program Mercy stated:

I have gained confidence. That's probably a huge one. I've gained the knowledge of different things. With my literacy program I understand it more in-depth. I have critiqued every single aspect of my teaching from guided reading to different ways of teaching math. I have improved in all areas. There is still room for improvement, there is always room to improve and to try something new but when I look back at how I taught something at the beginning of the year and with the help of everyone in this program you just make such gains throughout the entire year and you look back and you think wow I've grown so much as a teacher. I think the biggest thing is just confidence as a teacher. That's huge when you're a first year teacher, you're in front of all twenty students by yourself

and it is going to make or break you and if I didn't have the support I probably would have broke down a long time ago and would have been frustrated the entire year, and scared of everything. But if you have a bad day today I had someone to pick me up and say do it another route, try this tomorrow, you know things like that and I was like ok, you are right, it's done, we'll try something new tomorrow. Just yeah confidence is huge.

Mercy thought that by participating in the resident teaching program she has gained a lot of confidence. The description depicted the fears and frustrations of a beginning teacher's encounters with classroom teaching. It also showed how developmental support helped beginning teachers in that context. Through classroom teaching, and support from her mentor, Mercy felt the experience in the RTP had helped her to improve, mature, and to become more confident as a teacher.

It was not only Mercy who felt that she gained confidence as a teacher. Talking about what they learned in the program, Ann also made this response:

Yeah, there is so many things that I have gained from being in the program: One is just the experience as a first year teacher, as a teacher in general, as a full time teacher so experience will be huge. Confidence, I will say because like I said if I was going at this year on my own I think I would have kind of been stuck several times and just not knowing where to go but to know that I can make it through these things and survive is a huge thing so confidence would also be something that I have gained.

Ann also felt the experience helped her become more prepared and confident as a teacher. Narrating gains she was making in the program regarding her confidence as a teacher vis

a' vis what her situation would be without this opportunity, Ann said

I would say with my situation now I feel more prepared, I feel more confident, and I feel like I can do it on my own now whereas just coming out of my bachelor's I would have been very timid, I would have been very nervous, definitely not as confident in my abilities and myself. So this is the way to go, definitely.

Ann understood that she felt the experience was good. The program was getting her prepared and becoming more confident about her herself and her abilities as a teacher. She felt confident that she could do it on her own now because of the experience in the RTP. Also, she was equally conscious that without this unique opportunity in the program she would have felt less confident and more nervous as a teacher.

The participants also thought that the resident teaching experience helped them to gain insights about many aspects of teaching life. Narrating what she had gained as a resident teacher Mary said:

I've learned a lot about classroom management and behaviors. That's another confidence thing too but that's something that I have gained. I learned how to have my teacher demeanor. I kind of became a teacher, I think whereas before it was something else kind of on-going and I've gained a lot of support and friends from others who are RTs. They will be lifelong friends because it's quite the experience to go through. So I've gained a lot from it and I've learned a lot of new techniques of how to teach.

Mary considered resident teaching as experiential learning. She gained numerous insights about classroom management and students' behaviors. Practical classroom

teaching experience had also made her conscious of how to maintain a teacher's demeanor. The experience also helped her gain new teaching techniques and she is also conscious of support she received from other teachers and peers and values the community of friendship she built with others teachers.

Ann also thought the classroom teaching experience gave her insight about different situations and about the diversity of students. Narrating how helpful the resident teaching program was to her, Ann said

Very helpful. The schools that we are in have so much diversity, just a different group of students, just a wide range of kids. So having the kids who are very low academically, having kids who are strong academically, coming from different home lives, there is just so much going on that it is a great experience to have all that background knowledge and being aware of all the different situations that kids can be put in and how school is not always the first thing on their minds. Such a great experience.

Ann felt that the RTP was helpful to her and that the teaching experience provided her insights including the composition and characteristics of the students in her class. She became aware of the different backgrounds and diversity of the students and what that means for the children's education.

Theme 3: Material Support From Mentors

One thing that was featured prominently in the participants' descriptions of their experience was the availability and easy access to teaching and learning resources from the mentors. The mentors had a lot of teaching and learning resources and were willing to

share these with the RTs. The mentors knew what materials the residents would need and had them ready for the residents.

Most beginning teachers do not have all the resources they needed to be successful. They need to buy everything they needed, which can be expensive and challenging. For example, Abby's narration on how she was managing the stipend paid them and how she acquired materials. "I spent a lot on the books for the library, on the rich literacy classroom and then just a lot of stuff that you see around the classroom is stuff that I had to purchase this year." Abby understood the need for a teacher to have adequate resources but felt it was financially challenging to have all the materials needed as a teacher.

The participants acknowledged that it was financially challenging to purchase all that was needed to be successful in teaching, but they were also conscious of the support they received from mentors in this regard. It was quite a relief to have a mentor who had what was needed and who was willing to share with them. This situation was evident in this description by Mercy:

She handed me a big stack of her books from her resources. She said here is all my poetry stuff. Here is what I recommend you do because this is what I did with my students and they loved it and I said oh that's an amazing idea! So it's things like that that people in their undergraduates don't realize. My mentor has probably 5000 books and when you are first year teacher, you don't have money to buy 5000 books for your classroom. It's amazing. So my general impression is I can't imagine life without the program

Mercy knew it was financially burdensome to acquire all that was needed as a beginning teacher. Mercy also felt relieved by the sheer numbers of resources owned by her mentor and her willingness to share those resources with her. Mercy, therefore, considered such support in the program as a worthwhile experience because availability of needed resources would enhance both lesson preparation and teaching efforts.

Therefore having readily available materials support from their mentors is a relief and good experience for them. For instance, Mary commented on the difficulty in getting materials as a beginning teacher and how her mentor supported her in that respect:

Sundays I come here to prepare and as a first year teacher it is tough because you don't have really a wealth of materials to be working with, you kind of have to make it and build it on your own and it's another reason it's nice to have my mentor because she has been teaching for 20 years so she has a lot of materials that I can borrow and use. I grab a lot of math games and reading games from her, extra things like that.

Mary acknowledged the fact that her mentor is not only an experienced teacher but that she has a wealth of teaching and learning resources that they can borrow and use in preparation for teaching. Mary considers material support from their mentor a helpful component of the program. Mary understood that it is hard to have your own materials to prepare for teaching as a first year teacher.

Though mentors have adequate stock of needed teaching and learning resources to support RTs, descriptions of the participants indicated that they were conscious of the mentors' willingness to share with them. They understood the difference it made in the

lives of the residents. This narrative by Abby supported how comfortable the residents were in working with their mentors:

She is so willing to share. Like a lot of the furniture in here is hers but you know as a first year student it's hard and you can't afford to be buying a lot of things.

She shares her furniture, books. She has a wealth of books.

Abby felt that the mentor is willing to share and support them in having access to materials they needed to be effective. Abby conceded it is difficult to buy the teaching materials so it is very helpful that a resourceful and willing person is there to support them and this makes it possible for residents to come forward with their concerns and feel comfortable receiving support. Abby, in response to the question concerning aspects of teaching in which she worked with her mentor stated:

I think they really help you with everything. I know here at my school, she has endless resources really and it's amazing because I could say, for example, last week we were working the short e vowel sound for a spelling pattern. So I went up to her office and said what do you have for a short e and she gave me games and certain activities and she had worksheets that we could work on. So, one big part is materials. So I have a file cabinet now full of things that I can use that she had right away for me. So a lot of material things or advice, that way she gives me.

Abby felt that their mentors readily assisted them with everything. Conscious of this welcoming and willing attitude of their mentors, Abby felt comfortable in going to the mentor's office to share her challenges. Abby felt the mentor had assisted her with materials and advice. This atmosphere of willingness to share resources and to share

problem and receive needed support would allow the resident to have a good experience.

There is an atmosphere of give and take in which residents were ready to talk to the mentors about their needs. This positive environment is enhanced by the ability of both parties to work together, and it is enhanced by the residents' perceptions of how comfortable they were around the mentors. This narrative of Abby supported how comfortable they were with their mentors:

I'm lucky because both of the ladies at both schools are very kind and approachable and professional and knowledgeable. But you should be if you are a mentor too. But I'm very lucky that I click very well with my mentor and we have similar personalities. You can tell that she wants to help you, and she is always been very willing. If am uncomfortable with anything, you know, if am having a hard time connecting with a kid or he or she won't listen to me, she wants to jump in and help or like I said before, she is so willing to share ideas and materials.

Abby thought that both mentors were kind, approachable, professional in their approach and knowledgeable. Abby also thought that the mentors were caring and willing to help. Additionally, compatibility with the mentor and ability to work together was important to Abby. Mentors' possession of resources, their willingness to support RTs and feelings of comfort made the teaching experience so beneficial to everyone.

Theme 4: Instructional Support From Mentors

The participants received a lot of useful instructional support from mentors via many means including classroom observational visits and modeling, meetings, conversations, and feedback. One way that mentors helped to make the classroom teaching experience so valuable for the residents was through modeling. The participants

thought that their mentors supported their learning was by modeling how best to teach certain lessons that might be challenging to them. Narrating how the RTs felt supported by their mentors in this respect, Mary stated:

I mentioned earlier that if there is a lesson that I was uncomfortable with or I wasn't sure of how to teach something she would come in and model that for me, and she would show me how to teach that. You know, I asked her to come and do a writing lesson about writing a letter. So she showed me how to teach 1st graders to write a letter. I got to watch her because she is an experienced teacher. I got to watch her in action how to teach that lesson. And then the next day, I turned it around and kind of gave it my own spin but then, I had seen it just a day before. And then, that next day she watched me, as well, to see how I did with the lesson and after we reflected on the whole process.

My mentor understood that there were certain topics or lessons that would be challenging for me. She also indicated that whenever I was going to teach a challenging lesson she was willing to share appropriate teaching techniques in the classroom through scaffolding. In view of this show of support, Mary felt that they were always able to ask for such support when needed. The narrative also gave an indication that the mentors did not just model how to teach, but that the RTs had the opportunity to practice on their own and also to use the model in teaching while being observed. This process helps the mentors to confirm areas that residents were successful and also to recommend areas that needed improvement. Mary summed it up this way, narrating how they work with mentors:

If I'm not comfortable teaching she might teach a lesson and I will watch while she teaches my kids and the next day maybe I will teach and she will observe me and say this is what you did really well, this is what you need to work on so.

Mary thought that the presence of the mentor was a huge help. This is because the mentors helped them to learn how to teach, to grow, and improve. They let them know that teaching is a learning process in itself. Residents consider such a support to be hugely beneficial to them. This is because they felt it was not always possible to know how to teach a lesson by just reading about it. Observing how an expert does it made a difference. Narrating how she works with the mentor, Abby made this point:

She will come in here and model things for me, that is one of the most beneficial things of the program. It's one thing to read about how you are supposed to teach a lesson but to actually see someone come in here and teach it the way it's supposed to be taught is amazing. For example I wanted to have a word wall, so if you look here at the alphabet and I have words that I put on my wall. I had never seen it before done in a classroom. So to actually have her come in, she introduced me to what a word wall is. She taught me how to introduce words to make it fun. The kids like it. We bring in pom poms and we cheer for words and we do all sorts of fun things. When she introduced it I would sit take notes on what she was doing.

Abby considered the opportunity to watch mentors teach certain lessons a useful experience. She understood how difficult it was to learn to teach by just reading, especially when you have not seen it done before.

Apart from modeling, the participants were able to consult with their mentors about their concerns or ideas. As beginning teachers, they had many concerns. Having someone to talk to was very important for them. For instance in speaking about how they worked with their mentors, Abby stated:

It's really anything that I need help with. If there is an area where I'm concerned, where I don't think I'm doing good job I will bring that to her during our meetings and I will just say poetry, I'm really uncomfortable with poetry and then that's where she will offer me ideas.

Abby felt she was able to consult with the mentor for advice on her concerns and she felt comfortable talking about areas that she needed help with. Mary also indicated she consulted the mentor about many things. Narrating how she works with the mentor, Mary said:

I consult her for academic things. I consult her for behavior things. And really I can vent to her about everything. Even my personal life, she is very invested in me that way and she cares about me, all around as a person. So it's just comforting to have someone that close, in school during my first year of teaching.

The participants felt they were able to work with their mentors in the areas that concerned them. They think that it is comforting to have, in their first year, somebody who cares about them as a person. They were comfortable consulting the mentors for ideas and suggestions about teaching and curriculum, students' behaviors, and even personal issues, which are so important in the life of beginning teachers. The participants also thought they were supported by the mentors through constructive criticism and feedback they received through mentors' class visits and conversations. This helped RTs

focus on things they were perhaps unaware of with their teaching. This next response from Mercy on collaboration with the mentor supports this:

Every week she would ask us what do you want or need, what do you want me to critique you on? I have chosen every single thing, every week was different and when I chose Writer's Workshop, she's critiqued me on it, she came in every single day, summed it up together and gave feedback. She watched me again and helped with many aspects. She comes in and watches, and even videotapes me. I can say there isn't an aspect that she hasn't covered. She's taken notes on many things like how many kids do I called or which kids do I call on more, my feedback to them. How am I making them become critical thinkers rather just saying yes and no and moving on? You know, even down to the little bits of walking kids in the hallway. How do I handle situations? Do I stop? Do I make them wait? How do I handle the walking in the hallway? Absolutely everything.

Mercy felt she was able to decide with the mentor which aspect of her teaching she needed help with so that the mentor could focus on it in the upcoming week. Through class visits and observation, mentors offer feedback to residents on what was observed and on ways to improve. The classroom observation and feedback to the residents are important as another resident, Dan, shared:

Maybe it sheds light on the other half of what I didn't see in the classroom because I only have two set of eyes and there are 20 students in the classroom so there is no way I could soak in the whole situation. So it helps me sort out my beliefs with the mentor there.

The feedback on their teaching helped the RTs have a better view of their teaching and what goes into it. As Dan indicated, it's impossible to realize all that is going with the students and assessing your own teaching. Feedback from a third person enabled reflection and action for improvement.

Descriptions of the participants indicated that the mentors supported them with classroom management and how to address the needs of diverse learners. This comment by Mary supported this "Also with classroom management she would come in and model little tricks and tips, you know, to keep children focused, on-task" Mercy also stated this:

Oh goodness everything. Right away at the beginning of the year my mentor came in and it was mostly classroom management and how am I with getting the students' attention and how am I keeping their attention as learners and if I was meeting the needs of all students?

The participants felt they received instructional support from the mentors with respect to classroom management. The mentors supported them through modeling. They also offered the RTs with ideas and tips on how to engage the students and meet their diverse learning needs. Additionally, the participants felt that the mentors were ready to jump in to their aid whenever they were confronted with an issue with their kids or they felt wanting. This narration by Mary shares how her mentor assisted her in the classroom:

I get a lot of tips from my mentor for she's taught for 20 years and she's had her own classroom. She has tricks from years past so I can go to her if there is specific problem and also the great thing is that she has her office upstairs and so if a child seems really angry or upset or perhaps they are having a hard day, it's great to have her because I can call her and she can take them up to her room and

give them time to relax, kind of like a cool off spot. So that's really nice to have her support there too. So not only that she gives me tips but she also acts like kind of someone they can go to.

This description was an indication of how supportive the participants felt the mentors were. The mentors supported the RTs in whatever way possible and that is what made the difference.

With the RTP, it was also important now to peruse the residents' perceptions on their experience with the graduate courses, which will be the focus of the last two remaining themes.

Theme 5: Ability to Transfer Learning to the Classroom

The graduate courses had a direct benefit on the participants' learning and teaching abilities. Descriptions of the participants indicated that the graduate courses were very important to their effectiveness in the classroom. The graduate program offered RTs new ideas and strategies, which they were able to integrate in their teaching which enabled them to experiment with the new ideas and invigorate their teaching. In narrating how the graduate courses were helping to transforming their ideas and skills in teaching Ann stated, "just the course work I think gives us something that we can take into our rooms," Ann further stated:

I believe that it's just giving us a way to kind of take those ideas and use them right away unlike during your whole undergraduate, you just write ideas down and you never really have the chance to put it into practice and to use it. So now we can actually use it and go see what's working and what doesn't work for us with these kids.

Ann felt that the course work provided her with new ideas that she could use in the classroom teaching. She appreciated experimenting with new pedagogical ideas from the graduate courses in her classrooms and seeing how it worked in that context.

Mary also felt the same way when she said “We have been able to quickly take the information you learned in class directly into the classroom the next day and it’s awesome. Instead of trying to file it in your head for the future.” Mary also thought that the graduate courses had immediate impact on their classroom teaching and learning. Mary tried comparing the graduate courses in the RTP with their undergraduate courses. In this program the RTs were able to use the knowledge gained practically, right away.

The participants also thought that integrating and experimenting with the new ideas in the classroom made lessons lively and enriching for students. This is because the students liked the new experiences. Mary stated this about the graduate courses professors:

She taught us a lot about assessing and then fun ways to teach too like doing book clubs or literature circles and guided reading. Just different means of helping your kids to be readers and that is a good example of trying those different things in my room. So really you able to just kind of experiment, which is great, and kids love it and they don’t know you are kind testing something on them, they are just enjoying having all those different experiences.

Mary felt that she was learning new teaching ideas and strategies for example on assessment and how to teach children to be readers. Mary was able to experiment the ideas in her classroom and she thought that it made the lessons lively and enjoying experience for the students.

The participants equally thought that the RTP was helping them grow professionally as budding teachers. The new ideas and ability to utilize them in the classroom was seen as opportunities for them grow and mature as teachers. This response by Mercy supported how the program helped her improve professionally and academically:

I just think professionally there is no greater experience. First year teachers should have people to rely on to help you professionally. This has helped me just soar and academically I have been able to take what I have learned and actually apply it in my classroom. I have a math class right now and it's actually making sense and I can come back and say oh this is exactly what the students are doing wrong and this is what they need to do to help fix it. I have seen a lot of growth this year, through this program, academically, socially, and professionally.

Mercy thought that the RTP helped her grow both professionally and academically. Mercy was also happy that the courses offered her new insights that could be applied in the classroom. Abby also thought that the graduate courses were transforming her teaching. She said:

There is a lot of reading in grad school, which is good. I'm reading about new ideas and some is more theory and then some ideas you can use with your kids. They're both great.

Abby's response showed that there was a lot work in the graduate program. The program offered theoretical ideas that increased the RTs understanding. It also gave practical ideas and insight that were readily applicable in the classroom. The residents

also spoke about the university supervisor, professors, and assistantship package in the graduate program.

Theme 6: Support With the Graduate School Courses

The participants have had great experiences in the graduate program. Their descriptions showed that they received great support from all those in-charge, the advisor, mentors, faculty members, and also with the assistantship package. Mary made this all-encompassing response on experience in the program:

I have just been really enjoying my classes. I think that the professors really look to the residents with respect because of our very full plates. I know at least with two of the professors I had checked in by asking, Am I given you enough time for assignments? Are you overwhelmed? What can I help you with? And the University advisor and mentors always check in to see how everything is going. And so I feel like, all around, with the University piece and the public school, they are all concerned about our progress and feelings. Yes, they recognize each other.

This description showed that Mary thought that she had a good experience, full of support and recognition in the graduate program. Mary enjoyed the graduate classes and thought the professors respected them and had high expectations for them. She also thought the professors gave the RTs encouragement, support, and accommodations appropriate to their needs. Mary also thought that that both their mentor and university supervisor were interested in their progress and growth as graduate students. Mary equally thought that the University and local school system worked hand-in-hand, which was great for their experience in the whole program.

The participants thought the University advisor to the program was a great source support for the with respect to their graduate courses. Ann stated this on how she worked with the University advisor:

She is more like our [University] lady. So we go to her when we are scheduling classes and trying to pick which classes to take. She helps us with that and gets all that set up and then we meet with her during the semester too. The six of us, the residents meet with her, and just kind of talk, catch up with each other, make sure everybody is doing okay, and then again answer any questions we have. So she is the one that is helping us through classes, picking classes and then the things we have to do at the end of the program.

This description by Ann was an indicative of the University advisor supporting the participants' experiences in the program in diverse ways. The University advisor helped to make sure everything was set up for them with their program of study. The supervisor was the one who made sure that they met all program requirements and she also helped with the RTs' final Independent Study.

It was not only Ann who felt that they had support from the University advisor with their graduate studies. Dan also mentioned how supportive the supervisor had been to him. He said this on how he worked with the University advisor:

The University advisor helps me out in the aspect of signing-up for classes and getting through the program. She is very relatable and very personable. She let's me know what to expect at every step of the process. She goes out of her way; she brings dinner or snacks and is there to guide me through the college courses.

Dan made it clear that he received a lot of support from the advisor with respect to

his graduate courses. The advisor was in charge of the program and helped the RTs with everything.

The participants also spoke about the assistantship and paid tuition connected with their graduate program. The participants considered the assistantship package as a great benefit for them. Commenting on how it was like working under the conditions of a resident teacher, Mary stated:

Having free tuition for graduate school is a good motivator to make sure that you're doing your best and so it's a very wonderful opportunity. It's amazing being able to come into a school with your own students and also being able to get your master's degree basically for free. So it's a great program. It's wonderful.

Also, commenting further on reasons for joining the RTP, Mary reiterated that:

It's just amazing that like with the stipends and the paid tuition, I always wanted to go to graduate school but it probably would not have been possible, for me. Continuing my education is just so important, and it is something I always wanted to do, especially right out of the undergraduate degree. It's hard to go right into graduate school, especially if you want a job as well. And so that was a big thing getting my schooling paid for.

The two narrations by Mary showed how good she felt about the experience in the graduate program, in particular, and the RTP. Mary was happy about the opportunity for master's degree together with classroom teaching experience. She was feels grateful for the assistantship package-stipend and paid tuition conscious of the implications of paid tuition for her further education. This was because her ambition for further education would not have materialized without such a financial support. Having looked at the

participants descriptions that portrayed their actual experiences (Moustakas, 1994) within the Resident Teacher Program it was important we also looked at their descriptions with respect to the elements that structure their experiences in the program.

Analysis Based on Structural Descriptions

The next six relevant themes were identified from the participants’ structural descriptions describing contexts, elements, or conditions that structure the experiences of participants in the Resident Teacher Program. These themes can be found in Figure 5.

Structural Descriptions	Categories	Themes
	Teaching Responsibility	
		8. Professional development resources and other school personnel
Mentoring Support		9. Meetings with mentor structured into time
		10. Full time mentors appointed by the University and school district
Graduate Program		11. Courses commitment /School commitment=Double commitment
		12. Seminar with Advisor structured into time

Figure 5. Structural descriptions, categories and themes within structural descriptions.

The six themes are described below with their supporting narratives from the interviews. The first two themes focused on teaching responsibility as a category and how that structure shaped the residents’ experiences.

Theme 7: Resident Teaching as Full Time Teaching Job

According to the structural descriptions of participants, one of the conditions that constitute a context of the participants’ experience in the Resident Teacher Program was the teaching responsibility. The participants’ classroom responsibilities were the same as

any regular teacher. They were actual classroom teachers. This narration by Abby on what their responsibility as RTs supported this:

Well we are classroom teachers so our duty is pretty much the same any other teacher, only we are lucky enough to have the support of a mentor if we have questions. So I mean, we have the same duties as any other teacher in the school.

Abby understood that though they were RTs, when it comes to the classroom they were like full time teachers. The same position about the RTs' was made by Mercy when she said.

It's the same as the life of a first year teacher, second year teacher, third year teacher. You take on the same responsibilities as a teacher. You are responsible for the students in your room, for the curriculum, to meeting all the standards. As a resident teacher I supposed you have the help from a mentor throughout the day when I need her to be there for me, she pulls kids to work with interventions and you just collaborate, share ideas, and she comes in your room and models things for you, she gives you feedback so. But mostly, you have the responsibility of any other normal teacher.

Mercy knew that they had the same responsibility like the regular teachers. She also understood exactly what they do. They were responsible for students, preparing and teaching in line with standards. She was equally mindful of the fact that there were resident mentors in the schools to support them with their teaching. The descriptions of the participants showed that not only did the RTs know that they had full time classroom duties; they also understood what they were specifically supposed to as regular classroom teachers. The following narration by Ann supported this assertion:

Just everything. It's prepping, it's planning, it's making sure everything is set but also going through the curriculum, going through the standards, making sure you're hitting everything, all the concepts you need to be hitting, make sure they are learning what they need to be learning, and all that stuff on top of it. So it's really just everything that everyone in the building is responsible for. We have the same duties.

The description by Ann showed that she knew very well that they had the same full time classroom teaching responsibility as the regular teachers in the building. Ann understood that their work came with many and varied responsibilities. Planning was a huge part. Preparation and teaching according curriculum and standards was a must for them. Also attending meetings was a professionally unavoidable duty.

Performing full time classroom responsibilities demand time for planning and classroom teaching. This served as a condition for one's work as a teacher. The descriptions of the participants showed that the RTs understood that both planning for teaching and classroom work demanded time. In considering what her day was like as a resident teacher, Mary said:

I usually get here at about between 6:30a.m. and 7:00a.m. in the morning and then usually on the weekends is when I do bulk of my planning. So either Saturday or Sunday or sometimes both I come in and do my planning. I come in I do exactly the same thing as any other teacher. I have the same responsibilities. So the day starts at about 8:05 and I go through my day and just like anyone else we end at 3:00 o'clock.

The description indicated that Mary knew that school hours were structured into full time teaching work. Being in your classroom from 8:05a.m. - 3:00p.m. was non-negotiable. She also knew that planning and preparation to teach was sine qua non with effective teaching but demanded time, attention and action. Another theme with the teaching component is the presence of professional development and other personnel in the schools.

Theme 8: Professional Development Resources and Other School Personnel

The participants did not work in isolation in the schools. Just by their presence in the schools there were other colleagues, personnel, and resource people that they needed to work with. These interactions also shaped their existence and experiences. Some of the other conditions that constituted contexts of the RTs' experience were the participation with school professional development resources and the principal's supervision and evaluation of their teaching.

Descriptions of the participants showed that there were professional development resources like new teacher workshop and instructional coaching in the schools. The new teacher orientation was organized by the school district and Ann describes it in this way:

There was a new teacher workshop that we had to go to and that was a couple of days of curriculum stuff. They would go through the science stuff and explain that to you, and then math and social studies.

Ann recognized the existence of new teacher orientation, which they attended for a couple of days. She recognized that they were introduced to the school curricular at the orientation program.

Descriptions of the participants showed also that there was on-going professional development through instructional coaching in the school district. This narration by Mary on what it was like teaching all the subjects in the curriculum supported existence of instructional coaching:

It's not that bad and they have instructional coaches, for example there one for science. She is a great like a mentor as well. She is very busy because there is only one of her and there are a lot of schools. She offered to come in and teach a lesson or she supports the teachers in any way for science. It's the same with social studies, reading, and math. So there is kind of one leader for each subject or content area that helps us out.

Mary's responses indicated availability of instructional coaches in the school district. The instructional coaches according to Mary act as resources for teaching in the curriculum areas. The instructional coaches helped teachers including the RTs with ideas on how to teach individual subjects. The RTs also had to work with their school principals.

The principals' visit to classrooms was another feature of the resident teacher experiences in the schools. The principals made sure teachers taught according the curriculum and standards. This description by Mary on her experience with curriculum and standards supported this statement:

I think that as far as standards, it's more of the principal role because it's part of his job too and he would come in and say what standards are you hitting here? How was that going? Throughout the school year, the principal popped in to see how I was doing and to make sure that I am getting all those objectives down that I need to be covering.

The narrations by Mary gave some indications of a context of the participants' classroom teaching experience. The principal visited classrooms to monitor the teachers' work. Through observation, questioning, and conversation with the residents the principal had to make sure were teaching what they ought to be teaching at that grade level.

The participants' descriptions showed the types of observations teachers including the RTs received from the principals. In his description of how he worked with the principal, Dan added that, "He does both formal and informal observations. I think as a first year teacher he completed two formal evaluations and many walk-throughs or informal observations." Dan knew that on many different occasions the principal would pop into his classroom to check on him, making sure standards were being met.

Not only did the participants knew the principals would observe them but they had an idea of what the principals expected within their teaching. There were certain things the principals expected should guide the teachers' preparation of lessons and what they teachers. Abby said this on how she prepared to teach:

When I'm planning my lessons, we have four critical questions that our principal is encouraging us all to ask. So the first question is what do we want our students to know? How do we know when they know? What do we do when they don't know? And then what do we do when they already know? So as I am lesson planning, those questions are what I am asking myself.

Abby knew how they had to structure their lessons according to the principals' expectations. The suggestions from the principals could support residents' teachers by guiding their lesson preparation and teaching. The principals through supervision, constituted a major factor that could influence RTs' experience with teaching. In view of

this the participants' perceptions of their principals was crucial. In her narration on how she worked with the school principal Mercy added:

He gives you positive feedback. I have heard you about those principals you just fear and personally with mine if I ever had a personal problem, or issue, or problem with a child, or something I wanted to try in my classroom, I felt comfortable enough to go to him and say this what I trying in my classroom do you, do I have your approval? Is it ok? You know maybe he's going to say yes, maybe he will say no but I still have the confidence to go to him and know he will handle it professionally and respectfully. He is also always asking about your personal life, your family, because he actually cares about you personally rather than just as a teacher in his school or things like that. So it's very welcoming.

Mercy expressed initial fears and panic about the principal. Those fears gave way to confidence over time. Mercy felt comfortable going to the principal with questions on the curriculum, students, or personal issues. Mercy sought approval from their principal on things she wasn't sure of or new things she wanted to try out in the classroom. Mercy felt that their principal dealt with her inquiries respectfully and professionally. She thought that the principal cared about her as a person.

The participants also worked with other teachers, especially, those that were at same grade level. With the structure of the schools they needed to collaborate as a team. They were also the other RTs that they worked with since they were three RTs in a school. These relationships also provided a context for the participants' experiences. Narrating how she worked with other teachers and the cohort Mercy stated:

Oh my gosh, I will say I work with the other resident teachers closest because I mean they are going through the same things. I then see every single day, I go classes with them and things like that. So for problems I usually go to them and my mentor but I am not afraid to go to the other second grade teacher and say something like I am doing this for the 100th day of school, would you ever want to do that too? You know, our teaching styles are different but we are still meeting the same standards and it's so nice to bounce ideas off each other. There are also other past resident teachers in the school and they are so welcoming and they understand what we are going through this year with school and having your own classroom. So you we share things over the email and just bounce ideas off each other. If we ever need anything, even a book or something they are more than willing to share. So I think I'm lucky, no I know, that I'm very lucky to be a part of this school.

The narration by Mercy showed that the RTs worked with other teachers in the schools. Mercy thought that they worked very well with each other as a cohort. They saw each other daily; problem solved, and attended classes together. Mercy's description also showed that the participants collaborated with their grade level team. They shared ideas together and Mercy thought the other teachers cared about them. The presence of other teachers provided a supportive environment for the RTs. This is what Mary said on what it was like to be working with other the teachers as a team:

It's fun. I'm lucky because I'm first grade and there are two other first grade teachers and one of them has taught for 20 years. So she knows her stuff. So I can go to her if I need any support or help with anything and the other first grade

teacher, and she was a resident teacher last year here and she got hired as a classroom teacher. So it's nice to have her because she understands how busy I'm and the process that we are going through. So I have the support of a veteran teacher and also a second year teacher. So that's been very nice having that team of teachers willing to help me.

Mary understood how the other teachers in the team were affecting her experience. The other teachers understood the RTs' situation and were willing to support them. This provided a congenial atmosphere for the resident's experience.

Participants also spoke about placement of the RTs in the schools. Descriptions of the participants repeatedly pointed to how the continuous placement of the RTs in the same grade level was seen as worrying to some of the regular teachers in the schools. Some of these comments revealed how the residents viewed that structure. Ann said:

I think that they appreciate the hard work that we do and the time and the effort that we put in but I really think that it's hard for some of them who always have a resident on their team because it is constantly somebody new and it is constantly somebody who they have to get used to or who they have to kind of explain things to all the time. So I don't think that they feel negatively about it, I think it is just something that goes along with the program because I know a lot of times we get put kind of in the same grade. So it's just balance it.

This statement from Ann showed that she thought that the teachers recognized and appreciated their hard work. It also portrayed the structure of the program in terms of placement of RTs and its potential ramifications. Ann felt it was hard on some of the teachers who always had a new resident teacher on their team. Though Ann did not think

the teachers were negative about it she equally thought that they were not really comfortable either. They constantly had to get used to new RTs and had to explain things to them. This is because by work structure they needed to work together as a team. This same issue was raised by Mary portraying the participants' consciousness of the simmering but covert discontentment among some of the teachers who constantly have new RTs on their team. Mary thought that the situation could potentially be a reason for some schools to reject the program.

Since they had to work together as a team the regular teachers had to train the RTs in some ways even though it's not their job. That would bring them to the same page for effective collaboration. However having to constantly train new colleagues could be recipe for discomfort. Abby had this to say about how veteran teachers embrace the program:

I think, I think it's difficult for some. For third grade this year there is only three of us so I try to see it from their perspective too that with a teacher coming in and out every year, it's hard to have a working relationship with your colleagues, so from their perspective I can see how it would be a little difficult because they kind of have to train me in a little bit too.

Abby, felt that as much as the regular teachers embraced the program the placement structure posed challenge to some of them. This point is also asserted by Mary when she concluded that, "I think that there is probably maybe some mix feelings among some but overall it's very positive" The teachers embrace the program and are positive about it. They are supportive of the residents especially as team members. However

participants thought that placement structure in the program is a bit of concern to some teachers. This is important since it could silently impact on the RTs' experiences.

The presence of other cohorts also provided unique conditions for the participants' experiences. Narrating how fun their experience can be Mercy stated:

I'm lucky because we get along so well. So it's a lot of fun because you have the support of the other resident teachers and since the experience is so unique it's nice to have two others with you that know what you are going through and that way you can talk about that together.

Also narrating how it is like returning to college as graduate student Abby also said:

And now being in the residency program all of our classes, or almost all of our classes, are with each other so it's nice to kind of check-in during the week, where we have a little group chat online so if someone needs help with something, if we need to bounce ideas off each other, we are close enough where we can just throw out something on our chat and talk about. So it's nice to have the relationships with all of the RTs and that we can just kind of communicate whenever we need, it's ideal, so that's fun.

The statements showed how the presence of other RTs in the RTP provided a positive context for their overall experience. They shared ideas on their common experiences and supported one another in times of need. The presence of other RTs and the close relationship among them helped to make their experience fun and enjoyable. In addition to working with other personnel in the school are meetings with their mentors.

Theme 9: Meetings with Mentor Structured into Time

A meeting with the mentor is one of the elements that structured the life of the participants. Each resident had a day of the week that they had to meet and collaborate with their mentor. After observing a resident teacher's teaching in the classroom a mentor would meet with the resident to chat on how things went and also planned the way forward. The meetings were important as far as participants' learning and teaching were concerned. Narrating how her day as a resident teacher was like, Abby stated:

Every Thursday morning I meet with my mentor for an hour. So from 8:25 - 9:25a.m. that's our time to collaborate. So every week we do that, which is also kind of therapeutic, and I also have a teacher journal where I reflect on daily events.

The statement showed that Abby was conscious that the scheduled meetings with the mentor were a part of the things she had to do as resident teacher. Abby considered the meeting as a time to collaborate with the mentor on her own teaching and learning experiences in the classroom.

The mentors also used this meeting to shape the participants' experiences by checking in with them and holding them accountable on their responsibility. Mentors would ask questions that would push the RTs for excellence. This statement by Mary on how she worked with her mentor supported the above assertion.

When I meet with my mentor, we meet for at least one hour block a week. So while my kids are off at special classes I go there on Thursday. When she checks with me she holds me accountable, like I have these binders for writing and reading and she looks through all my materials and asks questions like what are

doing and how are you assessing them? So she kind of keep me in check to make show that I am doing everything that I should be and she pushes me to do more, to go above and beyond. You know not just teach the lesson but what am I doing that's extra?

Mary thought that such meetings were occasions for mentors to check in with them and hold them accountable for their duties. The mentor would look through their binders on the subjects they teach and also check how they assess the students' learning. Mary also thought the mentor encouraged her to do more than she promises.

Meetings with the mentors were geared towards the specific needs of residents. This is because it was focused on what came up during the week and what residents needed. Mentors used the time to know the needs of the RTs and discuss things that came up during the week. Speaking about how she worked with the mentor, Ann said:

I meet with her every Thursday and we will come in here, this is her office and we come here. The reason we do that is because sometimes my kids have health issues and they need to stay in the classroom and we will come in here and just talk and touch base and we kind of just start off and I ask her any questions and then she will start with my concerns basically, what I need help with and that's been everything from behavior, to what do I do for writing, how do I structure this reading stuff, so it's based on what we need and what comes up during the week. I keep a list, during the week of questions that I come up with and then she also takes notes as she's watching me teach. So then we go over that too and kind of reflect on all that. It's really a reflection process. It's the way we look at it, just how we're doing? How can we do better and keep growing as a teacher?

This response by Ann indicated that such meetings were focused on what the RTs needed to be successful with their classroom teaching. They also went over mentor's classroom observation notes. That served as feedback to RTs and enabled them to reflect on their own teaching and learning in practice.

Theme 10: Full Time Mentors Appointed by the University and School District

Unlike many school situations where mentors for beginning teachers are regular teachers with either fulltime or reduced teaching workload mentors in this RTP are full time mentors. They are experienced teachers appointed by the University and school district to support RTs with teaching and learning in the classroom. They were located in the participating schools where participants worked as RTs. This was significant in terms of the amount of time and attention they could put in to support the RTs.

The residents understand that the mentors are purposely appointed and located in their school to help with them. Responding to whether the mentors are fulltime Mary said "Yes, my mentor is here every day with us from 8:00a.m. - 4:00p.m. So she is here every day all day long" Mary further stated:

Yes, that is their title here in the school. So they don't teach any other classes in the school. This is strictly her job. So she breaks her time apart in three for each of the residents in this school. She spends about a third of her day with me, a third with Mercy and a third with Dan. She spends her time evenly with all the three of us every day. So today I had collaboration time with her and we scheduled our time together. So I might want to focus on math one week and that would be our focus. If I'm not comfortable teaching she might teach a lesson and I will watch while she teaches my kids and the next day maybe I will teach and she will

observe me and say this is what you did really well, this is what you need to work on so. No, she is not teaching any other grade here. She is fulltime just for us for support.

Mary understood that the mentor is a full time employed and located in the school just to support their learning and teaching. This consciousness was significant for their experience. The participants knew that they were not alone or neglected. They had experienced teachers available to help them. Mary knew that the mentor did not teach any other class in the school. She was in the school from morning to close of school day and shared her time in the school among the three RTs. She was there to support the RTs.

Mary's statement shows that since the mentor is in fulltime position she has enough time for them during school. Since she shares her time among them each resident equally there is enough attention and support from their mentor. Therefore, she is able to help them a lot. She is able to do demonstration teaching for each resident that might find teaching something uncomfortable. She has time to watch resident put what they learn from her teaching into practice. This would help the participants to learn from master teacher and be able to practice what they were learning.

Apart from the fact that the mentors are full time and are seen to be supportive, they are also seen to be experienced in teaching. The participants thought the mentors were experienced and as such abled to offer them with useful ideas and suggestion, which was a huge help for them. Narrating support from the mentor, Ann said

I think she just has been teaching for so long and she's seen so many teachers teach that she has ideas that I wouldn't think of for five years or maybe never that you are just able to get ideas from her and vice versa. She always say oh I never

seen that before so she is getting ideas from us too. But I just think that been able to get ideas help and the guidance because she's done a lot with reading so knowing that I have someone to go to and say okay my guided reading is not working how do I fix it? And she can give you ideas to kind of just implement it. It's been amazing.

Ann viewed the mentor as an experienced teacher with a lot of insights. Ann also saw the mentor as someone who was also willing to learn from them. Ann felt that it was great to have such an experienced and committed individual to fall on when you felt anxiety and doubt with your teaching. This was a source of hope for the RTs. The participants thought fondly about how the mentors affected their experiences. Narrating how her first year teaching would have been without being in the program Martha said:

I don't think I can even really imagine what it would have been right when we got here, we are shown around the school, we were shown our classrooms, where to get different supplies, how to work the copy machine, and then my mentor was able to show me and how to use it and where to go, how to check out books. It seems so simple but once you're stuck in a situation and nobody is there to help you, just don't know what to do. Also, I think that if I didn't have all the feedback that I have right now that I wouldn't be as good of a teacher as I am now. I would still be doing something that didn't work and I didn't realize it but with my mentor and the other residents here, if it is not working we can do something to fix it.

Martha thought greatly of the impact of the program. Martha recounts the support she got from the mentor right from their entry into the school. The mentor introduced her

to all that she needed to know as a beginning teacher. Martha thought that feedback from the mentor and supports from other cohorts have helped to make her a good teacher.

Another significant element of the program that could impact on residents' experience was that fact they had commitment to both teaching and graduate courses.

Theme 11: Courses Commitment/School Commitment=Double Commitment

By participating in the program the participants had to contend with double commitments. They had double commitment because they had full time teaching responsibility and graduate courses to attend to. They needed to respond to the demands of both their graduate courses and classroom teaching. They have to excel in the two spheres of their lives. Both the teaching and graduate school components were essential but combining them had its special intricacies. Describing how it is like to perform full teaching responsibilities Mary stated

I have to do everything that a normal teacher would do but on top of that I also have my fulltime graduate school as well. So I have class from 4:15 - 9:45p.m on Tuesdays. So that's my really long days and I have two courses there and I also have a course with [the University advisor and that's every other Thursday that we meet. So I have full time school and a fulltime job. So I'm very busy all the time.

Mary understood that they had double commitments because they had full time teaching duties and full time graduate school program. After teaching from 8:05 in morning to 3:00 in the evening, Mary has to attend two graduate school classes from 4:15 - 9:45p.m. on Tuesdays. This had implications for time demands and commitment for the program.

The timing of classroom teaching and graduate classes was a condition for the participants' experiences. They had their graduate classes after their long day of teaching in their own classrooms. Narrating how her day looked as a resident Abby added:

Last semester I had graduate class from 4:00 - 10:00p.m. so our Tuesdays were very long since I would get to school at 6:00a.m in the morning and then I would teach from 8:00a.m. - 3:00p.m. and then we have to stay here till about 4:00p.m. and then go over to [the University] from 4:00 - 10:00p.m. So I had pretty much no me time, you know to run errands or to get groceries. Tuesdays, I was booked up all day. You really had to make sure that you were ready for your night class in advance because you had no time to finish up anything up on Tuesday. So I got into the habit of on weekends I would make sure that, before I'd even start the school week, I was ready for my Tuesday class.

It seemed that time commitments to teaching and graduate classes on Tuesdays was a bit of an issue for the participants. Abby understood she was busy throughout the day from morning to 10p.m. on Tuesdays and felt it was too much for her.

Time demands and responsibility involving the teaching and graduate program components of the resident teaching could be overwhelming. Commenting further on how challenging the responsibilities were of a resident teacher, Dan explained:

Depending on the time of the year, like tomorrow, trimester grades are due so I need to be spending my time grading, getting the trimester grades in, curriculum planning, completing University class assignments, so being organized is essential. I need to itemize my workload by prioritizing everything. Or those six things you didn't get done yesterday that you should have gotten done, get piled

onto what needs to be done today, and if you don't get all those twelve things done on your list today then you know it how the next day will go. So if you're not proactive or organized things can really overwhelm you. Things happen you know like maybe you're sick one night, it's not possible to do all six things, or all the things you want to do. So if you get behind, it's going to overwhelm you and it's overwhelms me.

Dan found it was hard trying to find a balance between teaching full time and the graduate courses. There were many things between the two demands and each was important. Dan thought that one needed to prioritize, be proactive, and organized to be successful within such a circumstance. Otherwise it can be overwhelming. Commenting on how the graduate courses are transforming her teaching ideas and practice Mary also said:

So in one aspect, it's really helping me stay organized and to plan ahead because you are forced really to be prepared at all times and you are forced to be working, working, working. Because if you didn't you will sink. You know, it teaches you to balance because if I am focusing too much on my graduate studies the kids in here are going to suffer because of that and if I am too focused on this and I am not giving myself time for school then I am not going to pass my graduate program. So it's all about a balance.

Mary understood the double commitments demands of participation in the RTP. She understood that to be successful in the program she needed to be organized, hardworking, and be able to plan ahead. You need to be balanced and focus as a resident teacher because you need to be successful as a teacher and graduate student as well. The

participants also had to attend biweekly meetings with the University advisor for the group seminar.

Theme 12: Supervisor Meetings Structured into Time

Seminar with the University advisor was also structured into the time and experiences of participants. The advisor had a course with the RTs where they meet once every two weeks for a seminar. Narrating what her day is like as resident Abby said:

With my University advisor, we met every other Thursday and that was a more informal class, so it wasn't as high stress. It was just the six of us, the six RTs, and the University advisor and we would meet at one of the schools. It's kind of therapeutic, just to get our ideas out and offer ideas to other people. So if any of the RTs is struggling with a behavior issue or how do I make social studies come to life? They would give those concerns and we kind of just talk about it.

The participants met with the University supervisor every other Thursday. Abby thought that meeting was very informal, relaxed, and therapeutic. The environment was welcoming. Therefore they were able to voice out their challenges and also offered ideas to support other residents. Abby considered the meeting to be helpful because they were able to collaborate on ideas to help address problems individual RTs had in their classrooms.

The participants also thought that meetings with the University supervisor offered them a safe environment where they could talk about issues concerning their students and offered each other suggestions. Recounting the things she had to attend, Mary said:

I have to be at school by at least 8:00 in the morning until 4:00 o'clock but I am usually here from 7:00a.m. - 5:00p.m. Generally on Tuesday night I will have

class from 4:15 until 9:45p.m. and then I will meet with the University advisor every other Thursday for the resident teacher seminar, which usually would last for about two to three hours. It is just a time to relax and we can all talk about how our students are doing in a safe environment with each other, give each other advice, maybe a lesson, or on a child who maybe having problems.

Mary thought that meetings with their supervisor enabled them to talk through their problems together and share ideas on solutions. They learned from their challenges together. They received useful ideas and suggestions on lesson planning, teaching, and also how to manage their students. Meetings with the University advisor were sometimes held together with the mentors. This enabled the supervisor and mentors to understand what RTs were going through and the appropriate support was offered to each resident. That way they could assist the RTs with the necessary support. Talking about such meetings with the supervisor, Abby said:

Yes, we met with the University advisor every two weeks and that was informal, which I liked. It's a good break from going to all of the other classes. The University advisor was very casual and easy to talk to. So I enjoyed that. We would bring up any concerns that we had and we kind of just talk about it. And we also had a meeting last semester where the three supervisors met with all of us individually and it was kind of just check-in. It was how are things going? Is anything us that we can provide you? They were also trying to see how we were doing and they wanted to help us. So then if we had anything to share with them the University advisor would bring that to our next class and she would say so one of you would want us to learn more about technology so then she would go out

and do research, she even brought in Technology expert from [the University] to come talk to us. So for one of our classes we just, we are gathered around a Smartboard and it was about technology. So it's very tailored to our needs. It was scheduled around what we were interested in learning about which was nice.

Abby thought they were comfortable working with the supervisor and were also able to bring their concerns to the meetings with the supervisor. Abby also indicated that sometimes the supervisor held the meeting together with the mentors. They met the participants individually and tried to see how they were doing so that would know the support they needed to offer. This way both mentors and supervisor would be on same page with needs of residents.

Abby equally thought that if a resident raises an issue that needed further discussion and attention of all, the supervisor would bring it to their next meeting. The supervisor would sometimes do research on the issue to get the more information for them. Again, the University advisor would invite an expert to help residents if that was necessary. Abby felt that the meetings with the supervisor were tailored to their needs.

Essence

This part of the analysis described the essence of the data based on the themes as composite of elements of the experience that were universal to all participants and reflected the essence of the experience (1994). The following could be drawn from the analysis of data based on the themes and supporting descriptions as essence of RTs' experiences in the RTP in Figure 6.

The essence of the data regarding the RTs' experiences is described below.

Essence/Assertions
The following were drawn as a composite of the essence of the RTs experiences
Resident teaching experience as double commitments but double support
Resident teaching as the ability to bring University learning to school teaching/learning
Resident teaching as confidence building to transition into regular teaching

Figure 6. Essence of the resident teacher’s experience.

Double Commitment but Double Support

The participants’ experience according to the analysis is characterized by double commitments but also with double support. They had double commitments as teachers with full time responsibility and full time graduate students. They also experienced double support with both their teaching and graduate courses.

Double Commitments

The participants thought that they had full time teaching responsibility and were full time graduate students as well. This was because that is the nature of the RTP. Each of these commitments was involved with numerous activities and demanded considerable amount of time, full attention and action on the part of the RTs. The residents needed to be successful in each as they could not afford to sacrifice teaching for graduate course and the reverse was also true.

Full time teaching commitment. In the classrooms the residents were full time teachers with equal responsibility like any other regular teachers. This meant that they had to be in the school before 8:00 in the morning to 4:00 in the evening from Monday to Friday. They were fully in charge of their classrooms and students all day. They performed exactly the same responsibilities as any regular classroom teacher.

The participants taught all subjects in the curriculum that they were mandated to teach per their grade level. For example they taught disciplines like reading, writing, spelling, science, math, social studies. They were responsible for recess, snack, and getting students to the other required disciplines such as music and physical education. They were also responsible for establishing a positive classroom management system and learning environment. They had to make sure that all their students were accounted for, felt safe, and respected. They also had to plan all their lessons, attend meetings, and conduct parent conferences.

The participants view their responsibility as a classroom teacher as overwhelming because: they are novices and unfamiliar with full time teaching; it involved numerous duties; was time consuming; and also difficult at times. They are new and unfamiliar with complexities of classroom teaching and that made teaching challenging for them.

Their teaching work involved numerous other responsibilities. They were responsible for everything in their classroom like any other teacher. The planning of lessons involved a lot of time and the RTs had to come to the school on the weekends to plan for teaching. It was seen as challenging because some aspects of teaching like classroom management were found to be difficult for the beginning teachers.

Full time graduate student. On top of teaching responsibilities the RTs were full time graduate students with its added commitments. They had a course workload as graduate students and also had to attend classes after long days of teaching. The participants considered days that they attended classes as very long and tiring for them. The graduate courses usually began at 4:00p.m. while they also close from school at 3:00p.m. For example on Tuesdays they had graduate classes from 4:00-10:00p.m.

Therefore when they left home at about 7:00a.m. for school they only returned after 10:00p.m. which was very long, tiring, energy sapping. But that was the nature of things with teaching and the graduate school.

Balancing commitments with both the classroom teaching and graduate courses was a challenge to the RTs. It appeared that they had double job. This could make the experience appear even more overwhelming. The participants understood that double commitments demanded every resident to be organized, and learn how to balance and prioritize the list of required tasks. However the good news was that participants felt that they were not left alone to handle the responsibilities.

Double Support

The participants' experiences in the program were also characterized by double support. They had full support with respect to both their classroom teaching and graduate courses. The support system was to help them to have successful experience in the resident teaching program. The support was also to help them to learn from the process to become better and effective teachers.

Support with resident teachers' teaching. The participants received great amount of support with their teaching from many sources. They received support from mentors, instructional coaches, principals, University advisor, grade-level teams, and the cohort. With the classroom teaching, the RTs had fulltime mentors located in the schools to support them all day with their teaching and learning. The participants thought that they received adequate support from their mentors, in many ways. The mentors had a wealth of useful instructional materials they willingly shared with the RTs. The

participants also had material support from the mentors including books on different topics and even furniture.

The participants considered the mentors to be helpful with their classroom instruction. The mentors would readily model how to teach a topic to any resident who had a challenge teaching a topic or lesson. The participants observed mentors teaching. The participants had opportunity to integrate the new model into teaching while being observed by a mentor. The mentors offered suggestions to the RTs based on their observation. Apart from modeling the mentors also supported the RTs through classrooms visits and observations. During scheduled meetings with mentors they talked about the observation notes of mentors. The meeting was also used to learn about problems the resident might have and support that they needed. The participants were able to talk about their needs because of the cordial relationship between the mentors and RTs.

The RTs also received tips on student engagement and classroom management from mentors. In times of need mentors were on hand to lend the RTs with a hand of support, especially with managing students who were getting out of hand. Again right at the beginning in summer, the mentors spend a lot of time inducting the RTs into the school. They assisted the RTs with setting up of their classroom and planning how to welcome their students and families. The participants were grateful for having the mentors to support them.

Availability of professional development in the district also supported the residents teaching and learning. The participants benefited from the beginning teacher workshop and instructional coaching resources in the district. The RTs were supplied

with ideas about teaching subjects in the curriculum through such avenues. They also learned from the principals' supervision, evaluation methods, and conversations especially on preparation and teaching to curriculum standards.

Colleague teachers in the schools, especially those who taught the same grade level with the RTs, helped their learning and teaching in the schools. The participants felt the teachers appreciated their hard work and the program. Once they entered the school the team members taught them certain things so that they could work together as a team. Team members and other teachers helped them when they needed support. However, the participants felt that some of the teachers who regularly had RTs on their teams were not too happy about the situation. This was because they always had a new team member to work with.

The university advisor also helped the residents with their teaching. Through their seminar meetings, the advisor created opportunity for the RTs to bring forth their challenges for deliberation by all the residents. This helped those with challenges to get ideas from their colleagues and the University advisor. Informally, residents supported themselves in many ways to make their collective experiences successful. They met and talked to each other regularly. They shared ideas and problem solved together. Some of them even planned lessons together and reminded each other of deadlines and above all had fun together.

Support with the residents' graduate courses. The participants' experience with the graduate courses was marked by support from many sources. They received constant support from the University advisor. They also found support from the professors of their courses and also with the assistantship. The University advisor was a

major pillar of support with the RTs' graduate program. The participants felt that the University advisor had a sincere interest in the progress of their work in the graduate program.

The University advisor helped the RTs with everything including picking classes, scheduling, and registration. She was in charge of the RTP and the resident teacher considered her as the one who was helping them through the graduate classes. She made sure that the RTs were meeting all the standards and requirements in the program. She also supports RTs with completion of their final project. The RTs were comfortable going to her for support because they felt she was friendly, supportive, and a great person to work with on all levels.

The participants were also supported by all of the professors in their courses. The participants thought the professors respected them and had high expectations of them. They thought they received encouragement and accommodations appropriate to their needs from the professors. The participants also thought greatly of the paid tuition and stipend they received by being in the RTP. They were grateful for the free tuition and felt it was helping them to achieve their goals of getting a graduate education and become better and more qualified teachers. The participants thought their mentors also showed interest in their progress of work with the graduate courses.

Ability to Connect University Learning to School Work/Learning

The experiences of the RTs were also marked by the ability to integrate what they were learning in the graduate courses into classroom teaching. They were teaching and attending graduate classes. The participants thought that the ideas and skills gained from the graduate classes had direct impact on their classroom teaching.

The graduate program offered the participants new ideas and strategies. They were able to bring that to their classrooms and integrate it with their teaching. That way they were able to experiment with the new ideas and also used the new ideas to invigorate their teaching. The participants felt that ability to bring what is taught in the graduate classes to their classroom teaching was beneficial because they did not just have to keep it in their head for years only to forget about them. They were able to experiment the new ideas with their students, examined how it was working for them in that context. That was possible because they had their own classrooms with students, which added a practical meaning to their learning.

The participants thought that integrating and experimenting with the new ideas obtained from the graduate courses helped to make lessons lively and enriching for students since students liked new experiences. The participants also appreciated the opportunity to learn new idea, strategies, and ability to experiment with them in real classroom setting helped them to grow, mature, and develop both professionally and academically.

Confidence to Transition Into Teaching

One major characteristic of the participants' experience was the feeling of confidence among the RTs to transition from the resident teaching program into regular classroom teaching. They felt very confident about themselves and their ability to teach. The participants thought the program was a great experience. They understood that experience in the program helped them to become more confident about themselves as teachers. They felt confident about their ability to jump into classroom teaching because

they thought the program was helping them to become more prepared and experienced by gaining valuable insights into teaching.

The participants thought that they were getting new ideas, strategies, and insights on teaching. The opportunity to teach and the ability to experiment with new ideas obtained from the graduate courses had also been a huge source of learning and insights to the RTs. Developmental support from the mentors, University advisor, and other personnel in the schools have all supported the RTs' experiences and learning in the program. Thus the classroom teaching exposure, support available in the program, and the graduate courses worked together to enhance the RTs sense of preparedness, maturity, experience, and confidence about their ability to teach and succeed. The participants felt the experience had been helpful. They felt confident as teachers; ready to have their classroom because they thought can now do it on their own. Their initial fears and despair had given way to sense of improvement, maturity, and confidence about themselves and their teaching.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perspectives of beginning teachers regarding their experiences in a Resident Teacher Program. This was important since there was a vacuum in the literature about the perspectives of beginning teachers in teacher residency programs on their experiences. The overarching research question that guided this study was: How do beginning teachers in a resident teaching program perceive their resident teaching experiences? How do beginning teachers in a Resident Teacher Program understand and interpret their experiences? This was implemented further through these sub questions:

- What are the resident teachers' perspectives on the classroom-teaching component of the program?
- How do the resident teachers perceive their mentoring experience in the residency program?
- What are the resident teachers' perspectives on returning to college, as graduate students, in the residency program?

This chapter contains a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. It also contains my reactions. The summaries of the results will be reviewed briefly through an overview of the themes and their corresponding descriptions.

Conclusion statements representing essence of the RTs' experience was also provided and is followed by recommendations for further action and research possibilities.

Summary/Overview of Themes

Theme 1: Numerous and Overwhelming Teaching Responsibility

This theme emerged from the textural descriptions of participants in relation to the RTs teaching duties. The theme focused on the first research question, which was centered on the participants' perspectives on the classroom teaching component of the RTP. By participating in the RTP the participants perceived their classroom teaching work as involving numerous responsibilities, and being both time consuming and overwhelming. Their views on the teaching component had many manifestations.

The participants were very much conscious of the nature and scope of their responsibilities. They were responsible for the children, staying in contacts with parents, lesson planning in content areas, report cards, and parent conferencing. The participants understood their classroom teaching position responsibility was all encompassing just as any other classroom teacher. The issue of workload of beginning teachers has received attention in literature. According to Jonson (2008) beginning teachers are expected to have the same workload as veteran teacher, which is against the norm in other professions. Both the perceptions and realities of the many teacher responsibilities made their job seem daunting for them.

Considering that the participants viewed their teaching job as involved with numerous tasks, time consuming, and challenging at times, it was not surprising that they considered their teaching responsibility as overwhelming. For instance, Mercy found classroom teaching overwhelming right away from the beginning. She realized upfront

that teaching involved paying particular attention to so many little but different things and acting on them. It also involved planning for varied things.

Ann also saw some aspects of teaching like classroom management to be hard to handle as a beginning teacher. Classroom management has consistently been featured in educational literature as a common problem associated with beginning teaching experience (Hung and Smith, 2012; Moir's model 1990; Quaglia, 1989). Multitasking and being constantly confronted with challenges related to management of student behavior could make teaching experience even more overwhelming and frustrating for beginning teachers.

The participants understood that teaching was challenging partly because they were novice and inexperienced. Abby understood that her teaching life was overwhelming because she was new and had not done full time teaching before. It was an indication that she was conscious that she was inexperienced and perhaps unfamiliar with some of the things teachers had to do which actually made teaching frustrating and tiring. It is a documented fact that beginning teachers face challenges and frustrations (Fry & Anderson, 2011). Beginning teachers feel overwhelmed with their responsibilities but the important consideration is whether or not there were structures to support them.

The feeling of inexperience, time demands of responsibilities, the nature of the workload, difficulty with classroom management, and absence of sick leave and substitute support combined to summarize the participants' perceptions regarding their classroom teaching. Though the participants viewed their job as classroom teachers as involved with numerous responsibilities, time consuming, and challenging it was a good

experiential learning opportunity for them. There is no better way to train budding professionals than to be exposed them to what it means to join that profession.

Learning is a continuous process but for it to be effective it needs to be grounded in experience (Kolb, 1984) since learners require experience with the reality. Since the RTs are beginning teachers being assisted to transit into regular classroom it is only proper that they were given experience that is the same as what they would find themselves in the next year. They could not have been treated as student teachers. With embedded support in the RTP, exposing the participants to what teachers really do would give help the participants' develop the attitude, skills, and practical ideas that are needed for them to succeed as professional teachers. Despite their initial feeling of being overwhelmed with their teaching duties the participants were grateful for this opportunity because they thought the program helped them gain confidence and insights with their teaching.

Theme 2: Confidence Building and Insights as Teachers

This theme also focused on the participants' perspectives on their classroom teaching abilities and emerged from the textural descriptions. The participants considered their classroom teaching and participation in the program as great experience. As written above, they were conscious of how the experience was helping them gain confidence with their teaching and that they could now do it on their own. According to Chiang (2008) field-based teacher learning enhances self-efficacy and confidence because it fosters reflection on strengths and weaknesses of one's ability. Fieldwork also help the beginning teachers get useful ideas and insight about students, pedagogy, and content matter (Grossman & Richert, 1988) which enables the teacher to be effective.

The participants felt they were gaining new ideas and insights on many different things while they were gaining practical full time teaching experience in the classroom. Mercy considered confidence building with regards to teaching as a huge gain from the RTP. Her description depicted fears and frustrations beginning teachers encounter with classroom teaching. Through opportunity for classroom teaching and support from her mentor, Mercy thought the experience in the program helped her to improve, become more mature, and confident as a teacher. Such feelings of improvement, maturity, and attainment of confidence are conditions for wanting to continue with a career in teaching.

The participants also thought that the RTP helped them gain insights into the many aspects of teaching life. Mary considered the resident teaching experience as insightful because classroom teaching helped her gain experience into classroom management, teaching techniques, and student behaviors. It has also made her conscious of how to maintain her teacher demeanor. Additionally, she collaborated and formed lifetime professional relationships with the others in the cohort. Ann thought the classroom teaching experience gave insights about different situations and diversity of students. The students in her class made her aware of the different backgrounds and diversity of students and what that could mean for children's education.

Gaining insight and knowledge about students' lives and situations is an important part of beginning teacher development (Kagan, 1992). According to Kagan (1992) with professional growth of pre-service and beginning teachers, teachers try to acquire adequate knowledge about their students so that they can use that knowledge to modify their own understandings and perspectives as teachers with their instructional and classroom management practices.

The classroom teaching exposed the RTs to different situations and lives of students. They considered this confidence would enable a smooth transition into their own classroom, without mentor support, as one of the huge benefits of this program and they were grateful for that. The fact that the participants thought they had gained enough confidence and were prepared to start teaching on their own. This issue was significant because according to Solomon (2009) the RTP is an effort to stop teachers leaving the classrooms within their first few years of entry. The participants understood that without the knowledge, support, and classroom experience, they would be more nervous and not confident in their teaching abilities.

This second theme also relates well with the characteristics of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Kolb saw experiential learning process as a process of creating knowledge, dealing with conflicting and challenging issues, and adapting to the world. The practical classroom teaching exposed the participant to this experience. It is not surprising at all that the participant admitted to having gained a lot of knowledge, insights, and confidence in them. Being in the classroom with a full responsibility and also support was a great learning opportunity for the participants. The opportunity exposed the participant to the intricacies of teachers work including the workload and challenges in the classroom. This process would help the participants to learn from the situation. They would try to find solution to challenges that confront them in their work and try to adapt to the new situation in their effort to succeed. With guidance such environment would stimulate insightful learning and experience which can enhance one's self-efficacy. It is great that the participant noted that they had gained confidence and

insights. The participants also received enormous amount of material support from their mentors.

Theme 3: Material Support From Mentors

The theme focused on the participants' perspectives on material support from mentors and emerged from the textural descriptions. The experience of the participants was partly characterized by easy accessibility to readily available teaching and learning resources from their mentors. The materials and examples were of great help to Mercy who felt she was now able to get resources on her own which was an amazing realization for her. This confidence would continue to enhance both her lesson preparation and teaching efforts. The participants reported feelings of relief since they did not have their own stock of teaching and learning materials and it was also difficult for them to buy them. Lack of resources is always one major issue that confronts beginning teachers (Hung & Smith 2012).

The participants were able to go to their mentors for such materials support because they felt their mentors were people who were relatable, supportive, and comfortable to approach and work with. Abby knew she was lucky because the mentors in this program were approachable, very kind, professional, and knowledgeable. With these qualities and atmosphere it was not difficult for residents to share their needs with them and receive support. It was clear to the researcher that the support that residents received from their mentors went beyond material provision. The fact that the RTs saw the mentors to be kind, caring, professional and willing to share was very welcoming. It was also important relieving that the mentors were able to provide the RTs with material support. These are great attributes of effective mentors. Effective mentors have personal

attributes which emphasize on good relation connection with their mentees and focus on supporting the mentees (Ferguson, 2011; Hudson, 2007) with their needs.

Theme 4: Instructional Support From Mentors

This theme focused on the participants' perspectives on the instructional support from their mentors and emerged from the textural descriptions. The participants thought that they received useful instructional support from mentors in numerous ways. The mentors supported the RTs' teaching and learning through modeling of appropriate teaching practices.

When the RTs found it difficult to teach a specific lesson the mentors would model how to teach it to them. The mentor would also observe the resident teacher integrating what they gained into their teaching. This enabled the RTs to learn from mentors as master teachers. Through this process, the areas of teaching that posed a challenge to the RTs became a learning opportunity. Abby thought that having a mentor available to model how to teach something was one of the most beneficial components of the RTP. She discovered that there was a difference between reading about how to teach a lesson and watching a master teacher teaching especially when you are a novice teacher.

The participants also thought that they were able consult with their mentors for ideas on their teaching. Abby felt that if there was an area of the classroom teaching she was not good at she would bring it to the mentor during their meetings and the mentor would offer ideas. She felt comfortable consulting with their mentor for ideas because she thought the mentor cared about her. Ability to consult their mentors for ideas was a good experience as it helped them learn effective teaching strategies from a respected source.

Another way the participants felt supported with their teaching was through the constructive criticism and feedback from their mentors. Through conversations and meetings after classroom visits mentor offered the RTs feedback on their teaching. This helped the RTs focus on things they were unaware of so that they could serve their students better and also improve as teachers. Mercy knew that every week her mentor would ask her to indicate what aspects of teaching she needed help with so that the mentor could focus on something and offer her feedback. Mercy thought her mentor had covered every aspect of her teaching with such support.

The participants also felt that their mentors helped them with their classroom management which was an aspect of teaching where they faced challenges with like most beginning teachers (Hung & Smith, 2012) especially at the disillusionment phase of their development (Moir, 1990). Here too the mentors supported them through modeling, offering of tips and ideas, and sometimes being around to assist in times of difficulty. Mercy also thought that their mentor assisted her with classroom management, on how to keep student attention, and how to address the needs of diverse learners.

The participants had great deal of support from the mentor with respect to their teaching. It was not surprising that the participants felt confident about themselves and their teaching abilities because mentoring support in the schools is considered as one sure way to ensure success of beginning teachers (Hudson, 2012). This theme also relates with the ideals of experiential learning by Kolb (1984). According to Kolb experiential learning is a process which involves transaction between the learner and the environment in which interaction is huge component. He also sees learning as requiring reflection and observational skills. Interaction between the participants and their mentors was important

for the participants' experience. They learned a great deal from instructional ideas that mentors offered them.

Again, an opportunity to observe the mentors model teaching was also a great opportunity for the participants. They learned the best way to teach a topic, reflected over it and integrated the new insights and skills into their teaching. Effective mentors have supportive behaviors and they are both capable and willing to share ideas with the mentees based on the mentees' needs (Ferguson, 2011). They are strong role models, able to demonstrate the best ways to teach and they also provide feedback (Hudson, 2007) to the mentees. The participants also felt that they had gained so much with their teaching and learning from the graduate courses.

Theme 5: Ability to Transfer Learning to the Classroom

The theme focused on the participants' perspectives on their graduate courses and emerged from the textural descriptions. The participants' experience was also marked by an ability to apply what is learned in the graduate courses in their classrooms. The participants thought that the graduate courses had a direct benefit to their classroom teaching. They were getting new ideas from the graduate courses that they were able to bring into their classrooms. They either integrated the new ideas into their lessons to make it more engaging to the students or they experimented with it to see how it applied to different situations. Gaining new ways of teaching and experimenting with them in real classroom situations also helped them grow academically and professionally.

Ann thought that the graduate courses were giving them content that they could take to their classrooms. Ann felt that unlike undergraduate courses where you got the ideas but you never had a chance to use it; with this program they were able to put the

ideas into practice. This was something Ann considered as one of the biggest benefits of being in the program. She felt this process allowed them to experiment with new ideas as they were working with the actual students. They were immediately able to learn what worked and what did not work.

Ann also considered experience in the program and courses as “great” because it helped her grow professionally, academically, and even socially. She was also happy that the courses offered new insights that were applicable in the classroom and it even helped her identify problems students had with certain concepts and topics. This new understanding helped serve the students better. Abby also thought that they learned many things that they could apply in the classroom. Learning new ideas, applying them, and learning from them helped her grow and become a better teacher.

The participants considered the graduate courses to be beneficial to their teaching experience. The courses had direct benefit to their teaching. They took away new ideas that they applied in their classrooms to invigorate their teaching and made lessons livelier for students. Getting new ideas and strategies from graduate courses, applying these ideas in the classroom, and experimenting with it to check how they could be used combined to help RTs grow and become confident and prepared to teach. Additionally, the participants felt supported with their graduate program.

This theme is equally relevant with the characteristics of experiential learning by Kolb (1984) because Kolb saw learning as a continuous process that creating knowledge and understanding and experimentation. The graduate courses helped the participants to gain new ideas and strategies. By reflection and comparison of the classroom teaching and they course taken, the participants saw that the new ideas would be useful in their

teaching. This process allowed them to see the practical connection between theory and practice and need for continuing professional development. The participants did not just see relation between theory and practice but they experimented with the new ideas in their classrooms. That helped them to stimulate students' interest in the learning process and they also learned how the ideas apply in the real classroom. This made the process holistic because the RTs learned new ideas from college and also how it applies in teaching by experimenting with in their teaching.

Theme 6: Support With the Graduate School Courses

The theme focused on the participants' perspectives on the support they received with their graduate program and emerged from the textual descriptions. Part of the experience of the participants was the support in the graduate studies. The RTs received great support from the University advisor, faculty, and also with the assistantship package, especially, the paid tuition and the stipend. Mary felt she had a good experience, full of support and recognition in the graduate program. In regard to the professors, Mary thought they recognized and respected the RTs and had high expectations for them. She also felt that they received encouragement and appropriate accommodation from the professors.

The participants considered the University advisor to be a huge benefit with their experience in the graduate program because of the assistance with every aspect of their studies. They saw her as friendly, supportive, and great to work with. Again, the participants were equally grateful the program was helping them achieve their dreams of attaining a Master's degree.

Another aspect of the participants experience with the graduate courses was their desire for higher education and the assistantship package. They had desire for higher education and need to become better teachers. They were appreciative for the assistantship package connected with their studies, which was making their desires come to fruition. Now, let's look at the elements that structure the residents' experiences in the program.

Theme 7: Resident Teaching as Full Time Teaching Job

This theme focused on the participants' perspectives on the nature of their job as teachers and it emerged from the structural descriptions. The participants understood they had the same full time teaching responsibility as any regular classroom teachers. Abby and Mercy indicated understanding that as RTs they were like full time regular teachers, with the same classroom responsibilities. The RTs also understood they were ultimately responsible for the students' learning.

The participants knew that performing full time classroom responsibilities demanded a huge time commitment for planning and classroom teaching, which served as a condition for their work as teachers. The participants all knew that planning and preparation to teaching was part of the job and that it demanded time, attention, and action. Another feature of the program was the presence of professional development resources and other personnel in the schools.

Theme 8: Professional Development Resources and Other School Personnel

The theme focused on the participants' perspectives on professional development and other school personnel, which structured their experiences, and it emerged from the structural descriptions. The RTs did not work in isolation in the schools. There were other

colleagues, personnel, and resource people in the schools, which also shaped their overall experiences.

The participants indicated there were professional development resources, like new teacher workshop and instructional coaching resource people in the school. There was an instructional coach for each subject and they acted as resource for teaching in the curriculum areas. Some residents found these resources to be as helpful as their mentors. They helped teachers with ideas on how to teach individual subjects. The school principals also constituted a context for the participants' experiences. Through observation, questioning, and conversations, the principals made sure the teachers were teaching what they needed to be teaching. Mercy expressed initial fears and panic about the principal. However, the fears gave way to confidence when she quickly became comfortable enough to walk up to the principal with questions on issues about curriculum, students, etc.

The participants also worked with other teachers especially, those they were teaching the same grade level with in the school. Mercy indicated that they collaborated with their grade level team by sharing ideas and the other teachers cared about them. Mary understood how the other teachers in the team were affecting her experience. The teachers understood the RTs situation and were willing to support them but some of the teachers on their teams were not happy about always having new RTs on their team.

Mary also portrayed the participants' consciousness of this simmering but covert discontentment among some of the teachers who constantly had new RTs on their team. She thought that the situation could be a reason for some schools to reject the program. She felt that though the teachers were positive overall and supportive, especially as a

team, there were some mixed feelings among some of them. Though it was not portrayed as a big deal it could have potential impact on the RTs' experience.

With the current cohort design of the program, each resident had two other residents to work with in the school. Mercy and Abby thought that the cohorts worked very well and closely with themselves as RTs. They saw each other daily; problem solved, and attended classes together. They shared ideas on their common experiences and supported one another in times of need. The presence of the other residents and the close relationship among them helped to make their experiences educational and fun. Their statements showed how the presence of the other RTs provided a context for their overall experience.

Theme 9: Meetings With Mentor Structured Into Time

The theme focused on the participants' perspectives on the RT's meetings with mentors and emerged from the structural descriptions. Meeting with a mentor is structured into the resident teacher's weekly schedule. Each resident had a time and day of the week when they would meet and collaborate with their mentor. Abby saw the meeting as a time to collaborate with the mentor on her teaching and considered the meetings as therapeutic since it was time to share their experiences and be offered support and assistance.

Mercy thought that the mentors used such meetings to check in with them and hold them accountable for their responsibilities. She knew that the mentors also used such meetings to encourage them to do more than what they promised. Mentors helped to condition the RTs for excellence in teaching life. Mercy thought the meetings were focused on what they needed to be successful with their classroom teaching. They also

went over the mentor's classroom observation notes, which serve as feedback to the RTs on their teaching. The feedback enabled them to reflect on their own teaching and learning in practice.

Meetings with the mentor are structured into time and experience of RTs. It was time to collaborate with the mentor about their teaching experiences. The mentors gave each RT adequate and equal attention throughout the school year.

Theme 10: Full Time Mentors Appointed by the University and School District

The theme focused on the participants' perspectives on the status of the mentors and this emerged from the structural descriptions. The mentors in this program were in full time positions. They were experienced teachers appointed by the University and school district to support the RTs with teaching and learning in the classroom. They were based in the school where participants worked which was significant in terms of the amount of time and attention they could put in to support the RTs.

Mary understood that their mentor was a full time employed to support their learning and teaching in the classrooms. The residents knew that they were not there alone or neglected. They had experienced teachers available to help them. The mentor was in the school from morning to the close of school day. Mary knew the mentor shared her time in the school among the three RTs and that she was there to support them. Another significant characteristic of the program is that residents needed to combine teaching and graduate student responsibilities. Interactions with stakeholders like the University supervisor, professors, veteran teachers, principals, cohorts and other school personnel also made the participants learning experiential. This is because they contribute

immensely to the participants' experience. The participants gained new ideas and understand through engagement with the stakeholders.

Theme 11: Courses Commitment /School Commitment=Double Commitment

The nature of the RTP is such that the RTs had double commitments as fulltime teachers and full time graduate students. The participants needed to perform creditably with respect to both their graduate courses and classroom teaching responsibilities. Both the teaching and graduate school components were very essential but combining the two had its own complexities. Time was a factor for the participants' experience within this circumstance.

Dan found it was overwhelming trying to find a balance between teaching fulltime and the graduate courses. There were many things between the two demands. Dan thought that one needed to prioritize everything, be proactive, and organized to be successful within such a circumstance, otherwise it could become impossible to handle. Mary also understood that to be successful in the program, with double commitments, one needed be organized, hardworking, and be able to plan ahead. The participants' needed to have balance and be focus because they needed to be successful as a teachers and graduate students as well.

Theme 12: Supervisor Seminar/Meetings Structured Into Time

Structured into time in the program and experiences of the participants' was a seminar with the University advisor. The University advisor had a course with the RTs where they met together once every two weeks. The venue alternated between the two participating schools.

Abby thought that the meeting was informal, relaxed, and therapeutic. She considered the environment as welcoming and the supervisor as someone who was caring and comfortable to work with. At the meeting, the resident teacher shared their challenges and problem solved together by freely offering suggestions and ideas. Mary also thought that meetings with their University advisor provided a safe environment for them to talk through their problems together and share ideas on solutions to certain situations. They learned from each other's challenges and shared ideas on lesson planning, teaching, and managing students. Interactions between the participants the stakeholders in the RTP and the support participants gained from such interaction offered a good ground for experiential. As has been indicated by Kolb (1984)

Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the results and resultant essence it could be observed that the participants' were fully conscious of their experiences in every aspect of the Resident Teacher Program. They were not just in it; they knew and understood their daily experiences and how their lives were structured by the conditions within the program. They understood their experiences with the classroom teaching. They were also aware of their experiences within the graduate school program, and conscious of their experiences with mentoring support. A number of things could be said, specifically, on the experiences of the RTs in the RTP based on the research questions.

Double Commitment With a Lot of Work But With Double Support

The life of the participants as resident teachers was one of double commitment but also with double support. This assertion related to all three of the research questions. It reflected the participants' perceptions and understandings of their experiences in

respect to the components of the RTP: classroom teaching responsibility; mentoring support; and graduate studies. With the structure of the RTP, the participants were full time teachers with full time graduate coursework as well. In terms of teaching the participants had the same teaching responsibility as any other teachers in the schools. They were in charge of the students all day. They taught, plan lessons, attended meetings, and managed students and all other things connected with teaching. They were not exempted from responsibility or expectation because they were graduate students.

The participants' sometimes thought their teaching job was overwhelming because they were novices and unfamiliar with the terrain of full time teaching. They understood that their teaching job involved many responsibilities. They were in charge of the classrooms and responsible for everything, including teaching, planning, care and safety of students, classroom management, parent conferencing, attending meetings and everything else that a teacher is expected to do. The participants' also thought some aspects of the classroom teaching; particularly classroom management was a challenging experience.

On top of the teaching, the RTs had full time graduate coursework with its commitments. They had to attend classes and do course work as full time students which equally demanded time and attention. Balancing teaching responsibility and graduate work was hard for the RTs because it demanded a lot of time. To be successful in combining the two roles the RTs needed to have balance and be able to prioritize.

Days that they attended classes were long and tiring for the participants. Both the classroom teaching responsibility and graduate course work required adequate preparation. Getting time for this was a challenge for the participants. They had to resort

to sacrificing their personal time on the weekends to come to the school so that they could prepare for both equally useful but demanding responsibilities.

The life of the participants was also marked by double support. They were not alone and they received adequate support with both their teaching and graduate courses. They understood their mentors were there to help them with their teaching and development. The mentors supported the participants' classroom teaching in many ways. The mentors provided the RTs with material support like furniture and books on many topics. The mentors also provided the RTs with instructional support through many means like modeling, consultation, classroom visits, constructive feedback, meetings, provision of tips and physical presence.

The school principals, instructional coaches, and the beginning teacher induction in the school district helped the resident teacher with understanding and respect to curriculum and standards. The collegial of teachers who worked with the RTs in grade level teams equally supported the participants' by explaining things to them and collaborating with them. The six participants were a source of support for each other as RTs. As peers they shared their challenges with teaching, problem solved together. Some of them even planned together. They attended some courses together, shared ideas, and reminded one another of schedule commitments.

The University advisor also supported the participants' with their classroom teaching and graduate courses. The seminar course with the University advisor provided an avenue for the participants' to share their classroom teaching challenges and receive suggestions from their peers. The University advisor also supported the participants' in many ways with respect to their graduate courses. She helped them with scheduling,

course registrations, and their final Independent Studies. The professors were equally helpful to the participants' with their classes by providing them with the needed accommodation and encouragement.

It is not out of the norm that the resident teacher saw their teaching responsibility as numerous, time consuming, challenging, and overwhelming because that is in congruent with teacher development ideas. According to Bell and Gilbert (1994) at the first level of teachers social development beginning teachers feel isolated in their classrooms and perceive teaching as problematic. They also indicated at the first level of teacher personal development, beginning teachers both recognize and accept that some aspects of teaching are problematic. The participants in this study saw their responsibility as overwhelming. They felt they were responsible for everything in their classroom and considered some aspects of teaching like classroom management as challenging.

I think the experience of the participant was useful because it was experiential and agrees with the ideas of Kolb (1984). The process seemed daunting for the residents but it was good for their learning because it offered them practical regular classroom teaching experience which was what was needed at their stage. They needed to understand what regular teaching is through practical experience and guidance. It was also to help them learn by reflecting on their practice and that of others. The interactions with and support from the mentors, University supervisor, teachers and other personnel the school was to help the gain the insights and experience they needed to take off successfully as teachers. It was good that the classroom teaching helped the participants to work with many others including but not limited to the mentors, team, and cohorts. It was good opportunity

because learning to work collaboratively is according Bell and Gilbert (1994) the second stage of teacher social development.

Bringing Theory to the Classroom Practice

Again the participants' experience was characterized by the ability to experiment with what was taught in graduate courses back to their classroom. This assertion reflected the participants' perception and understanding of their experience with respect to both their classroom responsibility and enrollment in the graduate courses. The graduate courses have direct impact on the classroom teaching. The participants knew that what they were learning from the graduate classes was useful and had practical value in their classroom teaching and learning.

They knew they did not need to store the knowledge in their heads or in a notebook for future teaching because they could readily apply their learning into their classrooms. Fortunately they had classrooms and they were able to implement or experiment with the new insights, ideas, and strategies from the graduate classes. Integrating the new ideas into teaching helped to make their lessons lively and engaging for the students. It also enabled the participants to learn from it by knowing how the new ideas applied to specific and real-teaching situations.

Experimenting with the new ideas in the classroom gave a practical touch to their learning, which could lead to a contextualized and authentic understanding of ideas in teaching. This brought theories learned and classroom practice together which is consistent with how proponents of the resident program viewed teaching. According to AACTE (2010) they view teaching as academically taught but a clinically practiced

profession. With this experience, it was not surprising that the participants felt confident and prepared to jump into full time teaching during the second year of teaching.

The graduate courses in addition to classroom teaching made the participants experience even more experiential in line with ideas of Kolb (1984). This is the process offered the participating opportunity to learn how to adapt to the world of teaching and essence of new. It gave them useful knowledge to teaching and opportunity to experiment with it. By teaching and taking classes the participants were able to learn new ideas that are applicable in the classroom. They were also able to experiment with the new ideas in their classroom. The process is also consistent with teacher development ideas.

According Bell and Gilbert (1994) at the first level of teacher professional development beginning teachers learn to try out new activities. Also at the second level they develop new ideas and classroom practice. The participants experimented with ideas and strategies they got from the graduate classes. By so doing they would get new insight and develop a pattern for their own classroom practice. The process was a holistic teacher learning opportunity exposing the participants to application of theories into practice. It would help them to learn from their practice and also value continuous professional improvement. No wonder they have so much confidence in themselves.

Confidence to Transition Into Teaching as a Career

The experience of the participants was also characterized by an overwhelming feeling of confidence and preparedness to teach, which was refreshing. This assertion reflected the participants' perception and understanding of their experiences with components of the resident teaching program particularly the classroom teaching. With the experience of classroom teaching, aided by developmental support from mentors'

ideas, the participants felt ready to jump into teaching with confidence. The participants were very grateful for the opportunity to be in this program because they felt and understood that the components of the program were working together to preparing them for a career in teaching.

The participants felt the total experience had been helpful. Challenges and frustrations beginning face compel them to contemplate leaving teaching (Goddard & Goddard, 2006) but that was not the case here. The opportunity to experience full time classroom teaching helped the participants to gain confidence about themselves and their teaching. The participants also gained new ideas, strategies, and insights about teaching. This was not surprising because it has been noted that field-based experience in teacher education enhances one's knowledge building and confidence for teaching (Nugent, Kunz, Levy, Harwood, & Carlson 2008). The practical classroom teaching and ability to infuse ideas from the graduate courses was a great help to the participants' classroom teaching experience.

The developmental support from many including the mentors, University advisor, and other colleagues in the schools also enhanced the participants' classroom teaching and learning experiences. The classroom teaching experience with the support system in place helped to heighten the participants' sense of preparedness, maturity, experience, and confidence. Their initial sense of fear, nervousness, and overburdened responsibility was replaced with a sense of confidence and the desire to start full time classroom teaching.

What is so great about this program is that whereas beginning teachers usually contemplate of leaving teaching (Hung & Smith, 2012) the reverse was true with the

participants in this study. The participants were ready to start teaching in their own classrooms because they felt confidence about themselves and their teaching abilities. The participants' experience in the RTP was experiential (Kolb, 1984) and was also in line the ideals of teacher development (Bell & Gilbert, 1994). It was grounded in practical classroom experience combined with graduate classes where they were able to infuse the good new ideas into the teaching and learn from its applications. They also learned to work collaborative with others. The process would give them better perspective of teaching. With the classroom experience, construction of new ideas from the graduate courses, interactions with and support from the mentors, University supervisor, teachers, other RTs and other school personnel is not surprising the RTs were confident and ready to enter into the world of the noble profession, teaching.

Emerging Concerns

The participants' experience was also marked by a few minor issues and concerns. This statement also reflected the participants' perception and understanding of their experience with the classroom teaching. First the participants were unable to have sick days built into their contracts because of a lack of funding for substitute teachers. If a resident teacher was unable to make it school, the mentors would have to cover their classroom teaching responsibilities, which was not the ideal for many reasons. The mentors also had busy schedules with many responsibilities and subbing for an entire day complicated the flow of the week. The participants were informed of this when they interviewed so they understood that missing school should try to be avoided at all costs. Sometimes the mentors do send residents home and cover their classrooms or substitute

teachers are hired because of sickness. Having the option of hiring substitute teachers is something the participants thought should be looked into in the future.

Again the participants felt the situation where the RTs were consistently placed in the same grade level/class was something that some teachers were silently unhappy about. Some of the teachers who teach at a certain grade level, have tired of having a new resident every year. Maybe the school district and University need to consider using more schools and different grade level teachers.

On the whole the experience of the resident teachers in this program was great, helpful, and supportive. The program was experiential and followed teacher development ideas. The participants' experience was characterized by double commitment as teachers and graduate students. That was the nature of the program. Individually and collectively, these two commitments have their burden on the RTs. However the good news was that the program was full of support for participants' success all-round. The participants felt grateful they were learning new things in the graduate courses and getting experience and insights from classroom teaching. They felt the program was adequately preparing them for a successful teaching life. The participants thought that the experience has made them more knowledgeable, improved, and confident about themselves and teaching abilities, which was great. They felt they were ready, and prepared to go out there and start teaching because they can do it on their own now!

Recommendations for Practice

The usefulness of the Resident Teacher Program is not in doubt. The successful experience of the participants' is also evidently clear. They feel the structures in the program have been very supportive to their teaching and learning experience. They

understand the difference between their situations now from when they started. The RTs felt they had gained valuable ideas, insights, and experiences about teaching. They are ready to enter regular teaching. However there were some few concerns about the RTs' experience, in the program, that might need attention, consideration, and perhaps action. It was on this basis that I made these few recommendations.

It will be helpful if the issue of sick days and substitute teacher support for the RTs, especially when they are sick can be looked into. However, I believe the University and the school district can work together and figure out something for the future RTs. This is important especially when it is both a concern and plea from RTs.

Again it would be helpful if the issue of resident teacher placement and concerns of some of the teachers at that grade level where the participants teach also were given attention. It is important because, on a silent note, some of the teachers who are to work with the residents are, reportedly, unhappy that they always have new teachers they have to explain things to and work with. Again it is important because the participants' are conscious of this simmering discontentment among some of the teachers they had to work with.

The University and school districts/schools can look at the placement issue. I would suggest that, if possible, the teachers teaching at the grade levels where the RTs would be placed could be involved in the program at some level. These teachers also explain things to the RTs and they also have to work together with them in a team. Invariably they are strategic, but silent, partners in the program. Integrating them and elevating their contribution would be helpful because it would help them feel part of the program and their contributions recognized. They would not feel they have to do

something for a program they are not part of or that even what they do is unnoticed and unrecognized. That would be helpful to the program and RTs' experience.

Last but not least, it would be helpful to consider scheduling of the RTs' teaching and graduate classes. They consider teaching from 8:00a.m. - 4:00p.m. and then attending classes from 4:00 - 10:00p.m. some days to be a long and tiring. I do not know how this can be done but it is something that is worth looking at. For example is it possible to make sure they do not have graduate classes lumped up in a day so that they do not attend class until 10:00p.m.? Or is it possible for them to have some release time from teaching on days that they have classes. I think it is worth consideration by the University and the school district/schools since those days seem long and tiring to residents.

The findings, conclusions, and recommendations are specific to the context of this study with respect the experiences of the RTs in the particular RTP which was the focus of this study. The purpose of the study was not to generalize the outcome to the experiences of RTs in the RTP. The outcome of the study is useful and can be transferred to other similar situations but the special circumstances of each situation need to be considered. Likewise the process of this study is transferrable to a study in a similar situation but the special circumstances of that situation would need to be considered. These considerations are important since circumstances differ from program to program and ideas, perceptions, and understanding of experiences also differ.

Future Research

Development support for beginning teachers through a RTP would be a focus of my research activities. In the future I would like to do comparative studies of issues involved with RTPs, like the experiences of the residents in Ghana and the United States.

It would also be helpful for a study that would focus on how veteran teachers in the participating schools view the RTP. This study would be important since the program present the best of beginning teachers to the schools as RTs. However, an outcome of the study showed that some participants did not feel that all veteran teachers are pleased with the continuous placement of RTs at their grade levels.

Future Steps With This Research

This study is important to me. Developmental support for beginning teachers especially through the Resident Teacher Programs would be a main focus of my professional practice in education and academia. I would like to introduce a RTP into the education systems in Ghana and Africa. I know it would not be an easy task considering the nature of the program but it is something I plan to do. I have realized the program is capital intensive because money is needed to recruit and train mentors and also to recruit and pay both the tuition and a stipend for the students. How to contextualize these to the African situation is something to grapple with. It would require a lot of planning, advocacy, and mobilization. I would like to work with the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, and Universities and Colleges of Education to get a program like this established in Ghana.

I would like to prepare a policy brief on this study to the Department of Public Instruction and other institutions involved with policy making on education in the state. This would help to engage the public on the outcome of the study and the important role the program is performing in getting the top notch beginning teachers to become more knowledgeable, effective, and interested in teaching, for schools in the state. I would also like to present the study and its findings at the college, state, national, and international

levels. This would help other educators and policy makers to hear about this robust teacher education and comprehensive developmental support program for beginning teachers. Again, I would like to get this study published and extend the study and its findings about the RTP to a wider audience.

Personal Reactions

It is important I provide my reflections on both the process and outcome of this study. My reflections are interlaced with connections to my own classroom teaching experience and also what I would like to do with the concept of the RTP. This study would not have been without the support and cooperation of both the participants and my graduate committee members. I am grateful to the resident teachers for agreeing to participate in the study and allowing me into their classrooms to interview them. Despite their tight schedules the RTs made time for me to be able to interview each of them on two separate occasions. My graduate committee members were also a huge source of help. The committee members supported me with their time and expertise. They offered suggestions and ideas that helped to straighten the rough edges of the study. I am grateful for their help.

My interactions with the participants rekindled my understanding of the concepts of multiple perspectives and returning to the objects which are tenets of constructionism and phenomenology respectively. It is true that if you want to understand what means to be in a phenomenon it is imperative to engage the people involved. It is also important to approach the inquiry with an understanding that people perceive things differently. The participants were conscious of why they were in the program. For example, they were in the program to earn their master's degree and improve as teachers.

The participants were consciously aware of their experiences with every element and structure of the RTP. They were conscious of how the program and its structures were impacting their understanding and practical skills in teaching. They were equally aware of areas of their experiences in the program that required a second look. Each participant was different but unique with their responses on the issues. However their responses were genuine and germane to their experiences and the focus of the study.

Transcribing the interviews verbatim was an experience of its own. It was a difficult task but that afforded me a chance to be engaged with the data and also internalized the descriptions. That is the point you get to know what was really said because you are not waiting to ask a follow up question or the next question. The analysis part was equally involving but that helped me to know trends in the data and what that means. This is because a lot of different descriptions were given but the analysis helped me to know the essence of the data with respect to the experiences of the RTs. The process was transformational for me because I learned many things from it.

My interactions with the RTs have further enhanced my interest in the developmental support for beginning teachers through a well-coordinated program like the RTP. I intend to make the concept of developmental support for beginning teachers and establishment of RTPs a focus of my professional work. My aim is to contribute towards further strengthening of teaching as a profession. Internships and residency have long been associated with training in the established professions including medicine, (Solomon, 2009) pharmacy, and law. It would be important for many beginning teachers to get the opportunity to go through the experience of RTP. It is my hope that I would be

able to introduce developmental support for beginning teachers through the RTP to the education system in Ghana and Africa.

Interactions with the RTs with respect to their experiences and going through the analysis brought back to memory my own beginning teaching experience. I began professional teaching in September, 1996 immediately after my initial teacher education. I was posted to teach at Tanokrom Local Authority Primary School as a classroom teacher. The school was situated in a typical farming village without electricity, potable water, or decent accommodation. Many of the students commuted to school from hamlets located in the cocoa farms around the village. The posting was done without prior consultation with me and the officers in charge never took my interest as someone entering the teaching profession into consideration and were never ready to listen. I had no option than to report to the school and start teaching. I remember the first sight of the community actually made me regret that I attended a teacher training college to become a teacher.

But it occurred to me that I also had my elementary education in a rural setting, though it was far better than this community, and somebody taught me. I also remembered I had a professional commitment to give quality education to children wherever they are in Ghana. I stayed in the village and taught in the school for three academic years. The experience in the village was one of mixed feelings. Living in the community was boring and frustrating because there was nothing in the village and at the weekends before I would wake up everybody was gone to farm and the community was virtually empty. Commuting to the urban center was also difficult. However, teaching the children in the village was fulfilling to me because I was everything to them. In the

evening the children in the community would come to my residence irrespective of their grade level. We would sit around a table and using a kerosene lantern I would teach them reading.

The headmaster assigned me to teach primary 6 (grade 6) the highest grade in the school even though I was fresh from college and a novice. I was given my notebook for lesson preparation, subject textbooks and I had to start teaching. I had no support from anybody. It was commonly assumed that the fresh teachers were those with the new ideas. I remember in my third year I was assigned to teach both primary 6 and 5 combined because there were not enough teachers in the school.

My beginning teaching experience made me develop sensitivity for the experience of beginning teachers and I support a coordinated effort like the RTP that supports beginning teachers' entry, learning, and success. I want to advocate for better treatment and appropriate developmental support for beginning teachers. I would like to help establish a RTP in the education system in Ghana and across Africa.

In closing, the interactions with the participants showed how important the RTP is to the experience of beginning teachers and their success in teaching. It brought to the forefront the significance of learning through practice. The full time teaching responsibility was an opportunity for the beginning teachers to practice and understand teaching in a real classroom environment.

The interactions also brought to the fore the need to have full time mentors in the schools to assist beginning teachers. It also showed mentors need to be experienced teachers who know how to support beginning teachers. These mentors were in full time positions and they had adequate time to give enough attention to the needs of the RTs.

The interactions equally brought to the fore the interconnectedness between theory and practice with respect to teacher learning and professional practice. It also showed that continuous professional and academic development as an integral part of teaching and learning. I believe the graduate courses in addition to the classroom teaching gave the RTs more tools and understanding for their future teaching.

Yes both the classroom teaching and graduate courses were uniquely important and combined to enhance the experiences of the participants. However it cannot be wished away that responding to the demands of the two heightened the challenges of the participants.

It was also important that the RTs were three in each school. It ensured a sense of community and prevented a feeling of isolation because they worked, planned, attended class, and problem solved together. They worked so closely among themselves that they developed into a community of learners and practitioners. The bond of friendship and collegiality made the experience valuable for all.

APPENDICES

Appendix A Consent Form

1

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE: Experiences of Beginning Teachers in a Resident Teacher Program: A Phenomenological Study

PROJECT DIRECTOR: Emmanuel Adjei-Boateng

PHONE # 701-777-9543/701-741-8214

DEPARTMENT: Teaching and Learning

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH

A person who is to participate in the research must give his or her informed consent to such participation. This consent must be based on an understanding of the nature and risks of the research. This document provides information that is important for this understanding. Research projects include only subjects who choose to take part. Please take your time in making your decision as to whether to participate. If you have questions at any time, please ask.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

You are invited to be in a research study about the experiences of beginning teachers in a resident teacher program because you are enrolled in a resident teacher program or has recently graduated from it within the past academic year.

The purpose of this research study is to explore the experiences of beginning teachers in resident teacher programs. The study is to help in understanding what it means to be a resident teacher, in beginning teaching years. This is because despite importance of resident teachers programs, the experiences of beginning teachers who enroll in such programs are yet to be documented in literature.

The overarching research questions that will guide this study include: How do beginning teachers in resident teaching program perceive and understand their resident teaching experiences? This will be supported by these sub questions.

- What are the resident teachers' perspectives on the classroom teaching component of the program?
- How do the resident teachers perceive their mentoring experience, in the residency program?
- What are the resident teachers' perspectives on returning to college, as graduate student, in the residency program?

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL PARTICIPATE?

Approximately 14 people will take part in this study at the University of North Dakota. This includes students enrolled in the resident teacher program, their mentors and two university

Approval Date: <u>NOV 10 2015</u>
Expiration Date: <u>NOV 10 2016</u>
University of North Dakota IRB

Date: _____
Subject Initials: _____

supervisors in the program. The study will be conducted in the Grand Forks Public Schools where the resident teachers teach. Ten resident teachers (same participants named as UND students above), three mentors, and two university supervisors will participate in the study.
HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in the study will last for a period of 12 months.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

I would like to observe your class, on two occasions for approximately 45 minutes each. When I am in your classroom it will be for observation purposes only. No children or students will be interviewed or used for this study. There will be no videotaping or audiotaping while I am in the schools or classrooms when children are present. I would also like to interview you, on two occasions, for approximately 60 minutes each interview. Individual resident teacher observations will be hand recorded and interviews will be tape recorded. With the exception of the category of participant as a teacher, no personal identifiers will be used both during the interview and in both the written transcripts and observation notes

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THE STUDY?

There are no foreseeable risks to participants, either physically, emotionally or financially

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

You will not benefit personally from being in this study. However, we hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study because your participation will contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon of resident teaching and what it means to be a resident teacher.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY

There are two alternatives to participating in this study including: Declining to participate or accepting to participate.

WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

You will not have any costs for being in this research study.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will not be paid for being in this research study.

WHO IS FUNDING THE STUDY?

Approval Date: <u>NOV 20 2014</u>
Expiration Date: <u>NOV 20 2015</u>
University of North Dakota IRB

Date: _____
Subject Initials: _____

The University of North Dakota and the research team are receiving no payments from other agencies, organizations, or companies to conduct this research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records of this study will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. In any report about this study that might be published, you will not be identified. Your study record may be reviewed by Government agencies, the UND Research Development and Compliance office, and the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board.

Any information that is obtained in this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of avoiding use of personal descriptors in the transcription except the category of participant as a teacher, mentor, or supervisor. All data will be aggregated and written documents will be highly anonymized to protect the identity of participants and their affiliated institutions. Transcripts of interviews will be sent to participant for member checking of facts. Research data and consent forms will be kept in separate locations for a minimum of three years. The research data will be in a computer external drive kept in the researcher's office. The consent forms will be kept under lock in a separate location in researcher's office. All audio files will be deleted and written documents shredded, immediately after completion of the study. Only the researcher will have access to the consent forms.

If we write a report or article about this study, we will describe the study results in a summarized manner so that you cannot be identified.

IS THIS STUDY VOLUNTARY?

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of North Dakota or the Grand Forks Public Schools.

If you decide to leave the study early, we ask that you inform the researcher through either a call or email.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS?

The researcher conducting this study is Emmanuel Adjei-Boateng. You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please

Approval Date: <u>NOV 15 2013</u>
Expiration Date: <u>NOV 14 2014</u>
University of North Dakota IRB

Date: _____
Subject Initials: _____

contact Emmanuel Adjei-Boateng at 701-741-8214 during the day and at 701-777-9543 after hours. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Bonni Gourneau at 701-777-2920. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279.

- You may also call this number about any problems, complaints, or concerns you have about this research study.
- You may also call this number if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is independent of the research team.
- General information about being a research subject can be found by clicking “Information for Research Participants” on the web site: <http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.cfm>

I give consent to be audiotaped during the interview stage of this study.

Please initial: Yes No

I give consent for my quotes to be used in the research; however I will not be identified.

Please initial: Yes No

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Subjects Name: _____

Signature of Subject

Date

I have discussed the above points with the subject or, where appropriate, with the subject’s legally authorized representative.

Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent

Date

Approval Date: <u>NOV 05 2008</u>
Expiration Date: <u>NOV 04 2009</u>
University of North Dakota IRB

Date: _____
Subject Initials: _____

Appendix B

First Interview Protocol for Resident Teachers

Good day and welcome. My name is Emmanuel Adjei-Boateng. Thank you for accepting the invitation to participate in this interview. This interview will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. The purpose of this interview is to explore the experiences of beginning teachers in a Resident Teacher Program. The information from the interviews will be used for the purpose of this study only and your identity will be kept confidential. Your name will not be associated with any part of this final dissertation. Feel free to respond to the questions as you think, there are no right and wrong answers. Your participation in this interview is voluntary and therefore your consent is needed before we can begin the session. This interview will be tape recorded. You may respond yes if you agree for us to go ahead with this interview. Thank you for your consent.

1. What is your day like as a resident teacher?
 - What are the things you have to attend to in your day life?
2. How do you prepare for teaching as a resident teacher?
 - How comfortable are you with preparation to teach?
3. What do you do as a classroom teacher in the Resident Teacher Program?
 - What do you like about classroom teaching?
4. On what aspects of your teaching do you work with your mentor?
 - How comfortable are you, working with your mentor
5. How do you work with your mentor?
6. How do you work with your university supervisor?

7. What is it like returning to college, as graduate student, in the residency program?
 - How is the graduate study transforming your teaching ideas and practices?
8. What do you do in your graduate program?
 - How are the graduate studies enhancing your knowledge and skills of teaching?
9. How do you manage your classroom?
10. How do you work with your principal and school administration?
11. How do you work with (the experienced) teachers in your schools?
12. How are you working with your colleague resident teachers
13. How and where do you see yourself after the program?
 - In what ways is the resident teaching program adding value to your ideas and practices of teaching?

Appendix C
Second Interview Protocol for Resident Teachers

Good day and welcome. My name is Emmanuel Adjei-Boateng. Thank you for accepting the invitation to participate in this interview. This second interview is a follow up to the first interview. This interview will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. The purpose of this interview is to explore the experiences of beginning teachers in a Resident Teacher Program. The information from the interviews will be used for the purpose of this study only and your identity will be kept confidential. Your name will not be associated with any part of this final dissertation. Feel free to respond to the questions as you think, there are no right and wrong answers. Your participation in this interview is voluntary and therefore your consent is needed before we can begin the session. This interview will be tape recorded. You may respond yes if you agree for us to go ahead with this interview. Thank you for your consent

What is like having to perform all the responsibilities of a full-time teacher?

What is like working under the conditions of the residency program-stipend and paid tuition, and a full time teacher?

What is it like having to manage student behavior and discipline in the classroom?

What is feel like to be watched/observed when teaching?

How do the other veteran teachers in the school embrace the program?

What is like working with your other cohorts?

What is your general impression about being in the program?

What are some of the things you have gained from being in the program?

Are there some challenges in the programs?

Is there anything you wished could be considered in the program?

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