ABSTRACT

Are the Fine Arts Really Fine?
A Descriptive Case Study on the Experiences of Theatre Arts Teachers

Wendi Andersen Duric, Ed.D.

Mentor: Dr. Sandra Talbert, Ed.D.

All first-year teachers, whether alternatively or traditionally certified, face a wide range of issues when they enter the profession. Teachers require specialized skills to teach the subject, manage the classroom, and track individual student progress using a defined set of grading procedures. Theatre arts teachers encounter even more challenges due to the live performance nature of the class. Some major issues are the lack of a written curriculum, lack of administrative knowledge and support, management of student and parent expectations for a non-traditional class and, at times, overseeing all aspects of producing a live performance within the time allocated and within the limited budget available. Therefore, it is important to understand how the current theatre teachers have addressed these issues and build on their recent experiences to develop a plan to assist future teachers.

This descriptive case study sought to answer the following research question: What are the experiences of theatre arts teachers in meeting the demands of the job in their first five years of teaching? The researcher explored the experiences and feelings of

theatre arts teachers in the state of Texas, with two to five years teaching experience, regarding the distinctive demands of the position when they entered the field. The researcher collected data using multiple techniques, including questionnaires, recorded individual interviews, and photographs. This descriptive case study examined and compared the personal struggles and challenges as well as the highlights of theatre arts professionals with two to five years of educational experience.

The narrative from this study identified five emerging themes from the collected data: the need for content-specific professional development; identified an educational theatre pedagogical gap and lack of established curriculum; unclear expectations of the theatre teacher position; an overall lack of support from campus and district administration; and the presence of "imposter syndrome". These five themes informed change recommendations for both teacher preparation programs and school administrators.

Are the Fine Arts Really Fine?
A Descriptive Case Study on the Experiences of Theatre Arts Teachers

by

Wendi Andersen Duric, B.A., M.Ed.

A Dissertation

Approved by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction

_____

Brooke Blevins, Ph.D., Chairperson

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Education

Approved by the Dissertation Committee

_____

Sandra Talbert, Ed.D., Chairperson

_____

Sandi Cooper, Ph.D.

_____

Jess Smith, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School

December 2021

_____

J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the incredible professors at Baylor University. Each and every one of you have become an integral part of the lives of your students. None of us were prepared for the challenges of learning while caught up in the throes of a pandemic. With dignity and grace, you supported us and challenged us to find the good during this chaotic time. I know I would have been lost from day one.

I must also give a huge shoutout to my advisor, Dr. Sandra Talbert. This rock star has been a true mentor, providing me with guidance and laughter for the past three years. She sees me as the hot mess I am and embraces me all the same. Thank you, Dr. Talbert, for walking this journey with me. I am forever in your debt.

I would also like to thank my incredible Cohort 2 colleagues!!! We have faced so many ups and downs, so many changes along the way, so many challenges both professionally and personally, and yet here we are. There is no doubt each and every one of you will make lasting impacts in your new post-Cohort life. I am so thankful I am able to call all of you friends. Your friendship and support has been a life saver. I am so very proud of each one of you.

I must also acknowledge my former theatre teachers and professors, Mrs. Patty Nolan, who is my forever mentor and friend, Ms. Franci Hazleton, Dr. Don Hebert, Mr. Mac Lower, Mr. Brent Maddox, and Mr. Shane Fuller. You have each come into my life in unique and wonderful ways. You have shaped my love and appreciation for theatre and

theatre education. Our world is so much brighter because of theatre educators like yourselves. Thank you for being a beacon of hope in my journey.

I am beyond thankful to my friends and family for being by my side throughout this journey. Jessica Bruce, my kindred spirit, thank you for never giving up on me, even after twenty years of friendship. Mom, you believe in me more than I could ever believe in myself. Thank you for filling in as I ventured into this program as a single mom. Having Nana with us has been the greatest blessing. Pete, my wonderful husband, you have joined this family so seamlessly, bringing us laughter, soccer, and random music facts. You are by far my biggest cheerleader. Thank you for being an anchor in our storm. I love you.

Finally, I must thank my sweet boys, Scott and Wyatt. You are my reasons for living. I strive every day to make you proud, to help you see a brighter world. My sons, because of you I can truly say "pride is not the word I'm looking for, there is so much more inside me now."

DEDICATION

To my boys, Scott and Wyatt. You are inimitable.

To my daddy, my hero.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Problem of Practice

Introduction

Theatre arts teachers face unique struggles when they enter the profession. These struggles include creating and managing a budget and parent organization, production design, rehearsal schedules, and lack of content knowledge by administration. In addition to these unique needs, new theatre arts teachers must also tackle the normal challenges faced by most new teachers: creating new curriculum, dealing with classroom management, grading, and all other aspects of effectively running a classroom.

The importance of student involvement in the arts in many schools is not valued, despite research indicating the correlation between involvement in the arts and academic success (Deasey, 2002). When new texts apply classroom drama, verbal skills are known to increase (Hetland & Winner, 2001). Other benefits include reading and language skills, mathematics skills, and even social skills. Well-prepared theatre arts teachers produce these educational benefits in their students. Without proper teacher preparation and support, theatre arts teachers are unable to provide the best learning experiences for students. This study examined the lived experiences of theatre arts teachers and their feelings regarding the unique demands for the theatre classroom.

Statement of the Problem

Education and quality of education is a crucial issue in the state of Texas, especially with the increasing influence of standardized testing on accountability and the

resulting report card system for schools (School Report Cards). While theatre arts do not fall under the standardized testing umbrella, research indicates those students who participate in the arts perform better on standardized tests than those who do not (Calterall, 2002). With increasing pressure placed on teachers, there is an urgency to explore all avenues to help students be successful, both in the classroom and beyond. School participation of students in the fine arts, specifically theatre arts, proves beneficial to student success.

Theatre arts programs encompass a wide array of art forms, including musical theatre, theatre design, directing, acting, and more. For the purpose of this study, theatre arts will be referred to as theatre which includes all theatrical art forms. These theatre programs require a well-trained teacher in the classroom. However, many theatre teachers are entering the classroom ill-prepared for the challenges of not only everyday classroom needs and curriculum but for leading entire departments as well. The unique requirements of theatre teachers include leading an entire department, creating an original curriculum, designing sets for plays, creating advertising media for productions, fundraising, and managing facilities. Many theatre teachers are entering the field with only limited knowledge of educational theatre based on the type of degree they hold while also facing the traditional pitfalls of first-year teachers.

For theatre teachers, preparedness for teaching depends on the university and what area of theatre they choose to focus on, such as directing, acting, or technical theatre. There has been significant movement over the past few years at the university level to offer better options for educational theatre-focused students. The University of Texas Theatre Department website (n.d.) indicates very specified degrees in theatre.

Undergraduate degrees offered at this high respected university include specifically Bachelor of Fine Arts options with concentrations in Acting, Theatre and Dance, and even Theatre Arts plus Teacher Certification. This program does combine educational classes with the theatre education offered through the School of Theatre and would provide a student with a more comprehensive plan for entering the classroom. This is like the Theatre Department at Texas Woman's University (n.d.), which also offers specialized theatre degrees as well as teacher certification in conjunction with the program.

While the University of Texas and Texas Woman's University offer specialized theatre degrees, not all universities offer this combination for their theatre students. For example, according to the Baylor University theatre department website (n.d.), theatre degrees offered include a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Arts which is a degree that focuses on theatre as an overall subject area, a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre Performance, a Bachelor of Fine Arts with a Musical Theatre Concentration, and Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees with Theatre Design and Technology and Theatre Studies concentrations. Each of these degrees offers an incredible insight into theatre; however, most are not focused in specific areas related to kindergarten through twelfth grade education. The University of Texas at Arlington also offers a variety of theatre degrees, all providing a concentration in either acting or design, with no explicit ties to teaching theatre (n.d.).

With such a variety of degrees offered across the state of Texas, even those new teachers with theatre degrees might be lacking the knowledge necessary to effectively maintain a full theatre program on a school campus. This deficiency of knowledge, regardless of the teacher preparation program, results in a lack of preparedness for theatre

teachers when they enter the classroom. In order to continue positively contributing to the overall success of schools and classrooms, an investigation into the experiences of theatre teachers during their first five years in the classroom was necessary.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this multiple descriptive case study was to understand the experiences regarding the unique demands of the theatre teacher position for novice theatre teachers in the state of Texas. The unique demands of the theatre teacher position include classroom instructor, stage director, and program director. By investigating the experiences of these theatre teachers, the voices of often overlooked educators had their time in the spotlight. These teachers shared their stories and struggles in a way that could inspire change within education. With this newly gained knowledge, the researcher created recommendations for traditional and alternative certification programs and school districts to better prepare theatre teachers for the profession, which in turn improves the experience of both teachers and students. These recommendations are based on the answers to the primary research question: What are the experiences of theatre arts teachers in meeting the demands of the job in their first five years of teaching? By addressing this question, a story emerged from this research that identified the shared and unique challenges faced by theatre educators.

Theoretical Framework

Research requires a lens to focus and guide the process effectively. Goodson's Theory of Educational Change is the theoretical framework utilized in this research. Emphasizing the centrality of the personal domain of the teacher in sustaining educational change characterizes this theory (Goodson, 2001). That is, the educational

4

change must be a result of a teacher's personal desire for change for it to be effective

long-term. Goodson's theory involves three segments for the change process: internal,

external, and personal. These segments are defined as follows:

> Internal change agents work within school settings to initiate and promote change
> within an external framework of support and sponsorship; external change is
> mandated in top-down manner...; personal change refers to the personal beliefs
> and missions that individuals bring to the change process. (Goodson, 2001, p. 45)

The more integrated these three segments become, the more likely the change can move

forward. The researcher chose this framework because it allowed teachers' voices to

drive change suggestions. The researcher also utilized Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy

as a lens to guide this research, specifically in regard to developing questionnaire and

interview questions.

According to Davidson's recording of Bandura himself (2017), little has changed

in the makeup of the human race genetically speaking. However, humans have changed

through cultural and technological evolution in beliefs. Humans have changed through

their social growth and behavior styles, which indicates diversity in how we live and

think. Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory is a part of the Social Cognitive Theory, which

utilizes Triadic Reciprocal Causation. Triadic Reciprocal Causation asserts that our

personal experiences, outside environmental influences, and behavior work together to

determine our interactions in the world. In other words, how an individual personally

experiences life mixed with how others experience life and the behaviors of the world

around us will determine how an individual's worldview is created. This worldview is

imperative when determining self-efficacy, particularly in the classroom.

A simplified definition of self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to

produce desired results by their own actions (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is the

foundation of human motivation and accomplishments. If someone does not think they can accomplish something, the drive to do so will not be present. One develops self-efficacy in four ways: mastery, social modeling, social persuasion, and physical and emotional states. Mastery of skill develops the desire to succeed because it challenges the person to face both successes and failures. When mastering a skill, one does not see failure as demoralizing but rather informative. Without the challenge of mastery, one only faces easy success, which results in being easily discouraged by failure. The physical and emotional state of being also develops self-efficacy because one can judge his or her own capabilities based on his or her own body's reaction to obstacles. The presence of stress, fatigue, and depression lowers self-efficacy, making it difficult to possess the desire for change or success.

Bandura emphasized that self-efficacy should not be confused with self-esteem, however. Efficacy is the belief in one's abilities, while self-esteem is the belief in one's self-worth. There are four effects of self-efficacy:

1. Cognitive: the ability of one to be either optimistic or pessimistic.

2. Motivation: one sets and develops a commitment to challenges.

3. Emotion: one can manage stress by developing a belief in the ability to overcome it.

4. Decisions: affect the course life takes

Ultimately, Bandura believed that many groups of people, whether businesses, communities, schools, or governments, have joint problems that require working together to solve these problems. Self-efficacy provides the ability to solve these problems because it creates cognition, motivation, emotion, and decision-making to accomplish big things.

The researcher conducted the study, listened to shared stories, and analyzed the

lived experiences of often over-looked theatre teachers by utilizing Goodson's Theory of

Educational Change. With this newly gained knowledge, the researcher made

recommendations to universities, alternative certification programs, and school districts

to prepare theatre teachers for the profession more effectively. These better-prepared

teachers have the potential to make a tremendous impact in the lives of their students.

Research Design and Methods

The researcher determined that the multiple descriptive case study method

provided the most detailed insight into the experiences theatre teachers face because

descriptive research seeks to describe, explain, and validate research findings.

Researchers use the qualitative research method to analyze non-quantified topics, an

essential characteristic of this study (Dudovskiy, n.d.). Eleven theatre teachers from

across the state of Texas participated in the questionnaire part of this research, and four of

those eleven participants agreed to individual interviews. The inclusion criteria for

participation were as follows: all participants had two to five years of theatre teaching

experience and were still currently teaching at the time of the study. Due to COVID-19

safety guidelines, the researcher conducted the study using online communication and

recorded zoom interviews.

The researcher distributed questionnaires to all eleven participants, and then,

based on the data collected, conducted four personal interviews. The researcher also

requested photographs from all interviewed participants. The researcher collected all

questionnaires, interviews, and photos, and then transcribed, coded, evaluated, and

analyzed the data, with the focus of identifying emerging themes. After completing this

qualitative analysis of data, the researcher organized a cohesive story of these teachers'

experiences. Finally, the researcher employed Goodson's Theory of Educational Change

Framework to analyze the information and offer suggestions for change for consideration

by stakeholders.

Definition of Key Terms

This section will address the definitions of commonly used terms as they relate to

this problem of practice and theatre education.

Alternative certification: Alternative certification refers to any educator that received

certification credentials to teach in the state of Texas without attending a traditional

teacher preparation program through a university at the undergraduate or graduate

level.

Beginner teachers: Beginner teachers refers to any teacher with two to five years of

teaching experience.

Curriculum: Curriculum refers to lessons and content taught in a school for a specific

course.

Educational theatre: Theatre in education traditionally references the use of interactive

theatre to help aid the educational process (Robson, 2018). For this paper, educational

theatre encompasses full theatre education programs within the K–12 public

education setting.

Pedagogy: Pedagogy is how educators deliver knowledge and skills to students in an

educational context

Traditional certification: Traditional certification refers to any educator that received

certification credentials to teach in the state of Texas by attending a traditional teacher

preparation program through a university at the undergraduate or graduate level. This traditional program typically includes a time in which students participate in a student teaching or internship placement.

Conclusion

The lack of emphasis placed on the arts in public education is astonishing considering the benefits that participation in these activities bring to students. Due to this lack of emphasis, theatre teachers face a gap not only in pedagogy and instructional best practices, but in the extreme expectations of a field with varied responsibilities and excessive time commitments. To improve the teaching of theatre in Texas, the interviewer gathered data using questionnaires, conducted interviews, and organized the information into recurring themes. The researcher used the lens of Goodson's Theory of Educational Change and Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy to collect and analyze data and make suggestions for change. By allowing a teacher-driven desire for change, the study had the highest probability of providing potential solutions to theatre teacher preparation programs and school administration.

Chapter Two reviews research about educational theatre, its role in the success of the whole child, theatre education best practices, demands of a modern theatre teacher, and teacher preparation programs, both traditional and alternative. Chapter Two identifies the gap in theatre education research and provides the need for this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Every student deserves to have a well-prepared teacher in their classroom, one who can lead, guide, encourage, discipline, and perform all of the other duties required of a classroom teacher. This chapter presents the research findings from the literature that support the need to learn more about the experiences of beginning theatre teachers. The following research unfolded in six steps. First, the researcher explored the literature on the history of theatre education to show the confusion that surrounds the definition of a theatre teacher's role in the educational climate. Second, the literature indicated the importance of the arts in education. Third, the literature explored the diverse and unique demands of the theatre educator to indicate the gap in preparation programs of all types for theatre teachers. Next, the researcher examined current theatre education pedagogy and instructional best practices to show how these gaps culminate in the classroom. The researcher then explored information on the certification process for alternative and traditional routes, identifying trends for both and how certification type could affect theatre teachers. Finally, the researcher reviewed the literature regarding professional development practices for theatre teachers to determine the importance of this training for this specific teacher group. The researcher utilized teacher voices throughout the literature using the theoretical framework of Goodson's Theory of Educational Change.

Historical Context of Theatre Education

The use of theatre as an educational tool is not a new concept, and its importance has existed since ancient times. However, the concept of combining theatre and the institution of school did not take place until the 1960s in Great Britain, with continued development since then across the globe (Nistor, 2014). Historically, many educators viewed educational theatre as extracurricular "romp," and as nothing more than a school play (Patrick, 1982). As a result, a range of responses, from condescending to dismissive, have met theatre teacher requests for assistance or program growth.

Dramatic literature makes up much of the greatest lasting and living literature from the past. From Ancient Greece through the Elizabethan Era and into the 21st century, dramatic literature has played an essential role in our society. Even today, according to Patrick (1982), 90% of televised drama or comedy is either directly or indirectly based on a theatrical counterpart. For example, most sitcoms today are imitations of Neil Simon's plays (Patrick, 1982). Patrick even argued that dramatic literature is essential to the comprehension of any time in history due to its romantic nature. He said that in order to present the essence and background of the different characters in a play, one must typify aspects of the writer's culture in a living human example, which is the original definition of Romantic Art. Students need exposure to a culture through theatre first and not last.

Despite evidence of the educational benefit of theatre, educators have witnessed a decline in theatre participation and acceptance into the academic world. Patrick (1982) believed that those who oppose theatre education display their awareness of how important it is, albeit in a hidden way. Jackson (2007) defined Educational Theatre as a form of theatre that is specifically for educational purposes, even those without an active

audience or resulting in a workshop or debate. This definition leads many to question whether educational theatre is truly theatre because these limitations will compromise the artistic values of the dramatic pieces (Nistor, 2014). Whether educational theatre is a form of art, an educational instrument, or a combination between the two is a much-debated topic.

Many educational theatre enthusiasts see an effective way of developing children's personalities using transformative educational theatre, something that is far more important than the purity of the play. Edward Bond, a playwright, believes educational theatre can be an incredibly efficient way to change contemporary society because our imagination as humans changes our reality; it is what sparks the need for change (Nistor, 2014).

Even so, there are few artists, practitioners, and professors of theatre who believe educational theatre can be art and instrument at the same time. There are seven traditionally accepted functions of the theatrical act which are "to entertain, to make something that is beautiful, to mark or change identity, to make or foster community, to heal, to teach, persuade, or convince, and to deal with the sacred and/or demonic" (Nistor, 2014, p. 158). As educational theatre's primary function is to teach, persuade, or convince, stakeholders can arguably define it as an art form. If a Broadway musical earns the title of theatre because its purpose is to entertain, stakeholders in educational theatre demand to place educational theatre on the same pedestal. Once educators have a grasp on the history of educational theatre and its importance in society, the role of educational theatre in student academic success is much easier to understand. Understanding the

historical context of theatre is important in recognizing how theatre contributes to students' academic success.

Contributions of Theatre Arts to Academic Success

Despite the debate about the definition of educational theatre, there is an abundance of evidence that supports its role in academic success. One of the greatest proponents of a liberal arts education, John Dewey, believed that the purpose of public education was to develop the whole child (Jackson, 2000). According to Stuht and Gates (2007), there is a "plethora of evidence that hands-on, arts-based curriculum fashioned after the work of Jerome Bruner, Howard Gardner, and Lev Vygotsky plays a part in increased academic achievement, specifically literacy and numeracy as reflected in standardized test scores" (p. 1). Support for the arts in school perhaps might require a significant overhaul of the entire educational system.

The ultimate catalyst to improving theatre education was the No Child Left Behind Act, signed by President George W. Bush in 2001. This act gave the arts equal priority with reading, math, science, and other core subject areas. Forty-nine states established content and performance standards in one or more art forms. Texas included theatre in those standards, known as the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Although the Every Student Succeeds Act replaced No Child Left Behind in 2015, the emphasis on the arts remained the same and did not hinder the growth of the arts in education (understood.org, 2019).

The integration of the arts into the school curriculum generated positive changes in school environment and improved student performance (Ruppert, 2006). According to this research, student participation in the arts increases not only state standardized test

scores but also college readiness exams such as the SAT. Critical Evidence (2006) found

that students with high arts involvement not only performed better on standardized tests

but even watched fewer hours of television than those with low arts involvement. These

students also participated in more community service and reported less boredom in

school. Despite this improvement in test scores, budget cuts caused a loss for the arts in

schools. These budget cuts unfairly affect low-income families because they are more

likely to rely on in-school participation of the arts rather than the expensive

extracurricular arts activities of their high-income counterparts (Deasy, 2002). This fact

alone should cause any educator to be concerned with this disparity.

According to Ruppert (2006), the arts benefit student achievement in several

ways. These benefits include reading and language skills, math skills, thinking skills,

social skills, motivation to learn, and a positive school environment. The Kennedy Center

(2021) makes the argument that arts integration supports English Language Learners,

helps students learn how to cultivate creative conflict, and can encourage students to read

more. There is little doubt the need for theatre education in public schools exists,

especially when examining the whole child as a learner. With these benefits evident, it is

imperative to understand how theatre teachers struggle with implementing their programs

by examining the demands of the theatre teacher position.

Demands of Theatre Teacher Position

Much confusion exists about what theatre programs do on a school campus and

how they do it. According to Hobgood (1987), American Educational Theatre aspires to

prepare young artists to the theatre professions as well as cultivate an appreciation for the

dramatic arts. The education system expects theatre teachers to teach in a variety of

complex disciplines, including acting to theatre history to set design to costuming, and more. Theatre programs today offer much more for the student than ever thought imaginable by the pioneers of educational theatre.

Because the experiences of theatre teachers across the country are so varied, it is difficult to narrow the demands of the theatre teacher position. The literature, however, presented several themes. Not only are theatre teachers' demands both academic and physical, but they are also uniquely mental and emotional. One of the prominent qualities of a highly effective theatre teacher is the foundation of emotional and intellectual commitment (Hobgood, 1987). Students highly regard their theatre teachers as mentors and role models. The education system also expects theatre teachers to nurture the talent and experience of those students considered significantly talented. At the same time, theatre teachers must also give their resources to those students that are not deemed worthy of the significantly talented category (Hobgood, 1987). Hobgood believes there is a struggle for theatre teachers when they are dealing with significantly talented students and those who are not so significantly talented. Often, the excitement of the production or performance overshadows the importance of the work done in the classroom (Hobgood, 1987). This overshadowing then creates egos that are not sustainable by young minds and can lead to discontent amongst those students who may not garner as much attention on the stage.

For new theatre teachers or those with little or no experience in the classroom, the pitfall of focusing too much on the production would equate to teacher burnout and disillusionment. The need to teach learning independence away from the performance arena is vitally important for the theatre teacher. Those students who can pursue and

15

appreciate the art of theatre independently is one of the theatre teachers' most significant rewards.

According to Mattie (2019), the most prominent strain placed on theatre teachers is the unique demand of the art itself. On any given day, a theatre teacher works a multitude of jobs. In a standard theatre, the production will have full teams working before any actors enter the arena. The theatre teacher production jobs include artistic director, director, costume designer, set designer, light designer, sound designer, props master, publicity team, technical director, and stage manager, to name a few. Should the director add in actor or acting coach, the list begins to grow. Every single one of these positions is a unique entity that requires specific training. Each of these positions has degrees attached to them, and most theatre professionals limit themselves to being highly trained in just one or two of these specialized areas. Theatre teachers, however, perform every one of these roles, on top of developing curriculum and managing a classroom.

The demands of these multitude of jobs are where the disillusionment of a theatre educator comes into play. Because theatre teachers need to be all the above, theatre teachers often work from early in the morning into very late in the evening, for which these teachers are not often provided equitable financial compensation. Because a college education in theatre cannot typically prepare a degree seeker in all areas of theatre production, theatre majors that enter the education field are unprepared for the demands of running a theatre education program on a K–12 campus. For an alternatively certified teacher who might be entering the field as a second or even third career option, this could potentially serve as a huge hindrance. The question of why colleges do not train theatre professionals for work in the classroom is begging to be answered. According to Klein

(1993), the emphasis on providing specialized theatre educational courses at the university level does not exist. Many universities attach theatre programs to other majors such as English, and even more do not offer specific educational theatre curriculum for training teachers. Therefore, there is a disconnect in teacher preparation for the theatre teacher regardless of the certification process, albeit perhaps higher for those who are alternatively certified and lack the pedagogical and learning foundations of traditional teacher education students. The next section will provide research into the pedagogical and learning models needed in the area of educational theatre.

Current Theatre Arts Pedagogy and Learning Models

Regardless of how aspiring theatre educators obtain their teacher certification at the college level, most theatre teacher education and preparation tend to fall singularly on play production. According to Dynak (1994), pedagogical content knowledge as it relates to theatre is very unclear. The literature shows that adequate research on this subject does not exist. Because theatre pedagogy is traditionally rooted in performance, stakeholders need to rethink the emphasis placed on play production and instead focus their emphasis on theatre pedagogy. According to Dynak (1994), there is a strong need to continue researching this area of theatre education in a way that might allow for stronger theatre curriculum and assessment development.

Perhaps the most challenging problem facing theatre teachers is the need to broaden pre-service teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning. Colleges and alternative teaching programs often instruct aspiring teachers to use the pedagogy of the limiting transmission model; this model emphasizes teacher-centric learning (Corrigan, 2014). Colleges or certification programs must expand the pedagogy curriculum to

17

encompass much more than a series of discrete courses, especially when it comes to the designing of the curriculum for theatre education. Dynak (1994) believes it is imperative as theatre educators to communicate to students how to understand what it means to think in the discipline of theatre and how to communicate through it. Dynak's study presented four needs regarding research in theatre education. First, there is a need to study how theatre education faculty members must adapt their programs to support the latest changes in the National Standard for Arts Education. These changes include not only classroom courses but also field-based experiences. Secondly, there is a need to research and create learning models that allow for critique of educational theatre course work. Also, stakeholders need to study and explore how novice and expert teachers' content knowledge and curriculum develops throughout their tenure in the classroom. Lastly, Dynak believes more study must take place in determining best practices and programs for structure.

With such a need for curriculum development and pedagogical reform, having a powerful grasp on accessible and active learning models would aid new theatre teachers in tackling curriculum writing and instruction in the classroom. The traditional method of education has evolved. No longer are students sitting in rows as silent participants in class. One might wonder, why bother changing things up if it has "worked" for years? A response to the Industrial Revolution at the turn of the 20th century, a time when society needed hard workers who could listen and repeat what industry leaders needed from them for a production line, for example, established modern education. There was little need to develop or grow creative, critical thinkers who could work together collaboratively. Times have certainly changed since then, though. Today's learners exist in the most

extensive technological era of our time, where it is necessary to step outside of rote memorization and into a much more challenging thinking environment. Models that help meet this learning challenge are cooperative learning, role play, simulation, Socratic seminar, and problem-based learning.

The use of learning through interactions with peers has been a part of informal education for a very long time. John Dewey's use of collaboration among students dates back to his involvement during the progressive movement. However, full integration of the Cooperative Learning Model did not occur until the 1960s, the same era in which the education system introduced educational theatre as we know it into the classroom. The Cooperative Learning Model is one that helps "students achieve academically, socially, and emotionally while simultaneously developing 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity skills" (Kilbane & Milman, 2014, p. 309). According to Kilbane and Milman (2014), social learning models like the Cooperative Learning Model (CLM) capitalize on students' natural desire to learn socially while also developing social skills at the same time. When structured correctly, this model allows for students to gain a plethora of skills, including interdependence, accountability, group processing, and even social skills (Kilbane & Milman, 2014). The application of the CLM is vast and crucial to today's societal needs. When needing to work on self-esteem or critical thinking, educators can use this model (Kilbane & Milman, 2014).

A study conducted by Steven Groccia (2014) with Wesley College revealed that the student-centered approach of the Cooperative Learning Model created students who actively embraced their responsibilities when it came to learning and created meaning by

reflecting on their learning experience. The study also showed inclusion of the learning model promoted group work and cooperation and was able to merge the instructional and social aspects of learning by placing the students at the center of the learning ecology (Groccia, 2014).

Another extraordinary learning model that could be particularly effective in the theatre classroom is the Socratic Seminar. Developed to capture the tradition of classical Athens and their desire to gain an in-depth understanding through questioning and dialogue, the Socratic Seminar model provides today's teachers with a modern take on this idea in order to develop an understanding with their students. According to Kilbane and Milman (2014), this model uses "structured questioning with debate or dialogue to promote learners' development of critical-thinking skills and exploration of ideas" (p. 383). This model is a powerful tool, especially in a theatre classroom, where students and teacher hash out ideas about a script in a structured and accountable environment.

The Socratic Seminar can be overwhelming to students at first because there is an expectation of accountability and participation that does not come from the traditional call and response type of questioning. Teachers using the Socratic Seminar method of pedagogy can uncover their students' previously unexplored perceptions about a text or idea because this method centers students' discovery and fairly responds to the students' questions and concerns. These discoveries become essential when students are learning how to address characterization and explore playwright intentions and motivations. According to the study conducted by Jasmine (2019), the use of the Socratic Seminar in classrooms vastly encouraged and improved students' desire and ability to write, specifically in exploring higher-order ideas through discussion and then developed into

their writing. Writing is an essential part of developing literacy; therefore, teachers cannot ignore the importance of implementing teaching methods that will encourage that development.

In addition to gaining knowledge, Socratic Seminars also excite students. According to a study by Keegan (2013), the use of Socratic Seminars inspired students to participate and turn in work when they had rarely done so before. Students showed increased interest in their classroom texts and looked forward to their discussions through the Socratic Seminar lens. The study revealed that this model was a simple yet effective tool to aid in student understanding (Keegan, 2013).

As new theatre teachers begin to navigate through the trenches of K–12 education expectations, having a strong sense of instructional methods and assessment allows them to focus their intentions on student growth and success, even in the most difficult of situations and classrooms. Socratic Seminars will not only create a safe learning environment for students but will also aid in creating a culture of open dialogue and respect amongst students. Paired with encouraging social learning and higher-order cognitive thinking, this model is ideal in all classrooms, regardless of content. Again, when alternative certification programs do not provide student-led learning models to aspiring theatre teachers, the opportunity to contribute to student success decreases. The kinds of learning models presented to new theatre educators will be dependent on the type of training program an educator attends, either traditional or alternative.

Certification Programs and Their Limitations

Two ways theatre teachers can receive certification are through a traditional teacher education program at a university or an alternative certification program. The

state of Texas allows candidates that successfully complete one of the programs to teach in a public school in the state.

Traditional university teacher certification allows students to obtain a degree in their specific content area while also taking traditional teacher preparation courses. These courses will include field-experience hours as well as time engaged in K–12 classrooms. Current university teacher preparation programs that prepare candidates to be first-year teachers still face challenges. Studies have found that university teacher preparation programs vary in learning experiences offered and in how well prepared the candidate feels to step into the classroom (Lee et al., 2012). According to this study of 130 teacher candidates who had completed their internship, the preparedness for promoting family involvement and planning lessons for culturally diverse students ranked at the bottom of their study (Lee et al., 2012).

Teacher preparation programs in the state of Texas share some common requirements. For example, Texas necessitates specific requirements for certification, including 300 clock hours of coursework and training, which includes at least 80 clock hours of coursework and 30 hours of field experience prior to their student teaching placement ("Become a Teacher in Texas", n.d.). However, it is at the discretion of each university to determine what those hours look like and how long that student teaching internship should last. For example, according to Baylor University's website, Faculty-Guided Field Experiences for undergraduate teacher candidates begin their very first semester, growing in complexity over their time in the program, including exposure to a variety of school environments for experience with different socio-economic backgrounds, cultures, religions, and more. This experience also includes a full year-long

internship program in their final year (Why a BSEd at Baylor, n.d.). However, even this expansive program does not offer All-Level Theatre Arts as one of their majors or programs. The University of Texas teacher preparation program spans three semesters in a PK–12 classroom, only one of which is student teaching (The Professional Development Sequence for Future Teachers, n.d.). There is undoubtedly a difference between these two universities in not only content but time in the field as well.

In order to develop high-quality teachers, the student teaching experience should receive emphasis (Bruce & Ewing, 2012). A student-teacher internship allows teacher candidates the opportunity to gain real-life experience in the classroom, using the knowledge they have gained throughout their coursework before the school places them as a full-time teacher of record. Bruce and Ewing find that the experience before student-teaching does not adequately prepare teacher candidates for the real-time commitment the job actually requires when teaching full-time. Given this point, a student-teacher internship should provide better reflections of these time commitments, such as lesson planning, in their course work.

Another study finds the relationship between student teachers and their university supervisor plays a tremendous role in their success in the classroom (Asplin & Marks, 2013). These relationships, cultivated over an extended period of time, including time in the supervisor's courses, are pivotal in cultivating a positive student teaching experience based on their perceived level of knowledge prior to entering the classroom. Again, this literature shows evidence of the time invested in preparation as relevant to feeling prepared.

Another study found teachers were more likely to remain in the teaching field longer when receiving a better-quality student teaching experience than those who do not receive that same level of student teaching experience (Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012). The researchers assert that student teacher's feelings of preparedness have less to do with the length of the student teaching experience and more to do with the quality of the internship. This better quality of internship also includes exposure to schools with more black and Hispanic students, making teachers more prepared for a diverse environment when they enter the classroom.

There is no doubt that a strong student-teaching program is perhaps the greatest influence on future teachers. According to Brown et al. (2015), "teachers' feelings of preparedness and sense of teaching efficacy are both important indicators of how well they will be able to meet the challenges of the teaching profession and to be successful in their teaching careers" (p. 88). The limits of the study's conclusion are that the team only researched one traditional teacher preparation program. If teacher success relies so heavily on the student teaching or internship experience, it is possible to conclude alternatively certified theatre teachers are missing a key component in their preparedness for the classroom.

Alternative certification is obtained after an individual has earned a minimum of an undergraduate degree and then decides to enter the field of education. According to the Texas Education Agency website (n.d.), becoming an alternatively certified teacher in the state of Texas is an eight-step process:

> Decide what you want to teach. Select an ACP, Alternative Certification Program. Meet the screening criteria of the program. Develop a certification plan with your program. Obtain a teaching position. Apply for a probationary certificate.

Complete all requirements for a standard certificate. Apply for the standard certificate. (TEA, paras. 1–8)

One alternative teacher certification program, Teachers of Tomorrow (n.d.), provides an online avenue for obtaining certification. It offers over 100 hours of online classroom readiness training that is self-paced, as well as provides the option of obtaining 15 of the required 30 field-based observation hours online, leaving these teachers with only 15 observation hours before stepping into their classrooms as a full-time teacher. This limited classroom exposure is alarming as this lack of on-the-job training is vitally important to new teacher success, as outlined below.

Another area in which new teachers struggle, especially those with limited classroom experience such as alternatively certified teachers, is that of classroom management. There is a multitude of research discussing the importance of effective classroom management and its role in student success as well as teacher success. The following section addresses this information.

Importance of Effective Classroom Management

According to multiple studies (Demirdag, 2015; Gregory et al., 2014; Monroe et al., 2010), effective classroom management leads to fewer discipline problems and more engaged students. For theatre teachers, classroom management can present an even greater challenge than core curriculum classrooms because of the nature of the course itself. There are often no desks in the classroom and generally student behaviors in theatre classes are atypical. Students are often talking constantly, moving about the room, and engaging in physical and vocal activities.

Classroom management is a complex and also vitally important aspect of a successful classroom. Monroe et al. (2010) conducted a study in which it was determined

25

that classroom management is often the most influential factor in student academic success as well as determining success for first-year teachers. In addition, in a study by Demirdag (2015), researchers analyzed participants' classroom management skills in relationship to the number of discipline referrals they submitted. This study emphasized that classroom management required creating effective student learning in the classroom, and classroom management revolved around what teachers did to organize students' time and materials. These are all skills with which a beginner teacher is not familiar.

The research also indicated that student engagement plays a large part in classroom management and classroom success. Gregory et al. (2014), revealed how students engage in the classroom: behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement, and these engagements are interrelated. Proving this, Ersozlu and Cayci (2016) assert that teachers must know more than just their content to maintain student engagement. They must also take the time to know their students' interests and learning styles if they want them to remain motivated. Because behavior is learned, in order to do this, teachers must also be good models of behavior, engagement, and motivation if they want students to do the same. Sieberer-Nagler (2016) found that one possible approach to increase engagement is by using learner-centered activities, which will, in turn, help with classroom management as well. If a new teacher lacks field-based experience, the struggle to establish relationships and lead a classroom effectively will be exceedingly more difficult.

Effective classroom management should be proactive rather than reactive. Teachers should utilize rules and routines as powerful preventative tools, according to a study by Oliver, Wehby, Reschly, and the Society for Research on Educational

Effectiveness (2011). The research revealed how necessary knowledge of successful classroom management truly is to a successful classroom. The study conducted by Monroe et al. (2010) found that many new teachers feel ill-prepared to tackle classroom management when they enter their classrooms because of the lack of training in real-world situations. For example, Gregory et al. (2014) recognized that classroom engagement professional development was severely lacking at the secondary levels.

Oliver, Reschly, and the National Comprehensive Center for Teachers (2007) also identified inadequate professional development as a contributing factor to problems with classroom management with new teachers. The lack of supervised experiences reduced the effectiveness of many new teachers as they had not seen effective classroom management modeled by a mentor. Okseon and Euichang (2015) found that providing professional development for the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility model, for example, gave teachers common goals, which empowered them as creators of knowledge and provided a continuous and authentic learning experience. This model, according to Hellison (2011), encourages personal and social responsibility through five areas: respecting the rights and feelings of others, participating and putting forth effort, being self-directed, displaying caring by being sensitive and responsive to others' needs.

A study conducted by Demirdag (2015) determined that inexperienced teachers with poor classroom management skills were not able to accomplish much during their class periods, therefore inhibiting student learning. The results of this study indicated a correlation between teachers with poor classroom management and high numbers of disciplinary problems in their classrooms. According to Wolff et al. (2015), there is a notable difference in classroom management between novice and expert teachers. This

study utilized the voice of the teachers rather than just theories from previous literature. The results showed that expert teachers consistently responded using language that was more contextualized, more often discussed the role of the teacher concerning the situation rather than the student, referenced student learning, and recognized typical behaviors. The novice teachers, on the other hand, responded more often with references to rules, behavior, and discipline.

One way in which novice teachers can learn from their experienced colleagues in handling classroom behavior is how to better plan their lessons for actively engaging students. Experienced teachers find more confidence in their teaching by relying more on their own ideas and lessons and less on the Internet, according to Sieberer-Nagler (2016). However, experienced teachers can reduce time spent on lesson planning and increase the time spent on assessing the students' understanding and improving their behavior by using ready-made sources. By understanding what makes seasoned teachers so successful in the classroom, beginner teachers can find new ways to improve their own experiences.

Research indicates that discipline plays a significant role in the classroom. Classroom discipline is different from classroom management. According to Sellors (n.d), "classroom management is the responsibility of the teacher, discipline is the responsibility of the student." She says, "discipline is the actual act of self-control and appropriate behavior, as taught and modeled by the teacher" (para. 2). In a study by Sadruddin (2012), researchers created and implemented a plan using positive reinforcement instead of punishment, known as the Skinnerian Model of Discipline. The study found that learners' behavior was directly related to punishment and to de-motivation: they were more relaxed with positive reinforcement and a student interest

mind-set. When teachers avoided punishment and de-motivation, and the students'

interests were kept in mind, students were more engaged in the class. According to

Oliver, Wehby, Reschly, and the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness

(2011), discipline issues have an increased effect on teacher stress and burnout, and

according to Hagenauer et al. (2015), the lack of discipline in a class best predicts a

teacher's anger experiences.

So, according to Shahar and Schneider of Forbes (2017), there is evidence that

there is not a significant difference in teacher preparation depending on whether the

teacher is alternatively or traditionally certified. According to their research, the skills,

qualities, and training needs of a competent teacher are still debatable. One can test

content knowledge, but a researcher's capability of testing a teacher candidate's ability to

inspire students through relationships and actually learn about important issues is

difficult. According to these researchers, there is little difference between teachers due to

the certification process.

Professional Development for Theatre Arts Teachers

Another challenge that novice theatre teachers face is a lack of content-specific

professional development. Young and inexperienced theatre teachers need content-

specific and classroom-specific professional development. According to Whitaker (2011),

"relevant, sustained, and sound professional development presents a significant solution

to the problem of teacher attrition" (p. 10). When theatre teachers lack this professional

development, there is a breakdown in their abilities in the classroom. According to Grigg

et al. (2018), there is still a need for improved initial teacher training and continued

teacher training once in the career field, specifically in teacher methodologies such as

Project-Based Learning. Darling Hammond et al. (2011) note that successful teachers will utilize a wide range of methodologies in the classroom, a skill that is rarely taught in context for theatre classrooms.

Theatre teachers at the primary level are often tasked with the same expectations and responsibilities as middle or high school teachers. Allen (2015) explored primary school teacher learning groups for professional development but with the approach from theatre practices. The researcher presented a model for generating instructional and conceptual resources within teacher learning groups using the three elements of means, materials, and engagement modes. He found that teachers will require training in order for the model to be successful as they become facilitators of the group. Allen pointed out that teachers who have relied heavily on professional development that rely on transmission and reproduction of knowledge will struggle with this model. It does involve active participation.

Betts (2005) discussed implementing a drama writing program, 6+1 Traits of Writing Through Drama, at a public middle school over two years. The program incorporated basic writing components as part of the drama movement to improve writing test scores in the classroom. As interested as he was in the drama program's success, the researcher was also equally interested in the professional development's success presented to the teachers who volunteered to participate in the program. The lack of successful professional development, specifically in the fine arts, was presented as a problem. Betts was determined to create a teacher learning model that would help him understand what teachers learn from professional development. The research results indicated the drama intervention was a success academically and socially for the students

involved due to increasing their writing skills and self-awareness as individuals. The program was also determined to be successful in the professional development area. Betts developed an effective model for teacher professional development.

Boylan (2018) presented a set of interesting thoughts on teachers' who lead professional development within their schools and learning communities. The researcher found the thoughts very useful for teachers both as a presenter and as a learner since it encourages leadership development and networking creation. The study showed how valuable this leadership production could be for teachers as it supports a changing landscape of teacher professional development and the idea of leadership development from within the school.

Clark and Sousa (2018) presented a challenge for those in higher education to consider themselves as definitively unfinished, meaning there is always a need to learn more and improve. They pointed out that this should be exciting for educators because it puts learning at the center. However, this can be challenging to some in higher education because it is an industry that focuses on growing resumés over learning. The researchers defined fixed and growth mindsets, emphasizing that fixed mindsets are limited by personal ability. In contrast, growth mindsets focus on growing or changing those skills regardless of talent or intelligence. They added that fixed mindsets could lead to crises in personal thoughts when a failure occurs because the failure is attached to the individual. They argued that a growth mindset failure, on the other hand, is not attached to the individual's ability but rather to the ability to continue to grow, which prevents a sense of personal failure and crises. They also focused on mindset in educational settings and higher education and its role in those aspects. Clark and Sousa (2018) challenged

educators to have more discussions about mindset within higher education and to acknowledge when a fixed mindset begins to dominate the classroom.

All theatre teachers are unique in many ways, including how they experience professional development. Because the options presented to theatre teachers are so few, professional development designers must carefully approach the design of theatre specific training. These learners often experience Self-Directed Learning and Transformative Learning as a means of acquiring the training they require to continue to grow as educators. It is essential to get their hands on educational theatre training and the adult learner's assumptions should be taken into consideration to maintain interest and generate motivation.

Knowles (2012) makes six assumptions about adult learning. The first of these six assumptions related to teacher professional development is the learner's self-concept, which needs to be autonomous and self-directed. According to Smith (2008), professional development, specifically pre-service teacher training, must include modifications to fit the adult learner. Because teachers are so versed in pedagogy, many professional developments for teachers have overlooked the delivery of the instruction to the adult learner. Professional development presenters use pedagogical theories, perhaps to demonstrate the instructional strategies expected in the classroom, but forget about the autonomous nature of adults. When professional development reflects the learner's autonomy, the buy-in is much easier.

The second of Knowles' assumptions related to theatre teacher professional development is the orientation to learning, the need to make it life-related, and the task developmental. In a study by Grigg et al. (2018), the instructors presented Project-Based

learning professional development to pre-service teachers. After teachers worked through complex school issues, this study resulted in the teachers identifying real-life applications of the model. Few theatre-specific professional development options exist at a district level, so these teachers are left feeling useless when leaving a professional development session. Learning is not transferable for this adult learner when there is no application to the classroom.

Self-directed learning focuses on the process involved in adult learning instead of adult learner's assumptions (Merriman et al., 2014). It becomes necessary for theatre teachers to seek out training and professional development due to the lack of options. There is a gap in the literature about theatre professional development offerings, which speaks volumes about why these educators must become self-directed in their pursuit of growth in the field. Organizations such as the Texas Educational Theatre Association are providing theatre teachers with content-specific professional development. However, they are still required to come to the training versus the training coming to them.

Whitaker (2008) notes that administrators rarely ask teachers what professional development needs they have (p. 69), and the professional development presented lacks clear goals for the adult learner. Many districts overlook the theatre teacher needs because there exist so few theatre teachers within the district. With this, theatre teachers specifically are forced to seek learning on their own and develop goals for themselves as they do so.

Transformative learning is perhaps the most impactful theory of adult learning for the theatre educator. Mezirow's (1991) theory presents a process in which adult learners make sense of their experiences through steps: disorienting dilemma, self-examination,

33

sense of alienation, relating discontent to others, explaining options of new behavior, building confidence in new was, planning a course of action, knowledge to implement plans, experimenting with new roles, and reintegration. Theatre, in general, is an art form. According to Nistor (2014), there are seven functions of the theatrical act, including to teach, foster community, and to mark or change identity. By nature, an educational theatre artist strives to teach something new, develop a theatrical community, and to cultivate change by identifying what is happening in the world and do something with it.

While not every step of Mezirow's theory is required for transformative learning to occur, many of these events occur as theatre teachers seek out change for their programs and classrooms. With the social unrest and continuous changes affecting our communities, many teachers will experience disorienting dilemmas. Theatre art professionals must use that dilemma to provide timely and culturally responsive teaching as a part of the curriculum. Transformative learning offers the opportunity to "re-assess the validity of our learning and enables us to apply what we learn in unexpected situations" (Christie et al., 2015, p. 14).

The adult learner is undoubtedly different from the student learner. Teacher professional development must consider these learner differences to make the necessary changes in our schools. In particular, theatre teachers lack much needed content-specific training to make them classroom instructional powerhouses. Andragogy, the art of teaching adults, must be taken into consideration when designing professional development for these educators.

Knowles' assumptions of the adult learner, self-directed learning, and transformative learning are all concepts that apply to the theatre educator. Their

professional development should honor their professionalism, expertise, desire to grow as educators, and their desire as a theatre artist to see a change in their world.

Conclusion

The literature related to the experiences and feelings of theatre teachers described the challenges these teachers face in their first few years as professional educators. Trending themes included a lack of pedagogical content knowledge and how it relates to actual instructional best practices, struggles with classroom management, and a lack of a true understanding of the demands of the position itself. The literature revealed a lack of research into the actual differences between alternative theatre teacher and traditional theatre teacher preparation as well as the gap that exists in teacher preparation between pedagogy and instructional methods that are specific to theatre instruction. Through the comparing of experiences, theatre teachers can provide their suggestions for educational change as it pertains to their field and their preparation.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction: Research Question

The purpose of this multiple descriptive case study was to understand the experiences of novice theatre teachers as they faced the unique demands of the theatre teacher position. In light of the previous chapter identifying several problems for novice theatre teachers, the problem of practice focused on the experiences of Texas theatre teachers. Some of the problems identified in the literature included a lack of pedagogical content knowledge and its relation to instructional best practices, classroom management struggles, and a lack of any unified understanding of the demands of the position itself. The unique demands of the theatre classroom were the bounded experience focus of this study. A multiple descriptive case study allows an in-depth analysis of several people through a shared experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 13).

The central question addressed for this research was what are the experiences of theatre arts teachers in meeting the demands of the job in their first five years of teaching? The results of this problem of practice highlighted the feelings these experiences created, providing insight into the position and the demands of theatre education as well as the need for change at the teacher preparation and also the professional level. This chapter presents the rationale for the multiple descriptive case study design of this research as well as the positionality of the researcher, theoretical framework, selection of the participants and site selection, as well as data collection procedures and analysis.

Researcher Perspective and Positionality

The researcher has a personal connection to the phenomenon as well as the community of educators that are the focus of the research. According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992), the researcher's role as "welcomed and uninvited outsiders" requires them to position themselves into their study (p. 113). The researcher received her Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Arts from East Texas Baptist University in 2005. Although she was interested in arts education, the researcher did not seek any formal or traditional teacher education preparation at the time. It is important to note that this university has historically maintained a small theatre program. The small size provides both positive and negative aspects. Negatives include theatre students are unable to select a theatre focus, such as acting, directing, or design, options which are available at larger universities. Focus restrictions result in never truly becoming an expert in any one area of the theatre. On the other hand, because the program is limited in numbers, it affords every student the opportunity to gain some experience in every aspect of theatre, making each student a "jack of all theatre trades" so to speak. Becoming a well-rounded theatre professional instead of an expert in one area certainly lends itself to the educational theatre profession.

Following graduation, the researcher worked in several community theatres in both Texas and Oklahoma while also working random and odd jobs. In 2010, the researcher began work on her Master of Arts in Theatre at the Texas Women's University in Denton, Texas. While she did not complete this degree, the researcher did gain additional theatre training as well as her alternative teacher certification and training. The researcher entered the theatre classroom while she was enrolled in this program and spent three years as a middle school theatre teachers and two years as a high school technical

theatre teacher. At that time, in 2015, the researcher left the educational theatre world and continued her career as a high school English teacher before leaving the classroom and entering educational administration. At the time of this publication, the researcher has reentered the educational theatre realm as a high school assistant director.

As a new theatre teacher, the researcher entered the classroom with zero teaching experience or even student teaching. There was no provided curriculum, no training in classroom management, no training in the financial aspects of requesting purchase orders or maintaining a budget, no parent organization created, and no professional development offered specifically for the theatre classroom by the district. During this time, the researcher was a member of the Texas Educational Theatre Association which did provide extensive networking with fellow theatre teachers as well as professional development. However, membership in this organization and participation in any training was at the researcher's own expense. The leadership on the researcher's campus willingly proclaimed a lack of any knowledge of the arts, and there was a constant struggle to explain decisions in the theatre classroom and the need for additional resources. Outside of contract time, the researcher produced two mainstage shows each school year. This required her to stay at the campus until 9pm every weekday. This additional work time resulted in minimal additional compensation.

As a white, Episcopalian female who was raised in a lower middle-class home with both parents present, the researcher often feels her worldview is lacking, or at least boring. What she has discovered since becoming involved in the theatre is that it is a world and a place for everyone. Any race, any religion, any socio-economic background, any belief system belongs in the theatre. The researcher truly believes she has learned

more about her fellow human beings through exposure to theatre. Lin Manuel-Miranda's production of *Hamilton* has shown just how important theatre can be today by attracting young people and non-traditional theatre goers due to its use of hip-hop and diverse casting. Members of the Latin community have been praising their representation in the movie release of Miranda's musical *In the Heights* in 2021. The musical *Dear Evan Hansen* has highlighted youth depression and suicide. There has been a concerted effort recently in the theatre world to highlight and employ people of color and incorporate more diversity in their productions. Theatre is literally changing our world. It is important to note that theatre teachers are playing a major part in creating world changers and they deserve the same respect and recognition as teachers who are creating scientists and mathematicians.

Due to the researcher's background and feeling that there is an extreme lack of preparation in the classroom, the researcher must position herself as an active participant. The theatre teachers interviewed were complete strangers, but the researcher could not avoid her own experiences when conducting the individual interviews. The researcher's positionality influenced follow-up questions which was a main factor in determining the need to utilize a semi-structured interview platform. Each teachers' experience was unique. However, the experience of being a theatre teacher, while different for every teacher, is one that is uniting and unifying. It was important for the researcher to establish a level of trustworthiness with the participants in order to develop a feeling of comradery to permit the researcher to bring out their true feelings and experiences.

In order to frame this study and provide a lens for the research, the researcher

utilized Goodson's Theory of Educational Change (2001). Scholars characterize this

theory by emphasizing the centrality of the teacher's personal domain in sustaining

educational change (Goodson, 2001). That is, educational change must be a result of a

teacher's personal desire for change for it to be effective long-term. Goodson's Theory of

Educational Change begins with campus leaders initiating and promoting educational

change, such as proper discipline procedures for the campus. This is followed by the

teachers responding to external change, such as a district initiative that requires a certain

instructional method to be used in the classroom. Finally, teachers are led to a personal

desire for change where they take what they see in the classroom and what they are asked

to do without their input and seek larger change in education. See Figure 3.1 for a visual

representation of this theory.
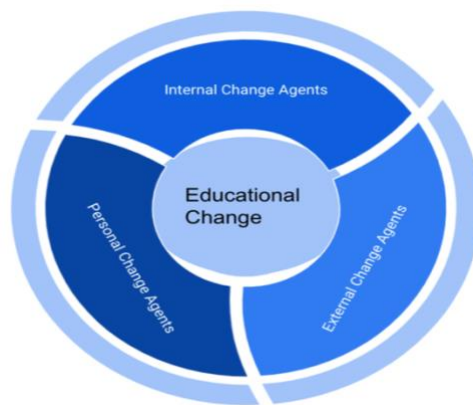

Figure 3.1: Goodson's Theory of Educational Change (2001).

Theatre is not a tested subject area in the state of Texas. Therefore, often-overlooked

theatre educators were able to share their stories, and then the researcher analyzed the

lived experiences of these teachers. The researcher assumed the need for change and the acquisition of new knowledge to improve preparedness in the classroom for theatre teachers. Without change, these teachers may not remain in the education field.

While Goodson's Theory of Educational Change was the primary framework for this study, the researcher also utilized the social cognitive theory branch of self-efficacy and its relationship to teachers in order to assist in designing interview questions. By design, administrators require teachers to face challenges that often have no clear answers. They are also asked to find a way to make changes to navigate those issues. According to Bray-Clark and Bates (2003), a teacher's feelings of effectiveness rely heavily on how teachers "define tasks, employ strategies, view the possibility of success, and ultimately solve the problems and challenges they face" (p. 2). According to Bandura's Theory of Self-efficacy (1997), self-efficacy is an individual's belief in his or her capability "to organize and execute the course of action required to manage a prospective situation" (p. 2). Because of this belief, the experiences amongst teachers influences feelings of success, which in turn drive the need for change.

This need for change was evident in the design of the primary research question for this study: what are the experiences of theatre teachers in meeting the demands of the job in their first five years of teaching? By focusing on the self-efficacy of the teachers and their personal experiences, the researcher took the struggles identified by the teachers and wrote the narrative of change required for continued success using their own words.

These theories rely heavily on teacher experience and teacher desire for change. Therefore, Goodson's Theory of Educational Change and Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy influenced the method for collecting data. In order to capture the personal stories

and experiences directly from each teacher, questionnaires used in the data collection allowed for open-ended responses instead of a quantitative-like questionnaire such as a Likert scale. These stories formed the interview questions, which also allowed the teachers to speak openly through semi-structured interviews. These questions focused on those experiences and helped to navigate the story of change. The addition of photographs from participants, their own interpretation of what their experience looks like daily in their own space, literally painted a picture of their experiences. Because the feeling of success, or the teachers' self-efficacy, and the teachers' experiences with the demands of the position are connected, the desire for change becomes inevitable. Therefore, Goodson's and Bandura's theories equate to a viable lens for the telling of participants' stories.

The collection of this data led to the analysis phase. Goodson's Theory of Educational Change integrates the external, internal, and personal perspectives of change in order to drive new approaches in the educational field. Therefore, the researcher coded the responses to the three areas. The researcher chose to winnow the data in order to provide the focused results for the narrative, external, internal, and personal influences.

With newly gained knowledge about the experiences of these teachers and how it relates to their feelings of success, the researcher made recommendations to existing teacher preparation programs and school districts to better prepare new theatre teachers for the profession. These new teachers have the potential to make a tremendous impact in the lives of their students.

Research Design and Rationale

In order to answer the primary research question and describe the in-depth experiences of theatre teachers, a multiple descriptive case study research design was necessary. According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992), the "research methods we choose say something about our views on what qualifies as valuable knowledge" (p 5). Qualitative researchers recognize the complexity of social interaction and desire to uncover some of that complexity. The researcher approached this complexity and provided justification due to the openness of qualitative research (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). In order to do this, the researcher had to immerse herself into the lives of others, or in the case of life during the COVID-19 pandemic, immersed herself via the safety of video.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), case study research allows a researcher to "develop an in-depth analysis of a case...bounded by time and activity" (p. 14). The phenomenon of tackling the unique demands of being a novice theatre teacher was the focus of this research design. A multiple descriptive case study allowed the researcher to seek out participants who have all experienced this distinctly unique phenomenon. Due to the open nature of qualitative research and the use of interviews and questionnaires, a clear picture of feelings resulting from the demands of the job emerged. Because the phenomenon, the unique and varied experiences of novice theatre teachers in the state of Texas, was well-defined, researchers, who are also seeking knowledge of the experiences of teachers in the fine arts, can replicate this study.

It was important to the researcher to select a descriptive case study research design. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), case studies are bound by time and activity. This particular study was bound by a very specific time frame and activity of

43

theatre teachers experiencing two to five years of teaching, creating the case study nature of the design. There is incredible power in storytelling, something that is the backbone to the theatre as a profession. Because case study research relies so heavily on rich descriptive writing, the researcher knew her participants as fellow theatre educators, which would create the perfect backdrop for the writing process, by allowing her to be the vehicle to deliver their words. The experience of being a new theatre teacher is difficult. If the stories of those who have lived it are not told, then the world misses out on important life experiences. Even more importantly, the study provides an opportunity to bring about change so the profession does not lose valuable teachers.

Site Selection and Participant Sampling

Careful consideration had to be taken when choosing the site selection for this research. Ideally, the researcher would conduct interviews in a school setting, perhaps in a classroom or even on the stages of schools. For many theatre teachers, the stage is where they feel most comfortable and possess the most creative energy. Because the problem addressed in this study was the possible feeling of being unprepared for the demands of the theatre classroom, feeling comfortable to discuss their experience was pivotal. This study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic which limited face-to-face interactions and in-person meetings, therefore the researcher adapted. Many teachers were not required to be on their campuses during COVID-19 and the pandemic restricted the researcher from meeting in person with any participant.

The researcher encouraged all participants to prepare for their interview by selecting a site that they felt most comfortable and their creativity felt most free. In order to encourage an open dialogue of discussion amongst the participants, a recorded zoom

video interview was the best option for these interviews. Each participant agreed that the zoom video conference was the best option.

In order to help the researcher best understand the problem, she used stratified purposive sampling to select participants. This type of sampling, according to Patton (1990), gives the opportunity to facilitate comparison and illustrate characteristics of subgroups. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research requires purposively selecting participants "that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question" (p. 185). This study focused on the feelings of being a novice theatre teacher and the unique demands of that position. Therefore, participants were all theatre teachers in the state of Texas with two to five years of experience in the theatre classroom. Additionally, the researcher selected these participants to inform the descriptive case study through criteria based, stratified purposive sampling. The selection criteria required theatre teachers to be currently teaching in the state of Texas and have two to five years of theatre teaching experience. Teachers in the group ranged in age from early 20s to late 40s and included both traditionally certified and alternatively certified backgrounds. No two participants resided in the same geographical area.

Eleven participants completed the questionnaire. The researcher obtained these participants through a posting on the University Interscholastic League One Act Play directors Facebook group page. This group is a collection of theatre teachers in Texas who participate in the One Act Place competition each year. The post called for participants who met the selection criteria to complete the questionnaire regarding their experiences when they entered the profession. In order to have stratified purposeful

sampling, the researcher selected four participants for the individual interviews with varying backgrounds and compelling experiences, as indicated in the questionnaire.

Data Collection Procedures

In qualitative research, the researcher must establish validity of the study (Creswell & Clark, 2018). The researcher used triangulation of data to establish validity. She collected data from multiple sources in order to establish trustworthiness and authenticity. The study utilized three specific forms of data in order to accomplish this triangulation.

First, the researcher created a questionnaire to gain insight into theatre teacher experiences across the state of Texas as well as to establish a general understanding of overarching themes for the study. While some scholars (Creswell & Clark, 2018) would consider the questionnaire as quantitative data, the researcher used open-ended questions in this questionnaire to capture the overall experience of each participant, making the data qualitative in nature. The questionnaire collected basic identifying data as well, such as name, years of teaching experience, type of certification, email address, location, and gender. The results from this questionnaire resulted in four themes that informed the creation of interview questions for the individual interview. The four themes that emerged were: lack of support, overwhelming basic duties, struggles with curriculum and pedagogy, and lack of continuing and content-specific professional development. Appendix B provides the questions included in the questionnaire.

These themes then led to the creation of interview questions and individual interviews. According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992), interviews are the process of "getting words to fly" (p. 63). As the interviewer, you essentially "pitch" questions at

your participants in the hopes of their answers flying. To accomplish this while still maintaining a focus on the research question, the researcher conducted individual semi-structured interviews. From the eleven completed questionnaires, the researcher selected four teachers to include in the individual interviews. The researcher made these selections based on a variety of backgrounds and compelling personal experiences. A Zoom video application recorded the interviews, which lasted approximately 60 minutes each. The interview questions focused on the four identified themes from the questionnaire listed above, however the semi-structured nature of the interview allowed the participants to speak freely about their own personal experiences. Appendix B lists all questions prepared for the semi-structured individual interviews.

The final source of data collected was the collection of photographs from participants. Creswell and Creswell (2018) include audiovisual digital materials as a unique and important data collection type. Photographs allow participants to share their reality directly and the photos capture attention visually. The researcher asked all interviewed participants to gather several photographs that capture their daily experiences as a theatre teacher, specifically the struggles and successes they have encountered. The researcher also asked the participants to include photographs that expressed any of their feelings regarding the demands of a theatre teacher. Only two participants provided photographs. Because the purpose of this type of data collection is to allow participants to share their personal experiences, the researcher provided no other instructions, and the photo selection was left up to the creativity of the participants. See Appendix C for photographs. Questionnaires, individual interviews, and audiovisual digital materials all

provided triangulation for this study. Through the collection of these data, the researcher conducted the analysis using memo writing, winnowing of the data, and hand coding.

Data Analysis Procedures

The purpose of data analysis, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), is to make sense out of text and image data, taking it apart and essentially putting it all back together. The researcher conducted data analysis through a five-step process. Step one was to organize and prepare the data for analysis, step two was to look at all the data, step three was to code all the data, step four was to generate a description and themes, and step five was to represent the description and themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data analysis began with the use of memo writing during the recorded individual interviews. This simultaneous procedure allowed for analysis to occur while also collecting data to include the information as part of the narrative in the study. The researcher then transcribed all interviews. Winnowing the data, a process of "focusing in on some of the data and disregarding other parts of it" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 192) was also necessary in order to accurately code the information. Unlike quantitative research, where researchers meticulously consider preservation of all data, qualitative researchers must process the data into a smaller set of themes and ideas; the data is often so dense and rich researchers cannot use it in its entirety. The researcher conducted a framework analysis of the data first, focusing on internal, external, and personal contributions to change. She then focused on the emerging themes of imposter syndrome, lack of support, poor communication of expectations, struggles with curriculum and pedagogy, and lack of continuing and content-specific professional development, as stated in the data collection section of this study. By doing so, hand coding followed.

During data analysis, the researcher used predetermined codes and emerging codes (See Tables 3.1 and 3.2). The researcher printed transcripts of the individual interviews and printed all teacher-provided pictures with space to assign the code labels. The researcher assigned code labels to the data and compiled all codes onto a separate sheet. The researcher reviewed codes to eliminate redundancy and overlap and then grouped the codes into themes. Then, the researcher created a concept map with the codes to allow for a visual flow of ideas. The researcher re-watched the interviews and looked for nonverbal communication such as body language as well as tone and words she may have missed in the initial interview. Finally, the researcher wrote a narrative for each case regarding the theoretical framework analysis as well as the emerging themes to be included in the findings section (Creswell & Creswell, (2018).

Table 3.1

Theoretical Framework Analysis Codes

Internal Change Agents	External Change Agents	Personal Change Agents
I	E	P

Table 3.2

Cross Case Thematic Analysis Codes

Professional Development	Pedagogical Gap/Curriculum	Expectations	Lack of Support	Imposter Syndrome
PD	PG	EXP	LOS	IS

The researcher used triangulation in order to validate this analysis by examining all three data sources: questionnaires, individual interviews, and photographs. The themes present in the questionnaires informed the interview questions for the individual

49

interviews. The researcher compared these findings to the provided photographs. She

asked the four interview participants to review the created concept map so they could

determine the accuracy of the themes presented, also known as member checking. The

researcher utilized a rich, thick description to convey the information in order to validate

the research. By providing this description, filled with many perspectives, the results

become more realistic, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018). Finally, the researcher

presented bias in the findings in order to establish reflexivity and inform the reader of

how her background in theatre education has shaped the findings.

<div align="center">*Ethical Considerations*</div>

The researcher addressed ethical considerations throughout every process of the

research study, from before conducting the study, at the beginning of the study, while

collecting data and analyzing that data, and when reporting, sharing, and storing the data.

The researcher anticipated these considerations and took steps to address them (Glesne &

Peshikin, 1990). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a research study should

always address ethical considerations. Prior to collecting any data, the researcher

obtained permission to conduct the study from the university Institutional Review Board

(IRB). The protection of the participants was of utmost priority in this study. The

researcher fully informed the human subjects that they were participants in a research

study by obtaining written and/or verbal consent from all participants for the collection of

questionnaires, interviews, and photographs. The researcher did not collect private or

harmful information and carefully respected their privacy. The researcher did not exploit

participants with promises of reciprocity for their participation. The design of the study

positioned the researcher in a manner that did not encourage power imbalances. During

data collection, all participants received the same treatment, and during the individual interviews, the researcher gave all participants equal amount of time to talk.

Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher took special care to avoid siding with participants, or what Creswell and Creswell (2018) consider going native. Participants shared multiple perspectives, and the researcher disclosed even contrary findings to avoid providing only positive results. The researcher reported all evidence and findings honestly and did not plagiarize any research. The study shared composite stories in order to protect the privacy of the participants, and the study used unbiased language in the findings in order to communicate clearly. The researcher made arrangements to store all data for five years on a flash drive locked in a file cabinet and provided copies of this research to all participants and fellow researchers.

Limitations and Delimitations

The researcher took every effort to conduct a quality research study; however, the researcher considered the limitations. The study relied on a small sample of human subjects to participate and only interviewed four subjects. In addition, only two of the four interview participants provided photographs for the final source of data. The study's conclusions, then, reveal a limited perspective: all theatre teachers may not share the human subjects' experiences in this study. This research also only included theatre teachers in the public-school setting and charter school setting, leaving out the perspective of private school teachers. The experiences of private school teachers might differ from those of public-school and charter teachers. Importantly, not all participants might have been as candid throughout the interview process with a stranger as they would have been with their personal colleagues, despite efforts made to establish rapport with

all participants. This set of participants could limit the perspectives of the experiences of those first few years in the theatre classroom. In addition, the study was limited to teachers in the state of Texas. It is possible theatre teacher experiences may vary from state to state or country to country. Finally, due to the researcher's personal experiences as a former theatre teacher and educator, she must note her own bias.

The researcher included several delimitations in order to maintain a focus on the research problem. First, the study maintained a small sample size in order to fairly represent all voices and experiences of the participants. The study also limited participation by only including teachers in the state of Texas who are still in the profession. This limited the conversation from straying to other issues such as teacher retention which was not the focus of the study. Finally, an inclusion criterion for participants was only having two to five years of theatre classroom experience. This delimitation prevented a focus on typical first-year teacher preparedness issues shared by most teachers of any content area and instead focused the discussion on content-specific issues.

Conclusion

This multiple descriptive case study examined the experiences of novice theatre teachers regarding the unique and distinct demands of their profession using questionnaires, individual interviews, and photographs. These experiences were viewed through the lens of Goodson's Theory of Educational Change and the study also provided necessary data to inform change in the teacher preparation field and ongoing professional development for these educators. The results of this study have implications for school district personnel as well as all theatre teachers and the lives they impact. To that end, the

52

following chapter examines the results and discusses the implications of the research

findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Implications

Introduction

Novice theatre teachers in Texas face a variety of challenges when it comes to the very specific nuances of the profession. Taking time to listen to the experiences of several of these novice teachers and analyze the implications of their stories has provided the opportunity to take an in-depth look into the daily lives of these educators. This study specifically focused on the lived experiences of four theatre teachers as they relate to the unique demands of the profession and aimed to answer the research question: What are the experiences of theatre teachers in meeting the demands of the job in their first five years of teaching? This chapter reveals identified feelings associated with being a novice theatre teacher of being unappreciated, unprepared, overworked, and isolated. The study also identified several implications, most importantly that there is a need for targeted support in the above-mentioned areas for theatre teachers at the teacher preparation level and at the classroom level.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of the participants and their selection for this study. Each participant is detailed as a separate case. The presentation of the findings for this descriptive case study unfolds in five steps. First, the researcher provides an overview of the narrative for each of the four cases, including their thoughts on teaching theatre. Following the narrative for each participant, the researcher presents a case study framework analysis with a focus on each case and its revelations regarding Goodson's Theory of Educational Change. Third, the researcher presents a cross case thematic

analysis which addresses the emerging themes of the study. Next, the researcher discusses all implications of the study. Finally, the researcher summarizes the results discussed in the chapter.

The Participants

Chapter Three of this document provides a thorough description of how the researcher chose participants and the sampling techniques used for this study. This descriptive case study focused on participants who are current theatre teachers in the state of Texas with two to five years of teaching experience. The researcher identified four participants that teach at different schools throughout the state of Texas that met the selection criteria. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the participants.

Table 4.1

List of Participants

Participant	Years of Experience	Certification Type
Alvaro	3–4	Alternative
Kristen	1–2	Traditional
Hilary	2–3	Alternative
Kelley	3–4	Traditional

Individual Case Profiles and Theoretical Analysis

Goodson's Theory of Educational Change was the theoretical framework utilized in this descriptive case study. This theory, as discussed, identifies three change agents in education, those being external forces, internal forces, and personal forces. According to Goodson (2001), the personal forces, or the personal beliefs held by an individual, hold the key to true long-lasting change in education. Because the goal of this study was to explore personal experiences of theatre teachers within their educational system, the

55

researcher identified evidence of external, internal, and personal influences for each case participant.

Goodson defines internal change agents as those who "work within school settings to initiate and promote change within an external framework of support and sponsorship" (Goodson, 2001, p. 45). The researcher focused on internal agents that affected the experiences of the theatre teacher in each case study, particularly at the campus level and not the district level. The researcher did not allocate connotation to the change, meaning the change could be viewed as either a positive change or a negative change. Unlike internal change factors, external change factors for this study are changes dictated from outside the campus, such as the state or the district. According to Goodson (2001), external change agents are "mandated in a top-down manner" (p. 45). Goodson believes it is the personal change agents that lead to the greatest educational changes (Goodson, 2001). "Personal Change refers to the personal beliefs and missions that individuals bring to the change process," according to Goodson (2001, p. 45).

Case Study #1—Alvaro

Alvaro joined this problem of practice, like all participants, by answering the questionnaire distributed through the One Act Play Directors Facebook page. He is in his fourth year as a theatre teacher in a public middle school and graduated from a public university with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre Performance. Alvaro did not participate in any student teaching before entering the profession which was one of the reasons his participation was requested for an individual case study. The questionnaire revealed a rich insight into the experiences he has had in the theatre classroom.

As a new theatre teacher, Alvaro struggled deeply with not having enough supplemental materials provided to him for his classroom. This translated into a struggle with students who did not want to participate in classroom activities because not only was it difficult to plan relevant lessons, but he did not have any help or resources for those who were in the class just for the theatre credit. However, he found that student participation in extra-curricular theatre activities and competitions was high and did not require a lot of planning on his part. These were the students who desired to be a part of the theatre department and grow as artists.

When asked on the questionnaire about what he wished he had known before he entered the theatre classroom, Alvaro responded that he wished he had more knowledge about curriculum design for theatre coursework as opposed to lesson planning. According to him, "it's hard to plan lessons when you're still shaky on things like pacing and structure." Perhaps the most telling data from the questionnaire were the words Alvaro selected to describe his job as a theatre teacher: stressful, underappreciated, expensive, disrespected, isolated, energetic, quirky, challenging, fun, overwhelming, and rewarding. All of these descriptions presented themselves throughout the analysis of data below. The interview conducted with Alvaro provided a tremendous amount of insight into his experience as a novice theatre teacher in Texas. His experiences as they relate to Goodson's Theory of Educational Change are discussed below.

Internal change factors. For Alvaro, internal change factors played a significant role in his experiences at the beginning of his time on campus and have shaped his current feelings on his future in the profession. For example, when he was hired for his job as a theatre teacher, he had never interviewed with the campus principal. He had only

met with the fine arts coordinator and directors at his feeder high school. Not interviewing with the campus principal meant expectations for the position were poorly communicated to Alvaro and were only explained "after the fact." He believed he would direct a fall show like a musical and a spring one act play competition production, but once he arrived on campus, he was told he oversaw pep rallies, must be a four-event sponsor, and help with all high school productions. This equated to a much larger time commitment than he expected.

Another internal change factor for Alvaro was that he walked into a poorly established program that was not stable. He was tasked with growing a dwindling program. For him, not being told this by his principal beforehand created a feeling that perhaps it was all a test. Could he handle the stresses of middle school theatre? Both internal change factors revolved around the administration of the school and how their communication affected the experience of being a theatre teacher for Alvaro. After year two of teaching theatre, his school had a complete administration overhaul, perhaps the greatest internal change factor for him.

According to Alvaro, the addition of a new principal made a huge change for him as a professional, but also for the entire campus as well. "He was an elementary principal, so he came in with all this energy," and that energy is what created a major culture shift on the campus. The new principal focused so much on meeting the needs of the staff and helping them to grow as professionals. He was entrusted as the campus's University Interscholastic League (UIL) coordinator and was made a part of the campus leadership team, meaning he had direct contact with administration. This principal had the motto of "tell me what you need instead of asking me for permission," which made a world of

difference for Alvaro. According to him, "this is what it feels like to be given the freedom to do what you want. Since he's been principal, I haven't had a failure, only lessons where I learn how to do things better." This change in administration has left Alvaro feeling empowered in his role as a campus leader.

External change factors. For Alvaro, the external change factors in his first few years as a theatre teacher ultimately have led to more stress than anything. Not only did he have to prepare his classroom for the beginning of the school year, but he also was required to attend new teacher training that extended into the entire first year of school. In his district, new teachers were required to meet twice a month during the week and one Saturday a month, something that got in the way of his duties as theatre teacher. He often had the internal debate of, "do I do what the district says I have to do, or do I do what my theatre program needs?"

The school district also provided zero budget for the middle school theatre program, meaning Alvaro has had to fundraise every penny for his productions. He believes, "if we're required to put the shows on, we should have the resources." According to him, the high school program receives a healthy budget for their productions, and his school often is left begging for hand-me-downs such as old costumes and props and leftover lumber for sets. Because of this lack of funding, Alvaro has been forced to spend money out of his own pocket to get his students what they need, such as scripts and fees for contests. While he says he does not feel he is owed that money back because "it's not for me, it's for the kids," it puts an immense pressure on him as a director and teacher that even his students feel.

In addition to paying for program needs in the classroom and in production, Alvaro has been forced to pay for his own professional development (PD). "There's not enough PD for fine arts," he said. He is allowed to attend theatre specific conventions every other year, but if he wants professional development on a regular basis, he must seek it out on his own and pay for it on his own. "PD for theatre teachers is so important. To do it once a year isn't enough, especially when other departments are getting way more content specific PD throughout the year." Alvaro believes that when theatre teachers are not allowed to grow professionally, they and their programs become stagnant.

Personal change agents. Alvaro's personal beliefs came across loudly and clearly in his interview. For him, his first year of teaching theatre felt like a roller coaster. He felt calmness when he was hired because he knew he had secured a job in a hectic job market in which theatre positions do not present themselves very often. That calm was quickly replaced by a sense of chaos because of how overwhelmed he felt. There was no established curriculum at all for him and he had no idea how to develop lesson plans. He felt he simply could not get a grasp on anything. However, once he was asked to be a part of the leadership team on campus, that chaos turned to a sense of ease. Alvaro explained, "when I became part of the leadership team, I really felt like I could make mistakes and not be afraid of changing things or doing things differently whether they worked or didn't. I became more flexible with my teaching." This freedom allowed him to try new things and fail and change, so being a part of this leadership team was a tremendous change agent for him personally.

When asked about the advice he would give his first-year teacher self, Alvaro said, "don't feel like you have to do everything." At the beginning of his time in the classroom, he felt there was an expectation of "that's what the theatre teacher does," so he just did it all. He thought, "if I'm the theatre teacher, I have to keep doing the things the theatre teacher does." However, he has developed the belief that it is okay to say no and to learn how to delegate tasks while still maintaining a strong program.

Another personal belief of Alvaro's is that theatre students are resilient, and it is due to this resiliency he has dedicated himself to remain in his current position for at least five years and likely more. He does not want to abandon a program that he has had to develop from the ground up, and he knows his theatre students sometimes do things that are so unexpected. "I would be like, 'how do you know about Shakespeare' and the kid would say, 'oh my dad told me about it,' or something like that." Sometimes these students can be harder to handle, but Alvaro finds joy in these challenges.

Alvaro also stated his belief that theatre teachers are likely to be the most passionate teachers on any campus. They are the biggest backbone of a campus because their passion translates not only to their students but to other teachers and staff as well. "We're not as out there as some people think we are. The stereotype is not always true," he stated, but that passion is what has allowed him to stop just going through the motions of figuring everything out because that is simply not enough anymore. These personal beliefs are what drive Alvaro forward in his profession.

Conclusion of case 1. Alvaro's responses to the questionnaire, interview questions, and submitted photographs provided evidence of various experiences that contributed to his first few years as a theatre teacher. Through his interview, he expressed

tremendous passion for his job and dedication to his students, as well as a desire to remain in the educational theatre profession long-term. Despite a major lack of communication of expectations when he first began his career, a supportive administration change has made all the difference for Alvaro. This leadership support as well as the resiliency of his students is what drives his decision to remain in the profession and his desire to move up to the high school theatre level, hopefully at his own alma mater. He shared examples of the frustrating circumstances that theatre teachers in particular face daily that are not present for other disciplines. Memos taken by the researcher during the recorded interview align with the most prominent elements of Alvaro's story. The next case in this study concerns a second novice theatre teacher, Kristen.

Case Study #2—Kristen

Kristen is in her second year of teaching middle school and high school theatre at a charter school, which also happens to be her high school alma mater. She received a traditional teacher preparation training, including student teaching, and she received her Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Arts from a private university. Her experiences revealed in her questionnaire were key in her selection as a participant. Kristen's student teaching experience was beneficial, although she felt incredibly wary of the subjects she was required to student teach, Technical Theatre 1 and Theatre 2–4. Theatre 2 was where she felt she did her best teaching and Technical Theatre her worst. Unfortunately, three of her eight classes were the Technical Theatre class, and although her students were "awesome," she felt as if she could only "teach them as best as I could." Kristen's student teaching took place at one of the largest high schools in her area and was strictly at the

high school level. The environment was not reflective of her very small middle/high school charter school where she currently works. This became challenging when she was trying to determine how to differentiate between her middle school and high school coursework.

When asked about her biggest struggle when she entered the classroom, Kristen revealed a lack of confidence in herself as a teacher and her ability to actually teach what she knew. She stated, "sometimes it felt like I had imposter's syndrome and kids would find out that I wasn't a real teacher." Her lack of confidence and young age also led to a need to be certain her students saw her as a teacher rather than someone who could be their friend. Despite this lack of confidence, for Kristen, her student-teacher relationships were incredibly important in her success as a new teacher. She wrote, "while I had a battle with myself on how the kids saw me, I knew they respected me and let me into their lives as their teacher." According to Kristen, these relationships gave students courage to be themselves in her class, whether in coursework or displaying their personal frustrations.

One of the revelations she made through her questionnaire as well as through her interview was her undiagnosed struggle with anxiety. This anxiety, in Kristen's words, "would cause me to not be the best teacher I could be." She feels as if there was so much that she wanted to be as a teacher and still have high expectations for her students and herself, but she found it so difficult to teach her students when she knew she was being held back from her own standards by her anxiety.

Kristen described her job as "the support kids need." She stated, "so many students have come into my class (virtually and in-person) and have stated how important

this class was to them because it eased their mind." She believes her job as a theatre teacher means she provides a space where students can talk freely about their frustrations, how things are going, and participate in the headspace that allows students to open up. Whole child education is incredibly important to her.

The individual interview with Kristen provided even more insight into her experience as a novice theatre teacher and the challenges and successes she faced in her first few years in the classroom. The results of this interview and how they relate to Goodson's Theory of Educational Change are discussed below.

Internal change agents. Kristen's experience with internal change agents had less of an impact on her experiences as a new theatre teacher than her personal change agents which will be discussed later in this section. For the most part, internal change agents affected which classes Kristen would teach. Since she teaches at her alma mater, she was somewhat familiar with the expectations of the campus as a whole and easily acclimated to the small charter school environment of her campus. However, when she was a student, the fine arts department had been thriving, in both theatre and music. The theatre department itself had gone from a combined middle/high program to two separate, individually operating programs. While she was away at college, the school decided to merge music and theatre into one program taught by one teacher. This meant students were only experiencing theatre during class time and never as an extra-curricular activity. By the time Kristen was hired after college graduation, the school had once again separated the fine arts back into two separate entities, both theatre and music, but theatre is once again a combined middle and high school program. This has created not only a lot

of extra work for her, but also means she must build her theatre program basically from scratch.

Kristen was provided zero curriculum to support her courses, and because she had only student taught at the high school level, she really had no idea how to create a curriculum that could support both middle and high school students. This year, she only teaches 8th graders at the middle school level, a decision made by her campus leadership for all fine arts teachers, each taking one grade level to focus on throughout the year. Her high schoolers are limited to Theatre 1 and 2, and according to her, she does not "feel like her program is moving in the direction of a stereotypical theatre program," a frustration that comes at the hands of her campus leadership.

It appeared that Kristen's campus leadership is not overly supportive of the arts at all on her campus. She pointed out that, "this year we don't have a fine arts department at all. Fine arts did not get a 'lead' this year, so we have no established department." There is also no Fine Arts Coordinator to support the campus, so it is, "fend for yourself and hope for the best." Campus leadership also made it very difficult for Kristen to accept the challenges of directing a play for the UIL One Act Play competition during a pandemic. When she realized there was no way her production could continue due to the ongoing attendance issues, she said, "it took two to three times of asking. There was no 'we see your struggle and we support you.' It took me going back." This became an overwhelming frustration for Kristen that was even felt by her students.

External change agents. One of the major external change agents Kristen experienced was rooted in her teacher preparation training. She stated, "there was no overlap between theatre and education courses. The only exposure to actual theatre

pedagogy was in observations and student teaching." Of course, this lack of training created tremendous frustration and stress for her as she tried to navigate the already lacking access to curriculum provided by her campus. It became almost a snowball effect that resulted in extreme anxiety for Kristen, which will be discussed in the next section. Add in the global pandemic and the unprecedented ice storm in Texas and she has felt like she has yet to ground herself in doing what every theatre does: unfortunately, she has yet to direct a play.

Kristen also has an incredibly limited budget, a decision made at the district level. When asked about her budget, she responded, "I have to laugh a little." The middle school and high school each received $2000 for fine arts with the music and theatre departments receiving only $500 each for an entire year. A single production will overrun that budget with just production rights fees, scripts, costumes, props, set, etc. This leaves no room for additional classroom needs such as supplies for projects or classroom sets of scripts for analysis. "They're willing to provide me with any textbook I want, but there's really not a good one out there," she explained.

In addition to a very small budget, Kristen also must deal with a district that fails to prioritize professional development for fine arts teachers. "As a district this year, we did virtual PD with our nation-wide school district. There was one PD for all fine arts," she stated. She "got lucky" that the one fine arts professional development was being covered by a theatre teacher in Florida. Even then, it was just resources for the fine arts teachers with no support for the curriculum or individual theatre needs.

Due to this external change agent, Kristen has had to rely heavily on the network of One Act Play directors in the state. "In Texas we're lucky the theatre world is so close

together because of One Act Play. No matter who comes to Texas teaching theatre, they have to know that resource of directors is there," she pointed out. She claimed, "when you're panicking, run to them and ask questions, even if you don't know them," emphasizing that she has technically not met any theatre teacher other than through a zoom call. Kristen said when she thinks of resources, she thinks of other people.

Kristen has also found it very disheartening to have absolutely no one in her district who is able to provide her immediate support. She mentioned her district providing instructional coaches at the beginning of the year, but they were actually just there to serve as observers for the statewide teacher evaluation system. Once the district determined they would not worry about the evaluation system, they instead sent district employees to observe classrooms. "People who didn't know me came to see my class, people who don't know anything about theatre classrooms," she lamented. These internal and external change agents discussed above were heavily influential in the experiences Kristen had with her personal change agents. These personal change agents are discussed below.

Personal change agents. Kristen's personal beliefs played a very large role in her experiences as a novice theatre teacher. Mainly, she struggled with undiagnosed anxiety throughout the majority of her first year as a theatre teacher. She said, "I felt very overwhelmed. My mental health was not the best, plus teaching like that equates to memory loss about those days." It plagues Kristen that she cannot remember much about that time in her career. She felt like she focused too much on the small things during this time. "I very much built-up things in my head and because of it and my anxiety, it would cause things to stack up more and then not do it rather than saying, 'ok here is this one

thing, work on it now'," she explained. Instead, she would stress, and in class she would be so worried about all of the small things that she felt she missed out on what her students were doing.

Despite this anxiety, Kristen has established some very definite truths for herself as a theatre teacher. She does not mind getting to school before everyone else and usually does, but she draws the line at staying any later than required. She said, "that's one thing I've told myself throughout, I'm going to leave campus on time when I can. I don't take any work home with me."

Kristen has also determined she will always put student learning at the forefront of her teaching and focus on educating the whole child. When it comes to creating content for her class, she said, "theatre is meant to create these whole kids, and I want to get to know them better." Kristen expressed she talks to her students and finds out what interests them and honestly does whatever they want to do. In fact, the teacher who used to teach her class when they were combined into music and theatre has a very traditional view of education, and according to Kristen, "that's just not my method." She was very emphatic in explaining that kids come to her class to have fun and be creative and that is the space she wants to provide for them.

Conclusion of case 2. Throughout Kristen's questionnaire and interview, it is apparent her experiences as a novice theatre teacher have been more of a challenge than anything else. She has not had the opportunity to develop a theatre program that extends beyond the classroom due to external, unavoidable factors such as a global pandemic and unprecedented freezing weather. A lack of campus support and little to no professional development offerings has left her feeling underwhelmed with her first two years in the

classroom. Most of all, her desire to work on her mental health and to remain focused on the well-being of her students provided evidence of Kristen's passion for her career. She made it very evident that she wants to remain in the profession long-term but wants to see things improve for not only her classroom but for other theatre teachers as well. The next case study focuses on Hilary, the most compelling case in this study.

Case Study #3—Hilary

After reviewing the results from the questionnaire, Hilary's responses were not overly compelling, but she was eager to participate further in the study, and her eagerness to participate was compelling in and of itself. Hilary graduated from a public university with a degree in theatre but did not participate in any type of student teaching before entering the classroom. She was in her fifth year as a teacher at the time of her interview but in her fourth year as a theatre teacher. She started teaching as a first-grade teacher and happily moved to theatre, saying moving into the theatre classroom was like "nirvana" for her. First grade was "wildly" out of her comfort zone, and she was relieved to not have to go home and learn what she was going to teach in order to teach her students the next day.

For the questionnaire, Hilary pinpointed that she has struggled with the fact some kids just do not like theatre and she still struggles with finding great resources for her kids to make theatre class more fun. She also described her job as fun, eventful, and exciting, avoiding any terms with a negative connotation. When she joined the individual interview, she was incredibly confident in her demeanor, employing a strong yet exhausted tone. Throughout the interview, she sipped on a beer and finished her pizza dinner, a sign of her comfort with the process and perhaps even her frustration with her

69

teaching situation. Despite her confidence in her own abilities, there was an air of overall defeat throughout her interview. Hilary's interview and corresponding photographs provided a strong narrative on her experiences as a novice theatre teacher and the resulting impact those first few years have had on her as a professional and on her students. That discussion and how it relates to Goodson's Theory of Educational Change follows.

Internal change agents. For Hilary, internal change agents, those factors on her campus creating change, were not overly impactful. She is the only theatre teacher for her campus and her district, so she teaches at both the middle school and the high school. She stated one of her principals is very supportive of her and her program which is helpful, but her real struggle with internal change agents is the amount of time she must work in order to produce mainstage shows for both a middle and high school.

The middle school in Hilary's district has a rehearsal space she can use, but because all of her productions can involve the entire campus, she must rehearse after school and not during class time. The same is true at the high school, although she has zero rehearsal space to use and must use her classroom. This outside of school rehearsal equates to ten hours a week for every production, and every play rehearsal process runs anywhere from seven to eight weeks. This means she is working an extra seventy to eighty hours for any given production at either the middle school or high school, and according to her, that is a lot of commitment to fall on her shoulders. This rehearsal dilemma really leads into the struggles Hilary has had to face with the external change agents over the past four years as revealed in the discussion that follows.

External change agents. The changes that occur, or that should occur, for Hilary

mainly fall on the district, or the external change agents. There is no doubt she has been

facing tremendous frustration and disappointment due to the decisions made by her

district. According to Hilary, there are zero opportunities for fine arts professional

development provided by her district. Because she must provide differentiated lessons for

7th through 12th grader students, professional development opportunities are vitally

necessary for her to be effective. Luckily, her district is willing to send her elsewhere to

attend theatre training at conferences, but she must seek them out herself. "The biggest

thing that has helped me is going to those conferences," she stated. She explained:

> There are people who will share their entire lesson plans for you and google
> drives. Having that opportunity to pick another theatre teacher's brain is really
> what helped me to get where I am today.

These resources have made all the difference for Hilary. Being the only theatre teacher in

her entire district, she has felt like an island, as if she has no one she can bounce ideas off

or even to "bum a worksheet" from. At this point, her focus has been how she can

minimize her workload since she spends so much time working after hours.

> The biggest struggle now is because I have to come up with content for all grade
> levels. What do I teach these kids? How do I minimize my workload? I can teach
> Greek theatre to all of them, but I can't teach the plot of Lysistrata to middle
> schoolers. Differentiating the work in the classroom and across the levels...it's
> gotten a lot better since finding new resources.

Even if Hilary had access to all of the best curriculum and professional resources in

existence, she would still face the incredibly daunting task of navigating rehearsal spaces

and a complete lack of appreciation by her district. According to her:

> There is a performing arts center that is open to the community. So, they'd
> schedule me and then take away my time for various community events. They
> don't know what that does. They don't realize what they're doing. They won't let

me use the lighting and sound equipment. I have to schedule a separate guy to do that but they don't want to do that because they have to pay him.

Not only does this create tremendous frustration when it comes to rehearsals, but Hilary is not able to teach and train her students appropriately either. She said, "I can't take my students to show them what a stage looks like, a lighting board looks like. I can't enter the building at all during school hours." The worst effect of this lack of appreciation and understanding of the profession by the administration is how it makes the students feel. Hilary said:

> They feel like what they do doesn't matter and no one cares about them and the admin doesn't support them. It's kind of lack a catch 22. My school district, we've never advanced past the 1st round of One Act Play and I don't care, we have fun. But my administration only cares about the competition and if we advance. So, they don't want to give me more stage time or support until we start advancing but what they don't understand is we're not going to do better until we get more stage time and more support, so it's just a vicious cycle.

This vicious cycle has caused Hilary's students to feel left out and unappreciated. She said, "we get overshadowed a lot. If you're not going to state, nobody cares." This worries her not only for her current students but for the future of her program.

Hilary is unsure how she can continue to grow her program and also make significant impact on her students. She knows the majority of those in charge find little value in what she offers to the school and the community. "We're trying. We matter," she expressed. "It's all political when it comes down to it and that's where the money goes," she explained. "And the money goes to what people care about, and we have the potential to offer so much to those kids and our community and to the parents of kids," a devastating revelation for Hilary.

Personal change agents. Hilary's personal beliefs shone throughout her interview. Her passion for her job and her students was evident in how she answered every question. The frustrating aspect of Hilary's story is that her personal beliefs seem unlikely to make any difference or change in her program because of the force of the external change agents affecting her. With her students already feeling defeated by administration, she makes sure she makes theatre fun for them. "I try and have fun with the kids. You gotta teach them, there's a curriculum, but you need to have fun with it," she explained.

Hilary is starting her master's program this summer, and she honestly does not know if she will stay in public education after the experience she has had at her current school. She is confident she will remain teaching theatre until she stops working, either at the university level or strictly high school. Unfortunately, she did not spend much time verbally expressing her personal beliefs. These beliefs were mostly inferred through the passion with which she expressed her frustration with her current district administration. However, there is no doubt whatsoever that Hilary personally believes in the power of theatre in the lives of students and the important role her students play in their community.

Conclusion of case 3. Hilary's case was jarring and stood out due to the impact her experiences have had on her students. The three elements of Goodson's Theory of Educational Change, internal, external, and personal beliefs were evident throughout the interview process with Hilary. It is possible she could potentially struggle to make changes for her program, despite her passion and love of her students due to the internal and external change agents that are present in her current situation. Her frustration was

73

evident throughout her interview based on her body language and tone of voice, all notated by the researcher during the memo writing and reviewing process. The final educational theatre professional interviewed, Kelley, is explored below.

Case Study #4—Kelley

Kelley was the last participant to be interviewed. She had just finished rehearsing when the interview took place, and she presented herself as very knowledgeable about the theatre and confident in the program she is growing. Kelley is the participant with the most extensive student teaching training out of the four interviewed. She spent her student teaching at a high school where she participated as their second director and was fully immersed in the classroom and all after school theatre activities. She also spent the six months prior to her student teaching observing high school theatre classes as well. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in theatre and entered the theatre classroom directly upon graduating. Her young age, twenty-two years old, caused her some frustration when she began teaching, because she felt almost like an imposter in the classroom, as if she was not qualified enough to be in her position. This "imposter syndrome" as she described it, did not stop her, though, from making a huge impact on her school. According to Kelley, she feels her greatest strength in the classroom from the beginning has been the welcoming culture she has created. She believed her classroom environment:

> …kept drawing them [students] back in and overall creating a different culture. I produced/directed The Addams Family, successfully, as my first musical ever and had the biggest audiences the school had seen in years. We do a holistic approach to theatre and make it inclusive for all.

Kelley's drive and desire to include all students is boldly evident throughout her interview. In her questionnaire, she described her job as, "fulfilling, loving, exhausting,

74

inspiring, heart-tugging," all words that perfectly fit the narrative she created. The way

internal, external, and personal change agents impact Kelley's career are explored in the

following narrative.

Internal change agents. Kelley, like Kristen, teaches at her high school alma

mater. In fact, she teaches alongside some of her own former teachers. However, the

program she returned to after college was drastically different from the one, she left.

According to Kelley:

> The program I came into was kind of a dying program which sounds awful, but in
> the four years I was in college, they had five theatre teachers. I'm the one to stick
> around the longest since my theatre teacher who had been here since the 90s. I
> was coming into a fractured program.

This fractured program did not slow Kelley down or hold her back from creating the

program she has today. Her first year she only had about thirty dedicated students, which

for a large 5-A high school in Texas is not many according to Kelley. In the three years

since she has been the head director, that number has grown to about one hundred

students. Not only has her student participation increased, but she went from directing

three mainstage shows her first-year to twelve shows this year. This growth is evidence

of the way internal change agents, the health of the theatre program itself, can drive

change.

Kelley also received a lot of parental support her first year, something she was

very nervous about because of her young age. Some spoke down to her because she was

so young, but most parents were excited to see an alumni enter the position with the

intent on staying and making the program successful. In addition to parental support, she

also has a network of teacher support on her campus. She has a co-director for her

competition production and a technical theatre teacher on her team. These teachers, who were also Kelley's teachers in high school, provide a great deal of academic and theatre support for her. She stated the competition co-director is her "go-to for academic stuff," and the technical theatre teacher is her "go-to for theatre help." Even her administration team is incredibly supportive, despite occasionally bumping heads every so often.

The biggest internal change agent for Kelley has been the time commitment expectation she had going into her position versus the actual amount of time she works outside of school hours. These hours, according to her, are tremendous, and she feels as if the pay is not reflective of this extra time. At the time of her hire, she knew she would be required to do outside of school hours rehearsals, but as her program grew, so did her time commitment. This is the catalyst for Kelley's most impactful external change agent, her district-determined pay.

External change agents. Kelley stated the one thing she would change about her job is the pay. She stated:

> I live in central Texas and love job, but my district pays considerably less than surrounding areas. I'm very happy. I love my job and it supports me, but I could easily go and make five to ten thousand dollars more elsewhere. I put in a lot of time for this because I want to, but it would be nice to see it better reflected in my pay.

While Kelley does receive a stipend for this extra work, she must split it with her fellow directors, and she feels this is disproportionate for the work she does versus her other directors. She really desires the district to allow her to hire a full-time assistant director, someone who can evenly share the burden of the workload. She stated her numbers will grow and at that time, she will be discussing this possibility with her fine arts coordinator.

Even though Kelley had the most well-rounded student teaching experience of all of the participants in this study, she still felt ill-prepared for the academic side of being a classroom teacher. She stated when it came to her first year, "there was a lot of teaching lingo I just didn't know. I still have to go ask 'what does this stand for', and I graduated where there's a theatre education concentration, so they specifically have classes for you for theatre in the classroom." This lack of academic knowledge, despite having an apparent robust teacher training program, is important to note because it is one more aspect of the job new teachers must learn through experience and not in the teacher preparation classroom.

Personal change agents. There is no doubt Kelley's work ethic is her strongest available personal change agent. She admitted she is a workaholic, and this dedication is all focused on her students. Kelley stated:

> At this moment, I don't have kids, just my husband and pets, but I'm still getting out of rehearsals at the normal 6:30 time. I just like providing as many opportunities for students as I can.

If and when she and her husband decide to start a family, she has already worked out a plan so her students do not have to suffer. Her district offers a teacher daycare center that is located across the street from her campus, so she plans on utilizing that resource and adjusting rehearsal times to give her a more balanced work and home life.

Kelley also made it perfectly clear she strives to introduce her students to dynamic literature and learning opportunities through the plays she chooses to direct. She teaches her students about life and people outside of their normal bubbles. She shared about two plays recently produced that caused some conflict with her conservative community. Kelley described:

77

We're kind of play snobs. We very much seek out very well written pieces and that's our goal and drive when producing one act, is provide literature that asks good questions. One play was about the legality battles of gay couples before marriage, but we had some push back form parents, not admin. Last year we did a play that takes place in a rehab facility and there is a lot of talk about drug and alcohol abuse. Lots of things were portrayed on stage that were real and human and gritty and made some people uncomfortable, but we collaborated with a sober high school for kids who are working with kids getting sober in high school and we visited them. While we do tend to do a little more controversial or questioning things or topics, we do research well.

Kelley also understands her role as theatre educator is not to traumatize or expose her students to unnecessary risqué content. For her, she will "automatically throw out shows that will be too sexy" because she personally does not want to direct that content. For example, she just got approved to produce the musical *Chicago* and several of her students were worried it might be too racy. She responded that, "if you costume it appropriately and use appropriate dance moves, it's fine."

There is no doubt Kelley is in this profession because of the students. She even stated, "I am here for the kids." However, she also believes strongly that her role as a theatre teacher should be respected, and she should be treated as a professional who has a degree and knows what she is talking about. The best way for her to communicate this belief to her colleagues, and the importance theatre plays in students' lives, is by comparing theatre to a sport. She stated:

> It [theatre] needs to be treated with the same respect as any other sport, and so do my decisions. I am a coach. You wouldn't not put the best quarterback in your playoff game. So, I need you to not make those assumptions about what I'm doing.

Conclusion of case 4. Kelley potentially has the strongest case for making change in her program. Regardless of any difficulties she has faced through external factors, her internal change agent factors have set her up for success in her position at her school.

These internal and external change agents have allowed her personal beliefs, the characteristics that Goodson (2001) believes allows for the greatest change potential, to present themselves on a regular basis. All three components of Goodson's theory appear to be well-balanced for Kelley, proof that change is most possible when all three characteristics are aligned, and personal beliefs are allowed to push forward.

Goodson's Theory of Educational Change provided a lens to analyze the experiences of the participants in a way that allowed the researcher to identify change agents that could potentially provide theatre teachers with more effective starts to their careers. Internal, external, and personal belief agents played a role in every participant's first few years in the classroom. For some of these participants, the identified changes were positive while some were negative. To look further into these experiences, a cross case thematic analysis was conducted and is discussed below.

Cross Case Thematic Analysis

As part of the data analysis procedure, the researcher compared all four of the cases in a cross-case analysis. The researcher utilized constant-comparison analysis to compare each individual case to determine themes and commonalities. Five themes emerged from the study. Table 4.2 provides an overview of these emerging themes.

Table 4.2

Emerging Themes

Participants	Professional Development	Pedagogical Gap/Curriculum	Expectations	Lack of Support	Imposter Syndrome
Alvaro	X	X	X	X	
Kristen	X	X		X	X
Hilary	X			X	
Kelley		X	X		X

Professional Development

According to Whittaker (2011), content-specific professional development is pivotal in solving teacher attrition problems, which explains why so many of the participants mentioned this need as vitally important to their success in the classroom. Three of the four participants discussed a need for professional development specific to theatre teachers. Kelley was the only participant who did not mention this theme. Kelley also was the only participant who works with a co-director and technical theatre assistant in her program. The other three participants are singular entities on their campuses or in their districts, and all expressed a feeling of isolation. For these three teachers, they feel as if they are lacking personal resources to help them be successful and therefore crave professional development opportunities. Each of these three teachers expressed their use of the Texas Educational Theatre Association conventions as their sole source of theatre related professional development, and Alvaro even explained that his district only pays for him to attend that convention every other year. Any additional theatre specific professional development must be sought out individually by each of the participants. Hilary, Alvaro, and Kristen all explicitly mentioned professional development as a need when asked what would better support them in the classroom.

Professional development is a key component on any school campus and in any district across the state and the country. Professional development finds its way into most campus improvement plans because of how important it is to teacher development and success. It is surprising that any teacher would lack access to such important resources. Even when administration is supportive and desires to provide all of their staff with professional development, this study shows that somehow many administrations still fall short.

Pedagogical Gap/Curriculum

In addition to the need for specific professional development, the participants noted a pedagogical gap. Again, three out of the four participants mentioned a pedagogical gap between their teacher training and actual theatre classroom experience. Hilary did not mention this in her interview and expressed that moving from a first-grade classroom to the theatre classroom actually eliminated the problem of pedagogical deficiencies because she then felt like she knew what she was teaching and how to teach it. Alvaro, Kristen, and Kelley all struggled with different aspects of theatre pedagogy or curriculum for their theatre classrooms. Alvaro and Kristen were completely lacking any form of curriculum when they began teaching, having to rely completely on other theatre teachers or random resources available. Kelley, who was fully immersed in her student teaching experience in the theatre classroom, struggled not so much with curriculum but with the academic side of pedagogy. She was unsure of what certain words or phrases meant or how those applied to her classroom specifically. For example, as a third-year teacher, she was informed of her student being sent to DAEP (Discipline Alternative Education Program) and had to ask other teachers what that meant and how it applied to her.

Based on the literature presented in Chapter Two, it is not surprising to see a large majority of participants struggle with their classroom pedagogy. According to Dynak (1994), theatre content-based pedagogical knowledge is unclear. Traditionally, theatre pedagogy focuses almost exclusively on play production and the needs of production and very little on classroom needs. The experiences of the participants perfectly highlighted the need for stronger theatre curriculum and assessment development.

The biggest strain placed on theatre teachers today is the unique demand of the art itself (Mattie, 2019). When administration does not effectively communicate the expectations of the job with new teachers, this strain becomes magnified. Two of the four participants, Alvaro and Kelley, revealed issues with expectations of the job not matching their understanding prior to entering the classroom. Both lamented the unexpected time commitment that would be required of them outside of normal school hours. Alvaro specifically struggled with how his principal defined the expectations of the theatre teacher based on how the previous theatre teacher did things. At no point in the hiring process were these duties mentioned to Alvaro. However, both Alvaro and Kelley expressed that once they got into the groove of the school year and were no longer feeling as overwhelmed, the time commitments did not feel as daunting, and they were able to adjust appropriately. As a matter of fact, both Kelley and Alvaro even added tasks to their plates by taking on additional leadership roles for Alvaro and tremendously more productions for Kelley. For Alvaro though, he only felt comfortable adding to his workload when his administration changed, and he felt better supported by his principal. Kelley also expressed having a strong support system on her campus and is not tasked with doing all tasks herself.

Alvaro's photographs made a compelling case for just how much time is spent outside of school hours as a theatre teacher as well as just how complex the position truly is. In Appendix C, Alvaro shares photos of him waiting with his students when it is dark outside, the crack of the morning sun when he arrives well before anyone else, and fliers he has made calling for volunteers to help work his after-school shows. He also shared photos of his set designs, lighting designs, and costume designs. Alvaro's photos of

82

medals also indicate his participation in preparing students for contests beyond his assigned One Act Play competition. This means he is also working with students to prepare and present these pieces, which is yet another unexpected requirement. These photographs all paint the picture of a position that is truly more than meets the eye and more than many non-theatre administrators may understand.

Lack of Support

In addition to not effectively communicating expectations of the job, some administrators fell short with how they supported their theatre teachers and programs. Alvaro, Kristen, and Hilary indicated a lack of support from their administration when they entered the theatre classroom. Alvaro felt the miscommunication about the expectations his principal had identified for him translated into a lack of support because his principal had no understanding of how much he was being tasked with daily. Once this administration changed over to a new principal, Alvaro's entire experience changed. He felt empowered to make decisions on his own, to support his fellow fine arts teachers, and his students felt as if they were important members of the school.

Kristen felt little support from her entire district and school system. For Kristen, the fact there is no defined fine arts department, no fine arts coordinator for her district, and zero professional development offered to her solidifies the lack of support she has from her leaders. Hilary's experience with a lack of support from her school and district was the most jarring. In her eyes, the district does not trust her enough to let her do her job by running lights and sounds for her productions, and they do not value the students enough to allow them access to a rehearsal space during school hours. This is traumatizing for not only Hilary but to her students as well. An entire demographic of

students on Hilary's campus is feeling left out and demoralized because they do not win state titles and therefore, they are not valuable or worthwhile.

Hilary provided photographs that beautifully illustrate how little she has been provided to work with. The photographs can be found in Appendix C. Her only rehearsal space is her classroom or the cafetorium at her middle school campus, a resource that will be taken away from her next year. Hilary's students are working hard in her photos, but there is an air of frustration or even sadness in the students' eyes. Her dedication to her students is evident though through how much work she has put into her classroom and the activities she engages her students in, such as sewing and costuming. If only Hilary's administration would take a moment to investigate the dedication of her students, perhaps they would be willing to invest more into Hilary and her program.

Imposter Syndrome

The presence of an "imposter syndrome" did not present itself as an emerging theme until after several reviews of the data. Kristen and Kelley both mentioned this phenomenon during their interviews, but it was such a flippant comment that it was practically overlooked. Both of these participants entered the classroom straight out of college and into head director positions. This quick placement meant that at age 22, they were immediately placed in charge of entire programs, and were teaching almost their own age. These participants felt like imposters almost immediately, like they were not trained or talented enough to be placed in this position.

For Kelley, confidence quickly replaced this imposter syndrome feeling. It is important to note that Kelley was surrounded by a supportive system. She had a co-director, a technical director, parental support, and fairly supportive administrators.

Kristen, on the other hand, faced zero support throughout her first year. This meant an intensification of Kristen's imposter feelings. These imposter feelings became even more evident with Kristen's anxiety and depression discussed in her narrative. There is an interesting correlation between imposter syndrome and age when entering the classroom. This syndrome also appears to intensify with a lack of support but dissipates when the theatre teacher is able to gain confidence in their abilities. The presence of imposter syndrome with young theatre teachers should be explored in future studies.

Questionnaires, interviews, and photographs revealed several emerging themes for the participants in this study. These themes were a need for content-based professional development for theatre teachers, a pedagogical gap in theatre curriculum, a lack of clearly defined expectations for theatre teachers when hired, an overall lack of support from campus and district administrators, and the presence of an imposter syndrome. Understanding these themes is necessary to best support the change theatre teachers require to be successful.

Discussion

This study revealed a need for change in the experiences of theatre teachers during their first years in the classroom. Through the narrative presented, the researcher was able to identify internal, external, and personal change agents for the participants. These change agents were almost universally negative in nature, indicating how important listening to the voices of teachers is to making improvements in the educational theatre system. There is evidence in these stories, through the emerging themes presented, that some school districts in the state simply do not value their theatre

teachers or their programs. This evidence is not surprising based on the literature presented in Chapter Two.

A finite definition of educational theatre and its purpose still does not exist, just as indicated by Patrick (1992) and Jackson (2007) in Chapter Two. Because of this lack of definition, school districts and campus principals are unable to provide a uniform set of expectations for theatre teachers from campus to campus. The participants provided evidence of that lack of expectations. Also, there is a lack of understanding about the actual demands of the theatre teacher profession by those outside of the field, such as campus principals. The literature from Mattie (2019) in Chapter Two also indicated the large demand placed on theatre educators. This lack of understanding would explain why so many of the participants have felt unprepared and unappreciated in their positions. It makes logical sense that many new theatre teachers are not receiving the resources they need to create a successful program because the administrators in charge of providing these resources are simply ill informed, and in some cases uncaring, about the demands these teachers face. Perhaps this is why, although the literature in Chapter Two informs us of the importance of content-specific professional development (Greg et al., 2018; Whitaker, 2011), many administrators fail to provide the required PD for their theatre teachers. This does not have to be reality. Through the revelation of themes in this study and the discussion of the theoretical framework, the researcher was able to determine several implications and recommendations.

Implications and Recommendations

Evidence from this study provided several implications for different groups to support the need for improving theatre teacher preparation and ongoing support and

86

training at the campus and district levels. Along with these implications, the researcher

provides recommendations for theatre teacher change as well. These groups and

recommendations include the following:

- Administrators

    o Support theatre teachers by getting to know their programs and individual
      needs.

    o Develop a creativity-friendly campus culture so students of all interests
      feel seen.

    o Provide consistent professional development that is content specific to the
      theatre classroom.

    o Support teachers who are singular theatre directors on a campus by
      providing opportunities for networking.

    o Clearly communicate expectations during the interview process.

- Teacher Preparation Programs

    o Incorporate coursework that bridges the gap between theatre pedagogy
      and the actual classroom.

    o Connect with current theatre teachers to determine what non-traditional,
      theatre-based training can be incorporated into their program.

    o Provide a variety of field experiences in different grade levels.

The implications and recommendations for each of these groups are detailed in the

following sections.

Administrators

      All four of the participants discussed the role campus or district administration

played in their experiences as new theatre teachers. For some, like Kelley, the experience

was positive while the other three teachers had negative encounters with their

administration which also impacted the students as well. Through these experiences, it is

evident that theatre teachers feel unappreciated, and this is often felt by the students. When the administration fails to take their theatre programs seriously or invest in them, the ripple effect is great. Based on the literature in Chapter Two, participation in theatre is drastically vital in increasing academic achievement, literacy, and numeracy (Stuht & Gates, 2007). With this kind of evidence, as well as the evidence from this study, the need for administrators to communicate the importance and necessity of their theatre teachers to the development of the whole child is evident.

Another implication revealed is that due to unclear expectations, theatre teachers feel overworked. All four participants discussed how much additional work they do outside of their regular class time, with two of them specifically stating none of this was presented to them prior to their employment. They are often arriving before school hours to spend time with their students, staying late for rehearsals, and completing assignments throughout the day that are not necessarily a part of the theatre department itself. This information supports Mattie's (2019) findings discussed in Chapter Two about the unique demands of the theatre teacher and the strain that creates for these educators.

The final implication for administrators is that due to a lack of support, theatre teachers feel lonely, like an island, and are forced to seek professional development on their own at their own expense. This was perhaps the prominent theme expressed by the participants and certainly one of the most frustrating aspects of the job for these teachers. The lack of resources and professional development communicated a lack of care to the teachers in this study as well as a lack of understanding for the job itself. As discussed in the literature, relevant, sustained, and sound professional development is key to keeping teachers in the profession long-term (Whitaker, 2011). If theatre teachers are not

presented with resources and professional development or if they are forced to seek it out themselves, theatre teacher attrition becomes a serious problem for administrators.

The researcher recommends that to support theatre teachers, administrators should get to know their theatre programs and individual theatre teachers' needs. Smaller theatre programs might have unique needs compared to larger ones. For example, a small program at a middle school may not need an assistant director to handle the demands of the job, but a large program, like Kelley's, that produces twelve shows a year, could benefit from an assistant director. On the other hand, a small middle school program might not have a large parent booster club to supplement budget needs, so additional assistance with raising funds might be necessary. None of the participants in this study felt that their administration understood what they were teaching or doing daily, so spending time with theatre teachers in the classroom and asking questions is key to providing the support they require.

Another recommendation for administrators is to develop a creativity-friendly campus culture so students of all interests feel seen. The literature in Chapter Two outlined the role theatre can play in the lives of youth. These students perform better academically in both literacy and math, they improve their speaking skills, and because the whole child is being educated, even campus culture improves using fine arts-based education (Ruppert, 2006). This evidence means students involved in theatre should be celebrated just as much as students involved in sports on a campus and their advancement in competitions should not play a role in whether they are worthy of support from administration or not.

The researcher also recommends that administrators make available professional development that is content-specific to the theatre classroom. If administrators do not have the ability to do so, the researcher recommends providing new theatre teachers with access to robust theatre training, such as the yearly Texas Educational Theatre Association TheatreFest Conference at the expense of the district. Whitaker (2011) made it perfectly clear that relevant, sustained, and sound professional development is vital to keeping teachers on staff. When theatre teachers are presented with zero content-specific professional development or are forced to seek out their own professional development, there is no opportunity for sustained growth. Not only that, but this lack of support communicates a lack of caring about the situation to these theatre teachers. Also, administrators can support their theatre teachers who are singular directors on a campus by providing opportunities for networking. This could be as simple as creating time throughout the year to allow theatre teachers from other schools in a district to meet and collaborate. The researcher also recommends administrators informing their new theatre teachers of the UIL One Act Play Facebook page as a means for networking.

Finally, the researcher recommends that all administrators clearly communicate expectations during the interview process. Mattie (2019) explained that theatre teachers wear many more hats than most realize, and these hats do not even include what happens in the classroom. When interviewing for theatre positions, administrators must present candidates with the full scope of what is expected of them in order to determine whether the expectations are reasonable for their abilities or not. When these expectations are not communicated, the participants made it clear they become stressed, overwhelmed, and frustrated.

Teacher Preparation Programs

This study revealed that many theatre teachers feel unprepared to tackle pedagogy and theatre curriculum. Some of the participants felt strongly prepared for the directing side of the job, but only one of the participants felt prepared to develop and teach their curriculum appropriately. This indicates there is a need for targeted support in these areas for theatre teachers at the teacher preparation level and at the classroom level.

The researcher recommends that teacher preparation programs incorporate coursework that bridges the gap between theatre pedagogy and the actual classroom. Theatre classrooms, by design, look different from non-theatre classrooms. Students move more, talk more, and the learning standards are not conducive to a standardized test. This means pre-service theatre teachers must be presented with learning models that are not merely teacher-centric (Corrigan, 2014). These pre-service teachers should be provided the opportunity to practice developing curriculum and lessons that will fit the unique and diverse needs of the theatre classroom. To develop the type of training that would bridge the gap between theatre pedagogy and the actual classroom, the researcher recommends teacher preparation programs to connect with current theatre teachers to determine what non-traditional, theatre-based training can be incorporated into their programs.

Finally, the researcher recommends teacher preparation programs provide a variety of field experiences in different grade levels for their pre-service theatre teachers. The participants who felt the most prepared as they entered the classroom had multiple observation and student teaching experiences at different grade levels. Those who were limited to just one grade level experienced more hardship when developing curriculum and dealing with classroom management needs. For example, two of the interviewed

91

participants teach both middle and high school students and expressed the difference in the students between these grade levels. One of the participants only student-taught high school students, so teaching middle school students was more of a struggle, and one participant did not have any student teaching experience at all.

The implications and recommendations presented in this study have the potential to revolutionize the experiences of novice theatre teachers. By providing a more well-rounded teacher preparation experience, new theatre teachers will feel more prepared for the unique demands they will face in their theatre classroom. When campus and district administrators take more time to invest in their theatre teachers and programs, these teachers can have more positive experiences while overcoming the traditional pitfalls of being a new teacher as well as the challenges of the theatre classroom.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research studies on the experiences of theatre teachers could build upon the work of this research. The researcher recommends conducting a narrative case study on Case 3 regarding the effects of a lack of appreciation and support on her students. Also, the researcher recommends further studying how the experiences of novice theatre teachers affect teacher retention. The researcher also recommends additional research in theatre education in a way that might allow for stronger theatre curriculum and in the area of assessment development. Finally, the researcher recommends studying the concept of "imposter syndrome" in novice theatre teachers and how this syndrome affects their overall success.

Expanding the Current Study

Hilary's narrative expressed an extreme sadness at the current state of her theatre program. She has had little to no support from her administration and this lack of support has trickled down to her students, who have verbally expressed to her how disheartening it is to not feel cared about. Based on the implications described in the previous section, a narrative case study of Hilary and her students could further examine the effects of administrator support on both theatre teachers and their students. Future narrative case studies could include in-person observations of Hilary's daily routine and rehearsals as well as group and individual interviews with her students. These interviews could include how the students feel about being a part of the theatre program, what others in the school say about them, how they feel about administrators on their campus, and how that relationship affects their personal feelings of success or importance. Evidence from these observations and interviews could provide helpful recommendations for educational change at the administration level, both campus and district.

One of the concerns expressed throughout this study was whether or not the experiences of novice theatre teachers would affect them staying in the profession long-term. All of the four participants interviewed expressed they have no intention of leaving the educational theatre profession. However, all of these participants are less than five years into their theatre education careers, and a future qualitative study on teachers in the theatre classroom more than five years might provide insight into the retention of theatre teachers. The researcher could conduct observations and interviews of seasoned theatre teachers, focusing on the same theoretical framework and four emerging themes used here. These observations might include lesson planning and determining the daily routine of the seasoned theatre teacher. The interviews would include discussions on professional

93

development, support, pedagogy and curriculum, and expectations of the job. Evidence from these interviews and observations could provide helpful recommendations for school districts on retaining high quality theatre teachers long-term.

A constant concern throughout this study was a need for additional research in theatre education in order to develop stronger theatre curriculum and assessment. If effective theatre curriculum exists, it has not been distributed to any of the participants and perhaps not to the many other theatre teachers in the state. Future researchers can evaluate state learning standards and instructional best practices for the theatre classroom by conducting a mixed-methods study. This study could be conducted using a large sample of theatre teachers and their thoughts on instructional best practices and their personal experiences with curriculum and assessment needs. From this data and a smaller sample of participants, curriculum can be developed that is beneficial for all theatre teachers in all grade levels. This development would alleviate the stress of creating curriculum from scratch for new theatre teachers and provide them with more time to focus on the other unique needs of the theatre classroom, such as production design and budgets.

An unexpected phenomenon presented itself during data analysis. The presence of an imposter syndrome is concerning, especially considering the lack of support many theatre teachers receive and the correlation that support has to the syndrome. Future researchers can expand on this finding by conducting a qualitative study focused on identifying imposter syndrome in theatre teachers and what contributes to this feeling as well as what factors help to improve or worsen it. These findings have the potential to not

only help theatre teachers be more successful in the classroom, but also help improve their mental health as well.

<div align="center">*Conclusion*</div>

In this chapter, the researcher introduced and reported findings from the data analysis. The researcher analyzed each participant as individual cases as part of a framework analysis, holding with the tradition of multiple case study design. Following the four individual cases, the researcher completed a cross-case analysis to compare and contrast the four cases regarding emerging themes from the analysis. Finally, the researcher revealed implications of the study and provided recommendations for school district administrators, teacher preparation programs, and for future research. The researcher explored the research question, what are the experiences of theatre teachers in meeting the demands of the job in their first five years of teaching, through the description of the four participants and the analysis of the data collected. In Chapter Five, the researcher summarizes the descriptive case study and discusses the findings distribution proposal.

CHAPTER FIVE

Distribution of Findings

Executive Summary

Theatre programs require a well-trained teacher in the classroom. However, many theatre teachers are entering the classroom ill-prepared for the challenges of not only everyday classroom needs and curriculum but for leading entire departments as well. The unique requirements of theatre teachers include leading an entire department, creating an original curriculum, designing sets for plays, advertising for productions, fundraising, and managing facilities. Many theatre teachers are entering the field with a limited knowledge of educational theatre based on the type of degree they hold while also facing the traditional pitfalls of first-year teachers. This study answered the research question: What are the experiences of theatre teachers in meeting the demands of the job in their first five years of teaching?

The literature presented revealed that even those new teachers with theatre degrees might be lacking the knowledge necessary to maintain a full theatre program on a school campus. The literature also revealed a lack of pedagogical content knowledge, struggles with classroom management, and a true understanding of the expectations of the theatre teacher position. This deficiency in knowledge, regardless of teacher preparation program, indicates a possible lack of preparedness for theatre teachers when they enter the classroom. In order to continue positively contributing to the overall success of schools and classrooms, an investigation into the experiences of theatre teachers during their first five years in the classroom was necessary.

The purpose of this multiple descriptive case study was to understand the experiences regarding the unique demands of the theatre teacher position for novice theatre teachers in Texas. The unique demands of the theatre teacher position include classroom instructor, stage director, and program director. By investigating the experiences of these theatre teachers, the voices of often overlooked educators had their time in the spotlight.

Overview of Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Goodson's Theory of Educational Change is the theoretical framework utilized in this research. Emphasizing the centrality of the personal domain of the teacher in sustaining educational change characterizes this theory (Goodson, 2001). This framework was chosen because it allowed teachers' voices to drive change suggestions. The researcher determined that the multiple descriptive case study method provided the most detailed insight into the experiences theatre teachers face because descriptive research seeks to describe, explain, and validate research findings. Eleven theatre teachers from across the state of Texas participated in the questionnaire and four of those eleven participants agreed to individual interviews.

The researcher distributed questionnaires to all eleven participants and based on the data collected from this questionnaire, she conducted individual interviews with four participants. The researcher also requested photographs from all interviewed participants. Once the researcher collected all data, she transcribed, coded, evaluated, and compared the data, making note of emerging themes. After completing this qualitative analysis of data, the researcher created a cohesive story of these teachers' experiences. Finally, the

97

researcher employed Goodson's Theory of Educational Change Framework to analyze the information and offer suggestions for change to stakeholders.

Summary of Key Findings

This study revealed several key findings. All four of the participants discussed the role campus or district administration played in their experiences as new theatre teachers. Through these experiences, it is evident that theatre teachers feel unappreciated, and this is often felt by their students. When administration fails to take theatre programs seriously or invest in them, the ripple effect is great. Based on the literature in Chapter Two, participation in theatre is drastically vital in increasing academic achievement, literacy, and numeracy (Stuht & Gates, 2007). With this kind of evidence, as well as the evidence from this study, the need for administrators to communicate the importance and necessity of their theatre teachers to the development of the whole child is evident.

Another implication revealed in this study is that due to unclear expectations, theatre teachers feel overworked. All four participants discussed how much additional work they do outside of their regular class time, with two of them specifically stating none of this was presented to them prior to their employment. They are often arriving before school hours to spend time with their students, staying late for rehearsals, and completing assignments throughout the day that are not necessarily a part of the theatre department itself. This information supports Mattie's (2019) findings discussed in Chapter Two of this study about the unique demands of the theatre teacher and the strain that creates for these educators.

The final implication from this study for administrators is that due to a lack of support, theatre teachers feel lonely and isolated and are forced to seek professional

development on their own at their own expense. This was perhaps the prominent theme expressed by the participants and certainly one of the most frustrating aspects of the job for these teachers. The lack of resources and professional development communicated a lack of care to these teachers as well as a lack of understanding for the job itself. As discussed in the literature, relevant, sustained, and sound professional development is key to keeping teachers in the profession long-term (Whitaker, 2011). If theatre teachers are not presented with resources and professional development or if they are forced to seek it out themselves, theatre teacher attrition becomes a serious problem for administrators.

Finally, this study revealed that many theatre teachers feel unprepared to tackle pedagogy and theatre curriculum. Some of the participants felt strongly prepared for the directing side of the job but only one of the participants felt prepared to develop and teach their curriculum appropriately. This indicates there is a need for targeted support in these areas for theatre teachers at the teacher preparation level and at the classroom level.

Informed Recommendations

Evidence from this study provided several implications for different groups to support the need for improving theatre teacher preparation and ongoing support and training at the campus and district levels. Along with these implications, the researcher provided recommendations for theatre teacher change as well.

The researcher determined five recommendations for campus and school administrators. In order to build a stronger support system for theatre teachers, administration should get to know the individual needs of their programs and directors. Administrators can also work to develop a creativity-friendly campus culture so students of all interests can feel seen. Another recommendation for administrators is to provide

regular professional develop to theatre teachers that is content specific to their classroom needs. They can also provide opportunities for theatre teachers to network with others in the profession, especially if these teachers are singular entities on their campus. Finally, the researcher recommends clearly communicating all expectations for the job during the interview process.

In addition to recommendations for school and district administrators, the researcher determined three recommendations for Teacher Preparation Programs. To begin with, it would be beneficial to theatre teachers for these programs to incorporate coursework that bridges the gap between theatre pedagogy and the actual classroom. One of the best ways these programs can accomplish this is to connect with current theatre teachers to determine what non-traditional, theatre-based training can be incorporated into their studies. Finally, the researcher recommends providing a variety of field experiences in different grade levels for pre-service theatre teachers.

The researcher determined these implications and recommendations by analyzing and interpreting the experiences of theatre teachers in their first five years in the classroom. Their voices echoed the need for improvements in their profession and it is through this change theatre teachers can continue to be positive influences in the lives of their students.

Findings Distribution Proposal

Now that results of this study are complete, it is imperative to provide these results to the right audience and in a manner that will create maximum impact. The researcher took many aspects into consideration when making these decisions. While a

100

target audience and tentative distribution plan have been identified, it is possible these findings could reach even further scholars in the future.

Target Audience

While this study identified findings, implications, and recommendations that would benefit teacher preparation programs, the researcher determined the target audience for the findings distribution is school district and campus administration. Teacher preparation programs cannot fully prepare any pre-service teacher for every scenario they will face in the classroom. However, school district and campus administration can make lasting changes that will directly benefit theatre teachers and their programs. These administrators have the potential to provide tremendous support for their theatre teachers by taking an interest in their programs, providing them with dynamic professional development or opportunities for professional development, and increase their campus culture through recognition of theatre and theatre students. All of these opportunities translate to better prepared theatre teachers and well-developed theatre programs.

Distribution Materials

To best distribute these findings to school district and campus administrators, the researcher will create a professional presentation for key stakeholders. This presentation will consist of a video recording of the researcher on a theatre stage outlining the benefits of student participation in the arts and the research design of this study. The video will then utilize a montage of participant-provided photographs with recorded dynamic quotes from the interviews conducted in this study. Theatre students in the researcher's school theatre program will record these quotes. The video will conclude with a list of

implications and recommendations for these administrators. The researcher selected a video presentation as a distribution material because it does not require any administrator be an expert in theatre practices to understand the study, implications, and recommendations and will provide a creative avenue for a study that revolved around the arts. The researcher will potentially distribute this video to administrators in the Dallas/Fort Worth area and eventually throughout the state of Texas.

In addition to this video, the researcher will provide a one-page handout to all stakeholders which includes the benefits of participation in the arts, several dynamic quotes from the study participants, implications for school administrators, and recommendations for these administrators. This handout, like the video, does not require any administrator to be an expert in theatre or educational theatre and provides a short and direct path of information to support the theatre teachers on their campuses and in their districts. This handout is found in Appendix D.

In addition to this video and handout, the information in this study would benefit from being included in educational theatre journals across the state and the country. Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance, or RIDE, would be an ideal journal to submit this study. The journal publishes research on drama and theatre that applies performance practices to cultural engagement, educational innovation, and social change. This journal would provide exposure to a vast number of theatre professionals who could provide insight into the implications of this study.

Conclusion

This study began with the premise that theatre teachers are in need of better teacher preparation and support from administration in order to be the most effective

102

teachers they can be. Studying the experiences of current theatre teachers with two to five years of experience provided valuable insight into changes that are needed to improve theatre teacher experiences and preparedness for the classroom. Professional development, pedagogical improvements, clearly defined expectations, administrative support, and the presence of an imposter syndrome were identified by the participants as contributing factors to their improved experiences. These conclusions confirm similar findings found in the literature regarding the importance of professional development, improvements in curriculum, and well-defined job expectations. The researcher also confirmed that change is necessary for these teachers to have better experiences in their first five years in the classroom. Goodson's Theory of Educational Change (2001) proved to be an accurate tool to analyze change factors in these novice teachers.

Current educational research lacks focus on the experiences and needs of theatre teachers. According to Stuht and Gates (2007), student participation in arts-based curriculum has proven to play a part in increased academic achievement. If we neglect the experiences of theatre teachers, little will be done to continue providing students with much needed arts curriculum and the change needed to improve theatre programs in the state will continue to be placed on the backburner of priorities.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Consent Form for Research

Baylor University
Department of Education

Consent Form for Research

PROTOCOL TITLE: Are the Fine Arts Really Fine? A Descriptive Case Study on the
Experiences of Theatre Arts Teachers

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Wendi Andersen

SUPPORTED BY: Baylor University

Purpose of the research: The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences and
perceptions of preparedness for the unique demands of the theatre arts teacher position
for novice theatre arts teachers in the state of Texas. We are asking you to take part in
this study because you are a theatre teacher in the state of Texas with 2-5 years of
teaching experience and we value your input.

Study activities: If you choose to be in the study, you will complete a questionnaire
about your experience with teaching theatre and possibly take part in a recorded zoom
focus group interview with other Texas theatre teachers.

Risks and Benefits:

When answering the questionnaire, you may be uncomfortable with some of the
questions and topics we will ask about. You do not have to answer any questions that
make you feel uncomfortable.

If chosen to participate in a recorded zoom focus group interview, the researcher will ask
you and the other people in the group to use only first names during the group session.
They will also ask you not to tell anyone outside the group what any particular person
said in the group. However, the researcher cannot guarantee that everyone will keep the
discussions private.

Others may benefit in the future from the information that is learned in this study.

Confidentiality:

A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality. Loss of confidentiality includes having your personal information shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. The researcher plans to protect your confidentiality.

Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Your participation in this online survey involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet, which could include illegal interception of the data by another party. If you are concerned about your data security, contact the researcher to schedule a time to complete a printed survey with the same questions.

We will keep the records of this study confidential by using first names only when reporting data**.** We will make every effort to keep your records confidential. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of your records.

Authorized staff of Baylor University may review the study records for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Questions or concerns about this research study

You can email us with any concerns or questions about the research. Our emails are listed below:

Wendi Andersen: Wendi_Andersen1@baylor.edu (available 24/7)
Dr. Sandra Talbert: Sandra_Talbert@baylor.edu (available 24/7)

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), you may contact the Baylor University IRB through the Office of the Vice Provost for Research at 254-710-3708 or irb@baylor.edu.

Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to take part or to stop at any time for any reason. No matter what you decide, there will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the information that you have already provided will be kept confidential. Information already collected about you cannot be deleted.

By continuing with the research and completing the study activities, you are providing consent.

Questionnaire Protocol

Date of Completion:_____
Participant Name:_____
Email Address:_____
Demographic Information:
1. What is your age?
2. What is your current occupation?
3. How many years of experience do you have teaching in the theatre arts classroom?
4. Do you work for at a charter school, public school, or private school?
Educational Background:
5. Where did you attend college?
6. What degree did you obtain?
7. Did you participate in any student teaching before entering the classroom?
8. If so, please describe that experience.
Theatre Arts Teacher Experience:
9. What were some of your biggest struggles your first few years in the theatre classroom?
10. What were some of your biggest success during your first few years in the theatre classroom?
11. What do you wish you had known when you entered the theatre classroom that you did not know?
12. What words would you use to describe your job as a theatre arts teacher?

Interview Protocol

Date/Time of Interview:_____
Location of Interview:_____
Interviewer:_____
Interviewees:_____
Central Research Question:
Interview Questions:
  1. How did you feel when you very first began your theatre teacher career?

  2. How do you feel now that you are a few years into the profession?

  3. Describe a "day in the life of" you. In other words, what do you do everyday?

  4. What type of support do you receive for your program?

  5. What supports or knowledge would help you feel better prepared for your job?

6. If you could change anything about your job, what would it be?

7. What advice would you give your "first year teacher" self?

8. Do you see yourself staying in this career?

9. What do you want people to know about theatre arts teachers or theatre arts students?

APPENDIX C

Participant Photographs

Hilary's Photographs

Alvaro's Photographs

APPENDIX D

Findings Distribution Handout

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, D. (2015). Teacher learning as collective creation: thinking with the theatre arts. *Teacher Development, 19*(2), 151–167. https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2014.994072

Asplin, K., & Marks, M. (2013). Increasing the influence of university supervisors during student teaching. *Professional Educator, 37*(1), 1–10.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. Prentice-Hall.

Baylor University Theatre Arts. (n.d.). Baylor University. Retrieved December 1, 2019, from https://www.baylor.edu/theatre/

Become a teacher in Texas. (n.d.). Teach.com. Retrieved July 10, 2019, from https://teach.com/become/teaching-credential/state-requirements/texas/

Becoming a certified Texas educator through an alternative certification program. (2020). Texas Education Agency. Retrieved November 6, 2019, from https://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Educators/Preparation_and_Continuing_Educati on/Becoming_a_Certified_Texas_Educator_Through_an_Alternative_Certificatio n_Program

Ben-Shahar, O., & Schneider, C. E. (2017, July22). Teacher certification makes public school education worse, not better. *Forbes Magazine*. https://www.forbes.com/sites/omribenshahar/2017/07/21/teacher-certification-makes-public-school-education-worse-not-better/#1132aaa5730f

Betts, J. D. (2005). Theatre arts integration at a middle school: Teacher professional development and drama experience. *Youth Theatre Journal, 19*(1), 17–33.

Boylan, M. (2018). Enabling adaptive system leadership: Teachers leading professional development. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 46*(1), 86–106. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143216628531

Bray-Clark, N., & Bates, R. (2003). Self-efficacy beliefs and teacher effectiveness: Implications for professional development. *The Professional Educator, XXVI*(1). https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ842387.pdf

Brown, A. L., Lee, J., & Collins, D. (2015). Does student teaching matter? Investigating pre-service teachers' sense of efficacy and preparedness. *Teaching Education, 26*(1), 77–93. https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2014.957666

Bruce, J., & Ewing, J. (2012). Using reflection to gain insight into
the student teaching experience. *NACTA Journal, 56*(1), 73–78.

Calterall, J. S. (1998). Involvement in the arts and success in secondary school.
Americans for the Arts Monographs, *1*(9), 1–10.
https://www.artsedsearch.org/study/involvement-in-the-arts-and-success-
in-secondary-school/

Christi, M., Carey, M., Robertson, A., Grainger, P., (2015). Putting Transformative
Learning Theory into practice. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning, 55*(1), 9–30.

Clark, A., & Sousa, B. (2018). Definitively unfinished: Why the growth mindset is vital
for educators and academic workplaces. *Nurse Education Today, 69*, 26–29.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2018.06.029

Corrigan, P. T. (2014, January 31). *Transmission model of education*. Teaching and
Learning in Higher Ed.
https://teachingandlearninginhighered.org/tag/transmission-model-of-education/

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and
mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage.

Darling-Hammond, L. & Rothman, R. (2011). (Eds.) *Teacher and Leader Effectiveness
in High Performing Systems*. Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in
Education.

Davidson, F. (2017, August 3). *Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory: An Introduction*
[Film]. Kanopy Streaming.

Deasy, R. J. (2002). Don't axe the arts!. *Principal, 82*(3), 14–18.

*Department of Theatre and Dance - The University of Texas at
Austin*. (n.d.). The University of Texas at Austin. Retrieved December 1, 2019,
from https://theatredance.utexas.edu/study

Department of Theatre Arts & Dance. (n.d.). The University of Texas at Arlington.
Retrieved December 1, 2019, from https://theatre.uta.edu/

Dudovskiy, J. (2020). *Descriptive Research*. Business Research Methodology. Retrieved
from https://research-methodology.net/descriptive-research/#_ftn1\

Dynak, D. M. (1994). Profiles of preservice theatre teacher education programs
at three American universities (Publication No. 9524924). [Doctoral dissertation,
Michigan State University]. Proquest Dissertations Publishing.

Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. Longman.

Goodson, I. (2001). Social histories of educational change. *Journal of Educational Change, 2*(1), 45–63. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1011508128957

Grigg, R. & Lewis, H. (2018). Moving the andragogy of teacher educators forward: The potential and challenges of problem-based learning in teacher education. *Journal of Problem-Based Learning, (5)*1.

Groccia, S. (2014). The cooperative learning model in middle school physical education. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 85*(S1), A136. http://search.proquest.com/docview/1621829922/

Hagenauer, G., Hascher, T., & Volet, S.E. (2015) Teacher emotions in the classroom: associations with students' engagement, classroom discipline and the interpersonal teacher-student relationship. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 30*(4), 385-403. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-015-0250-0

Hellison, D. R. (2011). *Teaching personal and social responsibility through physical activity*. Human Kinetics.

Hetland, L., & Winner, E. (2001). The arts and academic achievement: What the evidence shows. *Arts Education Policy Review, 10*(1), 1–4. https://doi.org/10.1080/10632910109600008

Hobgood, B. (1987). The mission of the theatre teacher. *Journal of Aesthetic Education, 21*(1), 57–73. https://doi.org/10.2307/3332813

How to become a teacher guide. (n.d.). Teachers of Tomorrow. Retrieved November 6, 2019, from https://www.teachersoftomorrow.org/texas/how-it-works

Jackson, A. (2007). *Theatre, education and the making of meanings: Art or instrument?* Manchester University Press.

Jackson, P. (2000). *John Dewey and the lessons of art*. Yale University Press.

Keegan, N., & Keegan, N. (2013). Socratic Seminar and creating prior knowledge. *Library Media Connection, 32*(3), 50–51. http://search.proquest.com/docview/1531921485/

The Kennedy Center. (2021). Kennedy Center Education. Retrieved November 8, 2019, from https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/.

Kilbane, C. R., & Milman, N. B. (2014). *Teaching models: Designing instruction for 21st century learners*. Pearson.

Klein, J. (1993). To Oz: Changing theatre teacher education. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education, 117*, 76–91.

Knowles, M., Holton, E., III, Swanson, R. (2012). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development*. Butterworth-Heinemann.

Lee, J., Tice, K., Collins, D., Brown, A., Smith, C., & Fox, J. (2012). Assessing student teaching experiences: Teacher candidates' perceptions of preparedness. *Educational Research Quarterly, 36*(2), 3–19.

Mattie, S. M. S. (2019, April 19). *The life of a theatre teacher: Twelve jobs in one*. The Educators Room. https://theeducatorsroom.com/the-life-of-a-theatre-teacher-twelve-jobs-in-one/

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. Jossey-Bass.

Monroe, A., Blackwell, S., & Pepper, S. (2010). Strengthening professional development partnerships while bridging classroom management instruction and practice. *The Professional Educator, 34*(2), 1-10.

National assembly of state arts agencies school report cards. (n.d.). Texas Education Agency. Retrieved November 6, 2019, from https://tea.texas.gov/Student_Testing_and_Accountability/Accountability/State_Accountability/Performance_Reporting/School_Report_Cards

Nistor, M. (2014). Educational theatre. *Review of artistic education*, *7*(8), 156–58.

No Child Left Behind. (n.d.). US Department of Education. Retrieved November 6, 2019, from https://www2.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml

Patrick, R. (1982). *What is a theatre teacher teaching?*. Dramatics.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Robson, S. (2018, January 19). *What is theatre in education and how it supports education.* https://www.wearegibber.com/blog/what-is-theatre-in-education/

Ronfeldt, M., & Reininger, M. (2012). *More or better student teaching? Teaching and Teacher Education, 28*(8), 1091–1106. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2012.06.003

Ruppert, S. S. (2006). *National Assembly of State Arts Agencies reports:*

    Critical evidence: how the arts benefit student achievement.
        https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED529766.pdf

Sellors, A. (n.d). *Classroom management: punishment vs. discipline.* Seattle PI.
        https://education.seattlepi.com/classroom-management-punishment-vs-discipline-
        4051.html

Smith, T. M. (2008). *Integrating multiple intelligences and andragogical principles into
        a preservice teacher education program.* (Publication No. 3325347) [Doctoral
        dissertation, Walden University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
Stuht, A.C., & Gates, J.Y. (2007). The case for an arts-based curriculum: Continuation
        school students are most in need of innovative teachers and a curriculum that
        offers a platform for different learning modalities. *Leadership. 36*(4), 30–33.
        http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A161500909/AONE?sid=lms

The professional development sequence for future teachers. (2019, June 20). Texas
        Education. Retrieved July 10, 2019, from
        https://education.utexas.edu/students/undergraduate-students/become-
        teacher/professional-development-sequence-future-teachers

The difference between the every student succeeds act and no child left behind. (2019,
        October 17). Understood. Retrieved December 1, 2019,
        from https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/your-childs-rights/basics-
        about-childs-rights/the-difference-between-the-every-student-succeeds-act-and-
        no-child-left-behind

Undergraduate Programs. (n.d.). Texas Woman's University. Retrieved December 1,
        2019, from https://twu.edu/theatre/undergraduate-programs/

Whitaker, M. E. (2011). *Factors that contribute to teacher attrition and effective teacher
        professional development* (Publication No. 1492745) [Master's thesis, Prescott
        College]. ProQuest Dissertations Theses Global

Why a BSEd at Baylor. (n.d.). Baylor University. Retrieved July 10, 2019, from
        https://www.baylor.edu/soe/index.php?id=935339