WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE A TEACHER’S DECISION TO RENEW NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION?

by

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DEDICATION

To my mother, who has been my most steadfast supporter and most ardent cheerleader since the day I was born. I would have achieved little without her love and sacrifice. There is no stronger woman in the universe.

To my children, Elizabeth Lee and John Angus, who amaze me every day with their intelligence, originality, compassion, and willingness to stand against popular opinion. The world is a more wonderful place because you two individuals exist.

To my stepfather, Charles E. Muskett, who encouraged me to pursue a Ph.D. many years ago and who would be very proud of me for this accomplishment. He was quick to take on a challenge and gave me the confidence to do the same.

To Dr. Harriet Anne Hathaway, my dissertation chair in absentia, and the woman I so long to be when I grow up. I finally got the damn thing done, Dr. H. I finally got the damn thing done.
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To Toni, Meghan, and Kathryn, my always and forever partners in crime, in statistics and in all things scholarly, “meow.”

To countless friends who encouraged me along the way, cheered me from the sidelines, and reminded me that I could cross the finish line.
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ABSTRACT

KELLY L. TEAGUE
WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE A TEACHER’S DECISION TO RENEW NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION?
Under the direction of KELLY REFFITT, Ph.D.

Building on research of National Board Certification and its effect on teacher quality, student achievement, and professional development, this dissertation seeks to explore the factors that influence teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification. Using a qualitative methodology, this study seeks to describe the process of National Board Certification, the process of renewal of National Board Certification, and the individual stories of nine Nationally Board Certified teachers and the factors that influenced them when it was time to renew their National Board Certification. A case study approach was utilized to address the research question. Data were collected through an online survey, individual interviews with nine participants, and two focus group interviews, one with five participants and one with three participants. Data analysis employed open coding and a priori coding of the individual interviews and the focus group interviews through the use of QDA Miner. QDA Miner is a qualitative data analysis software program that assists researchers in managing, coding, and analyzing qualitative data. Interviews were transcribed within 48 hours and uploaded into the software and examined by the researcher to identify patterns and themes related to the factors that influence teachers when it is
time to renew their National Board Certification. Excerpts from participant
responses in individual interviews and focus group interviews are included.
Identification of conceptual categories and sub-categories were identified. The main
reasons for non-renewal of National Board Certification were: 1) lack of financial
assistance to offset the cost of the renewal process, 2) no financial supplement
offered, and 3) lack of prestige surrounding National Board Certification.
Recommendations for further study include additional research regarding the
National Board Certification process, the process of renewal in other states, and
teacher prestige. It would be advantageous to replicate the study in other counties in
Georgia and in other states in which incentives are offered for achievement of
National Board Certification.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Similar to certification in fields like medicine, National Board Certification is a rigorous, peer-reviewed process that ensures that Board-certified teachers have proven skills to advance student achievement.

(National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2013)

The Researcher’s Story

I remember with great clarity the day that I sent the box, the container destined for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards office. I checked and rechecked the contents, making sure that everything was in perfect order. I had been fortunate enough to receive a scholarship for the $2,300 application fee and only had to pay the $350 for the box which contained the extensive directions for completing the process and submitting the necessary documents. I had been assigned a mentor to assist me throughout the process and had been given three professional days to attend workshops on how to be a successful candidate. The long wait was over in November of 2002 when I received notification that I had achieved National Board Certification. I knew that I had worked countless hours on my portfolio, that I had gone over every word with a fine-toothed comb, and that I had sent in work of which I was truly proud. I felt a powerful validation of my efforts and felt boldly empowered as a professional educator. I had set myself apart from others by participating in a professional development experience that had transformed me as a teacher. My county sponsored a reception for
all the teachers in the county who had achieved this same honor; my principal announced my achievement with great pride, and I received congratulatory letters from Board of Education members, educators, parents, and local and state educational organizations.

Four newly certified Nationally Board Certified teachers and I were honored at a Chamber of Commerce luncheon and were asked to speak at school meetings to encourage other teachers to work toward certification. The local newspaper interviewed me since I was also a Teacher of the Year finalist for Jefferson County that year, and there was a great deal of emphasis placed on my achievement. I felt like a celebrity and appreciated all the accolades I received. While I had achieved my master’s degree only four years earlier, I felt that this certification set me apart from my colleagues. It was a representation of the growth I had made as an educator and a symbol of my commitment to my profession. I had joined an elite group of educators, a group of professionals who comprised only two percent of the teaching profession.

While I was grateful for the attention to my achievement, I was also pleased with the 10 percent yearly salary increase that would begin the following year. The additional funds, while certainly needed, were a reminder that I was receiving a financial accolade for my hard work and perseverance. Over the next five years, I transferred to two different schools; in both interviews, the administrators commented on my NBC, asked about the process, and were very impressed with my achievement. I can say with much certainty that the additional certification was a deciding factor in my employment at these new schools. I was asked to participate in leadership meetings at the school and county-level and worked more closely with those making instructional decisions in my school building.
It was with great surprise that I found out in 2009 that “House Bill 243 stipulates that salary increases for existing National Board Certified Teachers are subject to appropriations from the General Assembly. For the current school year, funds for salary increases have not been appropriated” (Georgia Department of Education, 2011). Bert Brantley, a spokesman for Governor Sonny Perdue, stated that the National Board Certification process was not tied to any student achievement, and therefore, was not worthy of rewarding teachers with a financial supplement. He went on to say that the governor realized that achieving National Board Certification was difficult and that there were advantages from going through the process but respectfully questioned if teachers should be remunerated for certification or for performance (Badertscher, 2009). While I was justifiably angry at losing an additional supplement that had been promised to me, I was also angry that the certification that I had worked so hard to achieve had been dismissed as having no impact on student achievement. I contacted legislators and those at the local and state level of a powerful education association but was told that after many efforts, National Board Certification was longer viewed as the crowning achievement for teachers in my state. Removing the additional supplement seemed to be an easy way to find additional monies in an already struggling education system. I considered applying for renewal when my certification expired in 2012, but the thought of having to pay for the $1250 renewal process entirely on my own, since the state no longer awarded scholarships, was not one I could entertain. The idea of applying for a certification that was seen as having no impact on my teaching ability seemed pointless. While I knew that the process was a transformative one and vastly improved my teaching,
I could find few others who held that view outside of my colleagues who had also achieved National Board Certification status.

Statement of the Problem

Since its beginnings in 1987, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has awarded National Board Certification (NBC) to over 100,000 teachers. There are NBCs in all fifty states, and based on a report from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2012), the number of NBCTs has increased by 60 percent from 2007-2012. Eleven states had more than doubled their number of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) in that same time span: Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Wyoming. There is a wealth of research proving that NBCs have increased teacher quality, increased teacher effectiveness, and increased test scores when compared to non-Nationally Board Certified teachers (Madern, 2007; Vandevoort, Amrein-Beardsley, & Berliner, 2004; Cavalluzzo, 2004; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2005; Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards proposes that its national certification does not focus on a teacher’s procedural abilities but focuses on the ability of teachers to implement successful strategies in the classroom and to extensively reflect on his/her practices. States have offered millions of dollars in incentives to attract teachers to the rigorous process and to increase the quality of teachers in the profession. With the amount of money and additional incentives that have been offered to NBCTs, it is worthwhile to investigate the factors that influence teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification.
Background of the Problem

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education released *A Nation at Risk*, a report detailing a decline in educational performance that jeopardized the economic future and world standing of the United States. The report focused public attention and awareness on the need for a widespread reorganizing of the U.S. education system. The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy answered the issue of teacher quality by assembling a task force consisting of leaders and policy-makers in education and business. In 1986, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* was published, and the task force recommended that the nation’s teachers would have to be better trained and would need additional support in order to have schools that would enable students to be successful in the 21st century. The report provided specific suggestions for fortifying standards in teaching and making the teaching workforce more professional, much like the areas of medicine and law. Consequently, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), now known as the National Board, was created to put into action the recommendations from the report. The first group of teachers to obtain National Board Certification status did so in 1994. There were less than 100 teachers certified in that first year (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003). The National Commission on Excellence in Education issued the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, which served as a stimulus for the establishment of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (Madern, 2007).

Formation of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards grew out of the emergent belief that teachers were a key factor in improving student achievement, and
thus the profession needed ways to recognize and appropriately reward exemplary classroom teachers (Vandevoort, Amrein-Beardsley, & Berliner, 2004). In 1985, the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy established the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession. Members came from teacher unions, teacher organizations, and government and business groups. The participants wrote a report entitled A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986), a plan for restructuring schools and the teaching profession. It outlined a plan of action, including the formation of a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The primary goal was to identify and recognize teachers who effectively enhance student learning. The Board would consist primarily of teachers, but it would also include members from local and state agencies, business, and higher education institutions. Early supporters of the plan included Mary Hatwood Futrell, then-president of the National Education Association; Albert Shanker, then-president of the American Federation of Teachers; and Lee Shulman of Stanford University, who was then conducting research on novel forms of teacher assessment. Additionally, North Carolina’s Governor Jim Hunt, also on the board, sought financial backing for the Board from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The funding was in place in 1987, and the Board held its first meeting in October of that year.

Once funding was in place, a 33-member planning team began the process of writing bylaws and articles of incorporation. Additional members were added to the group and the Board held its first meeting in October 1987. The Board also envisaged an increase in the numbers of exceptional individuals entering the teaching field as well as a decrease in the numbers of excellent teachers leaving the field. At the center of the
Board’s vision and high on its agenda was the concept of a national teacher certification system. The model the Board had in mind was that of the medical professions’ National Board examinations for specialty areas such as oncology, hematology, family practice, and other areas of expertise. The group sought to improve the public’s perception of teachers, restore faith in public education and instill in teachers an improved sense of self-esteem (Vandevoort et al., 2004). A vision of a national teacher certification system, one much like that of the medical professions’ National Board examinations, was beginning. In *Towards High and Rigorous Standards for the Teaching Profession* (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1989), it was stated that while there were many efforts being made to improve education, none was as promising as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and its promise to institute arduous standards for teachers and system-wide change for education.

Researchers in teaching assisted the Board in formulating a definition of an accomplished teacher and the components that constituted such a definition. Developing the standards, assessment, and definition took over six years to complete and involved massive time investments from experts in teaching and administration. The standards were originally put forth as drafts that were then examined by individuals in education, in the non-teaching professions, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Board of Directors. In the end, it was approximated that hundreds of individuals at costs exceeding millions of dollars were employed to identify standards in each specialty area as well as develop the accompanying assessment instruments.
National Board Certification Representation in the U.S.

In December 2016, 533 teachers became new NBCTs, and 3,384 teachers renewed their National Board Certification. In December 2016, there were 112,695 NBCTs in the United States (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2016). North Carolina, Florida, and South Carolina have the greatest number of NBCTs, and in regard to the percentage of teachers with NBC, the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Washington rank the highest. While these states are leading the way with the highest numbers of NBCTs and the highest percentages of teachers with NBC, the numbers across the nation are not as robust as in previous years. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards announced that 4,117 teachers received certification in 2013, down 17 percent from the previous year and down more than 50 percent from 2008 (Heitin, 2014). Data from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards shows that 4,158 teachers achieved National Board Certification in 2014, 1,826 teachers achieved National Board Certification in 2015, and 538 achieved National Board Certification in 2016 (TeamNBCT Week 2016, 2016).

North Carolina has the highest number of Nationally Board Certified teachers, with a total of 20,873 (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2017). James Hunt, former governor of North Carolina, is a founding member of the Board of Directors for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. North Carolina has been very supportive of teachers attempting to attain NBC. Efforts included the granting of a North Carolina licensure to relocating teachers who possessed National Board Certification and the incorporation of National Board’s standards in education programs of study at state-sponsored institutions of higher learning. In addition, North
Carolina paid the full application fee for all eligible candidates and provided three days of professional leave (Madern, 2007). North Carolina continues to offer support to all teachers interested in achieving National Board Certification based on legislation adopted in 1994. Upon achieving NBC, teachers receive a 12 percent salary increase, and the state grants full licensure renewal to all teachers who complete the process, even if they do not achieve NBC.

Florida ranks second in the number of NBCTs with a total of 13,576 (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2016). In 1998, the Florida legislature passed the Excellent Teaching Program Act to “recognize the essential role that teachers play in preparing Florida’s students for high academic achievement” (Florida Department of Education, 2017). The Act was later renamed the Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program in 2002, and in 2008, the legislature made substantial changes to the program. Currently, bonuses are provided to teachers in Florida who achieve National Board Certification and to those who mentor National Board Certification candidates in the process if legislative funds are available. The state will pay the application fee, but teachers must pay the $1,900 from their own funds. The Florida Department of Education (2013) states that “Section 1012.72, Florida Statutes, Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program identifies a certification bonus and mentoring bonus” and that the bonus for achieving National Board Certification is “equal to 10 percent of the previous average statewide teacher’s salary, plus the employer’s share of social security and Medicare taxes” but also states that “the legislature did not provide funding for their bonus for this academic year” (Florida Department of Education, 2017).
South Carolina has long supported teachers pursuing NBC. The state is currently ranked third in the nation for NBCTs with a total of 8,928 and is ranked second in the nation for the number of renewed NBCTs. The state created the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) to support all teachers in the profession as well as those in the National Board Certification process. Established by the Commission on Higher Education in 1985, CERRA is funded by the South Carolina General Assembly and was created “due to a concern for South Carolina’s teacher supply pool and a need for a centralized teacher recruitment effort” (CERRA, 2017). South Carolina offers new NBCTs $5,000 for the life of their certificate, and some counties, as well as local teacher organizations, offer assistance in the cost of the National Board Certification process. Each county has a Nationally Board Certified staff person to assist candidates and provide information about the process.

Georgia ranks fourteenth in the nation for number of NBCTs with a total of 2,598. Previously, for initial certification, teachers were given three professional days to work on NBC, assigned a mentor to assist them through the process, given the opportunity to apply for the many scholarships available to pay the $2,300 fee, professional learning credits, and a 10 percent salary increase over the ten-year life of the certification. The state of Georgia does not provide incentives for achieving NBC. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards website (2017) suggests that teachers contact current NBCTs to find out what support may be available or to contact their local teacher support group for more information on how to receive assistance. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards also encourages candidates to
partner with them and advocate for the program in their state so that NBCTs may receive the financial supplement.

Table 1 shows that the number of teachers obtaining National Board Certification in Georgia rose from 1994, the year the first teacher in Georgia achieved certification, to 2003, when Georgia had its greatest number of new NBCTs, 522. Since 2004, the number of NBCTs has declined, with 463 new NBCTs in Georgia to only two in 2014, zero in 2015, and four in 2016. Reasons for this have not been extensively researched so teachers, administrators, county-level personnel, legislators, and teachers are left to wonder if the process is not as worthwhile as initially thought or if there are other factors that are causing the decline. Table 1 shows the number of new NBCTs in Georgia from 1994 to 2016 and the total number of NBCTs in Georgia for each year.
Table 1

Number of new NBCTs in GA from 1994 to 2016, total number of NBCTs in GA

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<td>2</td>
<td>2,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,576</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

History of National Board Certification in Georgia

Like many other states, Georgia gave financial incentives to teachers who achieved NBC. Additionally, National Board Certification was used as a way to guarantee that a teacher is highly qualified, as required by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), proposed in 2001 by President George W. Bush in order to improve the performance of U.S. schools. The initial incentive to become Nationally Board Certified was a five percent raise on the state-funded portion of a teacher’s salary. The first
teacher in Georgia became Nationally Board Certified in 1994 (NPTBS, 2017). The number of NBCTs increased gradually, and in 2000, Georgia enacted the A+ Education Reform Act in an attempt to improve education throughout the state. House Bill 243, an amendment to Georgia code 20-2-212.2 that governs teachers’ salaries, came from the A+ Education Reform Act and changed the supplement from five percent to ten percent (Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE), 2009).

The number of teachers earning National Board Certification increased after 2000 from less than 50 per year (1994-1998) to more than 100 (1999-2000), and by 2003, there were 529 NBCTs in Georgia (Brantley, 2014). The increase may be connected to the Knowledgeable Teacher course, designed by the Northeast Georgia Regional Services Agency, which was implemented to provide pre-candidates with “an opportunity to describe, analyze, and reflect on their current teaching practice and to assess how the teaching practice meets and/or exceeds National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Attention is devoted to the specific impact that those strategies have on improved student achievement” (Professional Standards Commission Course Information, “Course Description”, para. 1). The course was offered to give support to National Board Certification candidates; in addition, candidates could be assigned an NBCT mentor to answer questions throughout the process and assist them, if necessary, with assembling their portfolio. A three-day conference was available for candidates to network with other candidates and NBCTs and included workshops on improving writing skills, organizing materials, videotaping lessons, and other related topics.

The decline in the number of NBCTs may be explained by the removal of the financial supplement for NBCTs. During the 2007-2008 school year, teachers who
certified in 2007 or later were required to teach in a Needs Improvement School in order to receive the 10 percent supplement. The Georgia Assembly then amended HB 243 to say that NBCTs “…shall be eligible for salary increases, subject to appropriations by the General Assembly” (Georgia General Assembly, n.d., section 1, 4b, 1). This change in legislation was defended by the Georgia General Assembly based on examination of three quantitative studies that concluded that there is no evidence that NBCTs have a positive impact on student achievement. “No matter the source, the research tends to point in the same direction: the NBCT process may sometimes identify teachers already performing above the average, but the process itself does nothing to increase student achievement” (Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, 2009). The stipend was eliminated beginning in the 2010-2011 school year (PAGE, 2009).

Nationally Board Certified Teachers

Teachers who earn National Board Certification have successfully gone through a rigorous, standards-based assessment process to affirm their knowledge of content and pedagogy, use of high-quality instructional practices, and involvement in professional development activities (Cavalluzzo, 2004). Teachers must teach for a minimum of three years before they can begin the process of National Board Certification and must have a bachelor’s degree. McDiarmid and Cleveger-Bright (2008, p. 143) state that the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards “appear informed by a broader conception of teacher capacity, a conception that is infused with the rethinking of teacher knowledge, skills, dispositions, and learning that has occurred over the past couple of decades.”

It was agreed that potential candidates for Board certification would need to know the standards in their area of teaching, be able to implement them within their classrooms
and complete the Board’s assessment process leading to certification. Teachers wanting to achieve the certification would be expected to analyze their teaching and complete extensive self-reflection of their teaching. They would also be expected to demonstrate their ability to enhance student learning by adhering to the Board’s Five Core Propositions. They are:

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Teachers are members of learning communities. (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2011)

The Board’s assessment process is performance-based and includes the evaluation of portfolio entries as well as the completion of a set of tasks that take place at an assessment center, usually over the course of a full day. As part of the portfolio assessment, teachers videotape and analyze their teaching, provide evidence of student learning, and display artifacts used in their teaching. The portfolio portion of the assessment was designed to examine the ways in which teachers put theory into practice in their classrooms. Testing at the assessment center requires teachers to provide written responses to questions that are specific to their field of teaching. The Board’s goal in developing these assessments was not only to complement and expand upon the portfolio
but also to allow the candidates the opportunity to demonstrate the scope of their content-specific knowledge.

Performance tests such as those chosen by the board are expensive to develop and to score. Archer states that, “a growing consensus among researchers and policymakers alike is that the time has come for the national board to prove its worth” (Archer, 2002). His claim is a valid one since large amounts of federal money have been collected to design the assessments used by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to prove that Nationally Board Certified teachers have what it takes to be more successful in the classroom than their non-Nationally Board Certified counterparts. Luckily, a small number of states have enough board certified teachers to do an adequate study of the process, the participants, and the effects they have on teacher quality and student achievement. Ann E. Harman, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Director of Research and Development, welcomed the scrutiny and invited scholars, critics, and other interested groups to examine previous research as well as conduct their own studies to find the correlation between National Board Certification and student achievement. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has long espoused its use of research to guide its practices and its use of validity tests to prove that its assessments are measuring what they intend to measure.

Renewal Process

The process for renewal is quite different from the initial certification process. Candidates must renew in the same area in which they initially achieved their certification. NBCTs are offered two opportunities to apply for certification renewal, with the first application window opening late in the eighth year of the current
certification and the second opening late in the ninth year. If a candidate does not attempt to renew certification during these times, she must apply for initial certification. If a candidate applies for renewal in the second year of eligibility and the certification is not renewed, the process must be started again.

The renewal process was previously known as a Profile of Professional Growth and had three interrelated components. Component 1 required the candidate to submit responses related to four areas of professional growth identified by the candidate. They must include current certification process content and/or pedagogical knowledge as well as the acquisition of effective uses of technology. Component 2 required the candidate to choose one of the professional growth areas in Component 1 and demonstrate its application in a 10-minute video in which the candidate demonstrated classroom teaching in the same content and developmental level as the candidate’s initial certification. Component 3 required the candidate to choose one of the remaining professional growth areas and demonstrate its application through a 6-minute video with pre-K-12 learners or with colleagues. A written reflection was also required so that the candidate could analyze the connections and patterns among Components 1-3 from the candidate’s perspective as an educator. The cost to renew was $1,250 and had a shorter time frame for completion, September 1 through January 13 of the following year.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards recently revised their policy on renewal, and instead of renewing certification every 10 years, teachers must now renew their certification every 5 years. The new process, Maintenance of Certification, will be introduced in 2021 and will take effect for candidates who certify in 2017 and after. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards believes that
this reflects the vast changes that have taken place in education since the certification was established. They also assert that “it reflects the National Board’s effort to make certification more affordable and efficient for all teachers, so that it can become the norm in the profession” (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2016). In videos found on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards site, Kristen Hamilton, National Board Certification Director of Standards, explained that the Maintenance of Certification process is still being developed and that the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is unable to say what the assessment will look like. Additionally, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards does not know the cost of Maintenance of Certification but that it is comparable to what one component of what initial certification would cost.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards affirms that “renewal is a personal and public statement about your commitment to the profession and to your students” (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2016). Since National Board Certification is similar to Board certification in other occupations such as law, medicine, and architecture, they require that renewal take place periodically. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards also believes that teachers should be current on best practices in their area of certification and that the technological advances and rapid changes in education mandate periodic renewal of certification.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards site has a wealth of information on how to renew and includes many personal stories of teachers who have chosen to renew their certification and their reasons for renewing their certification.
Additionally, there is information on the incentives provided by states for teachers who achieve NBC; these incentives, however, are much less than those offered previously.

The pressing issue regarding renewal is focused on the idea that while the number of teachers who certify was initially quite promising, the number of teachers who renew their certification is much lower. With the recommendations from earlier reports on the importance of National Board Certification and the improvements in teacher quality it brings, there is little attention paid to renewal.

Renewal of National Board Certification in Georgia

Georgia has seen a decline in Nationally Board Certified teachers since 2012 when additional funding was eliminated. Table 2 shows the number of NBCTs who have renewed their certification in Georgia from 1994 to 2016.
Table 2

*Number of NBCTs renewing in GA from 2004 to present, total NBCTs renewed in GA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of NBCTs renewing in GA</th>
<th>Total NBCTs renewed in GA</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
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<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Georgia Association of Educators, GAE, offers a National Board Certification Renewal Scholarship application of $1,000 to assist teachers wishing to renew their NBC. If teachers are successful in renewing their NBC, they must agree to reimburse the GAE foundation if they fail to renew or if they are non-compliant. In addition, they must agree to grant the foundation an interview about the process as well as commit to 20 hours of service to the GAE National Board Support Program.

**Conceptual Framework**

Shields and Rangarajan (2013) propose that a conceptual framework is a way to organize ideas so as to explain a research project’s purpose. The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that influence teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification. The foundation of the conceptual framework for this study is the paradigm of social constructivism. Patton (1990) defines a paradigm as a way of looking
at the world, as a wide perspective of it, and a way of dissecting the intricacies of it. It is a way in which a person, specifically a researcher, views the world since this view influences how a person views all that surrounds him. Found within that paradigm are the ways in which the person views reality, the acquisition of knowledge, and the process for answering questions. Whether the researcher is cognizant of it or not, there are reasons why the researcher is studying a particular topic. Within those reasons, there are ideas and perspectives in place based on that paradigm that guide the researcher as he explores his topic. As a teacher who achieved National Board Certification in 2002 and declined to renew the certification, the researcher has a personal connection to the topic and is curious as to the factors that influence other teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification.

Social Constructivism

Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) described the constructivist stance on learning as a progression of making meaning and how individuals form the meanings of what they experience in the world. More specifically, the basic tenet of a social constructivist research approach is that reality is socially, culturally, and historically constructed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, social constructivist research seeks to recognize social phenomena from how it is situated in particular context. Inquiry is then bound by personal values, affected by the researcher and context in which the study takes place (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). This study is based on the social phenomena of renewal and is situated in the particular context of National Board Certification.

It is grounded in the social constructivist paradigm since its foundations include a belief that individuals construct their knowledge of National Board Certification based on
their own personal beliefs, experiences and reflection upon those experiences with National Board Certification. Constructivists believe that when a person experiences something new, he has to align it with his previous experiences and ideas. In that process, he may adapt what he previously believed, he may believe something different, or he may get rid of previous information because it is found to be unnecessary. The individual creates his own knowledge based on his beliefs and his interpretation of the experience. If an individual creates his own knowledge, therefore, he must ask questions, explore the world around him, and continually reflect on what he knows and what he experiences. Cresswell (2009) explains that individuals following the social constructivist paradigm are constantly pursuing an awareness of the world in which they live in all aspects of their lives.

The idea of constructivism has been widely criticized. The term is used in so many different ways that care should be taken when reading publications which state that they are based on constructivism (Sjoberg, 2007). Since countless definitions and descriptions have been found, critics say that the term has lost its true meaning. In addition, there are many different varieties of constructivism. Individual and cognitive constructivism are related to the writings of Piaget (Coburn, 1993), while social constructivism is linked to the writings of Lev Vygotsky (Rodriguez, 1998). Radical constructivism is associated with Ernst von Glasersfeld, with other interpretations leading to contextual, sociotransformative, and sociocultural constructivism (Sjoberg, 2007).

In social constructivism, researchers seek meaning of the world through developing interpretations of their experiences. The goal of social constructivist research is to depend as much as possible on the views of the participants in the study and their
perception of the experience. Questions in a social constructivist study are wide-ranging and general so that the participants can construct their own meaning of the experience. Open-ended questions are ideal for this approach so that the researcher can carefully listen to what the participants have to say regarding their own experiences. The researcher then positions himself in the research to recognize how his own interpretation arises from the experience. The researcher ultimately makes an interpretation of what he finds, an interpretation shaped by his own experiences, and then interprets the meanings of others.

This study has its origins in constructivist thinking since perception of the National Board Certification process and the reasons for renewal are constructed by the individual and are not necessarily the same for everyone. Not all teachers experience the same aspects of the National Board Certification process in the same way, and not all teachers take away the same personal benefits from it. Paradigms held by teachers may or may not change, and if changed, they may not all change in the same way. National Board candidates construct their own knowledge of the National Board Certification experience as they proceed through it, and their perceptions of the process may change as they advance their teaching career. How teachers view their teaching quality, and especially how they define teacher quality, may have changed after the National Board Certification process, and they may have a variety of reasons for not seeking renewal.

The social constructivist paradigm is essential to this study since each candidate constructs his own reality of the experience, develops his own meanings of the experience, which will then give way to a variety of meanings based upon the experience. The researcher’s position is to understand these various meanings and realities from the
participants’ perspectives and to relate to them in meaningful ways. Understanding that personal background and experiences will shape the interpretation, the researcher must be positioned in the research to recognize a set of meanings.

Knowles’s Theory of Andragogy

While this study does not seek to identify the factors that motivate teachers to initially pursue National Board Certification, it is important to discuss possible motivators since they could be related to the factors that influence teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification. Lustick and Sykes (2006) state that the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has been identified as sound professional development because of its numerous endorsements by many organizations. Additionally, the learning communities that supported National Board candidates were also considered valuable examples of adult learning. Merriam (2009) states that adult learning is a powerfully personal activity. Knowles (1968) described a focus on the adult learner and his life situation as andragogy. The European concept of andragogy, the art and science of helping adults learn, was contrasted with pedagogy, the art and science of helping children learn. Knowles (1980) also made four assumptions, also known as characteristics, about adult learners:

1. Adults move from that of a dependent personality to one of a self-directed personality.
2. Adults accumulate a wealth of experiences which can be used as a rich resource.
3. An adult’s readiness to learn is closely connected to his social role.
(4) Adults have a more immediate application of research and knowledge than children.

Knowles later referred to a fifth and sixth assumption:

(5) The most powerful motivations are internal rather than external.

(6) Adults have a need to know why they should learn something.

These characteristics have been used as tools for designing programs for adults, and the implications have also affected implementation and evaluation of programs for adults. There are many critics of Knowles’ Theory of Andragogy with some critics not recognizing it as a theory at all (Brookfield, 1986) and recent critics citing that it focuses too much on the individual learner and not the context in which the learning takes place (Grace, 1996). When placed in the context of NBC, however, the theory of andragogy fully supports the adult learner’s role and motivation in pursuing NBC. Candidates must be self-directed as they pursue certification since it is a voluntary process, and many candidates pursue the certification without the guidance of a mentor or Nationally Board Certified teacher. Furthermore, candidates must have at least three years’ experience before beginning the process, and they draw upon that wealth of experience as they write and reflect throughout the journey of certification.

The impetus behind a teacher’s decision to pursue National Board Certification can come from many sources. Some teachers attempt to achieve National Board Certification due to a financial supplement offered by their county and/or state, some for recognition by others in education, and some simply for the challenge of the rigorous process it provides and the self-satisfaction gained from the achievement. Knowles recognized that intrinsic motivators are more powerful for adults than extrinsic ones.
Self-actualization, a realization or fulfillment of one’s own potential (Knowles, 1968) is a powerful force for those seeking National Board Certification and is often the richest reward. An assumption about adult learners made by Knowles (1968) is that “while adult learners are responsive to some external motivators (better jobs, promotions, higher salaries, and the like), the most potent motivators are internal pressures (desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life and the like).” This assumption relates directly to self-determination theory, proposed by Deci and Ryan (2002), which suggests that people tend to be driven by a need to gain fulfillment and a need to grow. It also relates directly to Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory, specifically self-efficacy, which is an individual’s belief that he can be successful. Teachers pursuing National Board Certification are engaging in a certification process in which they are not only describing the intricacies of their teaching and their pedagogical decisions but are learning new ways in which to effectively describe those experiences.

Bandura’s Theory of Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1994) described self-efficacy as a person’s beliefs about his abilities to produce a specific level of achievement or mastery. These beliefs influence how a person motivates himself and how he thinks, feels, and behaves. People with a high self-efficacy approach difficult tasks as obstacles to be overcome rather than impediments over which they cannot prevail. An efficacious approach to these obstacles produces deep-rooted interest and intense captivation with the task at hand. Individuals with a high self-efficacy set demanding goals for themselves and stay committed to them. If they encounter failures or obstacles, they continue to persevere without limiting themselves to self-defeating beliefs. They perceive those failures or obstacles as within their control.
and easily surmounted so that success is ultimately achieved. Conversely, those with low self-efficacy are hesitant to confront new tasks because they believe them to be too difficult to achieve or believe that they do not have the skills necessary to be successful. Self-efficacy enables people to make judgments about their abilities to achieve certain tasks. Based on those judgments, they may or may not proceed to engage in the actions necessary to achieve them.

Bandura (1982) believed that learning and performance are affected by an individual’s self-efficacy in three ways:

1. The goals that individuals choose for themselves
2. The effort that individuals put toward learning
3. The persistence with which people attempt new and difficult tasks

Teachers with high self-efficacy often choose to pursue advanced degrees, especially those that offer a challenge or carry extra prestige. They may set high personal goals for themselves and perform at levels consistent with their self-efficacy. Because they are confident that their efforts will produce results leading to success, they will work hard to learn new tasks related to their profession, engage in professional development, and take on new tasks. When difficulties arise, those individuals with high self-efficacy continue to persevere and will approach the task differently and repeatedly until they achieve success. Hoy (2000) wrote about teacher efficacy, the confidence of a teacher in his ability to promote student learning. Henson (2001) also wrote about a teacher’s belief in his ability to have a positive impact on student learning and how this belief is crucial to the success of students in the classroom.
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow (1943) posited that humans are motivated by a hierarchy of needs and must fulfill the most basic needs of survival before addressing higher levels of needs and wants. These ideas were organized into Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, a psychological theory of motivation, which described an individual’s need to meet basic needs and to then meet successively higher needs. The hierarchy was displayed in a pyramid like the one below:

![Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](image)

*Figure 1. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs*

Physiological needs such as air, food, water, sleep, and sex must be met before other needs. If these needs are not met, then the individual is likely to disregard needs in upper levels of the hierarchy. For example, a person who is hungry and is in search of food may ignore dangerous situations until the needs of hunger are met and satisfied. Once physiological needs are met, the individual can then meet the needs of safety.
Safety needs included security of surroundings, health, property, and occupation. Again, individuals must meet their needs of safety and security before they are able to pursue needs related to upper levels of the hierarchy such as belongingness or esteem.

Belongingness needs were comprised of family, love, relationships, and intimacy. Esteem needs included achievement, self-esteem, confidence, and respect. Self-actualization, at the top of the hierarchy, was considered the pinnacle of the hierarchy and included creativity, problem-solving, and morality. Maslow pointed out that the needs at each level do not have to be completely met before the person moves on to the next level. A person may be struggling to meet needs at one level but also feel a need to pursue needs in upper levels.

Maslow (1943) wrote that the first four levels were classified as deprivation needs ("d" needs) because when they are lacking, or when an individual is deprived of those needs, they create an insufficiency that motivates the individual to meet those needs. Physiological needs such as air, food, and water are satisfied for most people, but, if not, they become the principal focus for the individual until those needs are met. If an emergency arises, then the individual works to make sure that the needs of safety are met. Once these are met, then it becomes important to the individual to seek intimate relationships and close friendships. Maslow (1943) claimed that humans cannot do without the deficiency needs and if those needs are not met, individuals may act irrationally or defensively. Once individuals have met those deficiency needs, they are then motivated by their own development and fulfillment.

The uppermost levels, esteem and self-actualization, are considered being needs ("b" needs) and involve a person’s desire to grow and reach their full potential. Esteem
needs encompass the individual’s self-esteem and esteem from others, and these needs reveal themselves in independence, recognition from others, and high achievement.

Self-actualization occurred when an individual was working at his highest level, maximizing his potential, and willing to embrace the unknown or the abstruse. Maslow studied individuals such as Albert Einstein, Abraham Lincoln, and Thomas Jefferson and labeled them as self-actualized. He found that they had similarities such as purpose, humility, gratitude, and were motivated by growth instead of their own individual needs.

Generally, an individual beginning their teaching career will be concerned with a stable salary and adequate benefits and a work environment that is safe (safety needs). The individual may explore ways in which to socially interact with others in the workplace and to be accepted by them (belongingness needs). The individual may then work for additional certifications and degrees (esteem needs). Esteem needs may lead to a motivation to achieve additional certification in education and can come from many different sources: increased salary, the possibility of job advancement, professional growth, or a fundamental desire to improve oneself through challenge and success.

Self-actualization is achieved when the individual has become highly skilled and is interested in self-development. The individual may want to take on additional challenges due to desire to improve their teaching skills or may want to perform at a much higher level for a feeling of increased self-worth. Achievement of National Board Certification arises from esteem and self-actualization needs since the certification is voluntary. Educators can increase their salary or improve their job opportunities by achieving an advanced degree or obtaining a leadership or learning coach certification.
To obtain NBC, however, is to achieve the highest certification that education has to offer. As stated by the Chicago Teacher’s Union Foundation (2017),

This authentic assessment of an accomplished teacher’s practice is the highest credential the teaching profession has to offer and is an indicator that a teacher’s practice meets the high and rigorous standards of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to discover what factors influence teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification. While there are many studies that address the connection between National Board Certification and student achievement (Cavalluzzo, 2004; Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003; Vanderveoort, Amrein-Beardsley, & Berliner, 2004; Harris & Sass, 2009) and many studies that address the connection between National Board Certification and teacher quality (Cavalluzzo, 2004; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003, 2005; Izumi & Evers, 2002; Rice, 2003; Wise, 1996), there is little research related to the choices that teachers are making in regard to certificate renewal. This study would be an important piece to add to the already existing literature in this area.

Research Question

The research question guiding this study is: What factors influence a teacher’s decision to renew National Board Certification?

Importance of the Study

States have offered a variety of incentives to teachers to assist them in achieving National Board Certification such as: providing scholarships to pay for the $2,300
application fee, furnishing a Nationally Board Certified teacher to mentor a candidate, providing release days, giving professional learning credits, forming cohort groups, granting state licensure, and granting financial supplements. These incentives require a financial investment from states and local districts. While there is ample research to support and refute the claim that Nationally Board Certified teachers are of higher quality, there is little research to explain why teachers do not renew their certification. Findings of the study would assist district level personnel as they strive to hire higher quality teachers for their systems. It would also assist them in planning professional development opportunities for teachers since the National Board Certification experience is viewed by some as sound professional development (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2011; Lustick & Sykes, 2006). Findings would also assist administrators as they interview teachers for positions in their schools and place them in grade level/subjects in which they are needed, especially schools with a large population of struggling students who could benefit from the increased teaching abilities of Nationally Board Certified teachers. Teachers contemplating National Board Certification would also benefit from the study as well as current Nationally Board Certified teachers as they decide to seek renewal. Legislators would also benefit from the research since the findings would help them determine whether the achievement of National Board Certification is worth additional incentives. Ultimately, students will benefit if they are receiving improved academic instruction due to a teacher’s initial achievement of National Board Certification and renewal.
Definition of Terms

Specific terms in the study deal with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, while others are related to teacher quality and teacher effectiveness:

*The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)*: a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting excellence in education. Founded in 1987, the board develops and maintains advanced standards for educators and offers a national, voluntary assessment, National Board Certification, based on their standards (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2011).

*National Board Certification (NBC)*: a voluntary, advanced teaching credential that goes beyond state licensure and has national standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do (NEA, 2015).

*Nationally Board Certified Teacher (NBCT)*: a teacher who has achieved National Board Certification (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2013).

*Five Core Propositions*: Standards by which the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards base their recognition of teachers who effectively enhance student learning by demonstrating a high level of knowledge, skill, ability and commitment (Madern, 2007).

*Teacher quality*: quantifiable ability to produce gains in student achievement (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003b, p. 11).

*Teacher effectiveness*: specific things that a teacher does throughout the day to improve student learning (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999, p. 157).

*No Child Left Behind*: mandates high standards of achievement for all students through testing and accountability measures. (Maleyko, 2011, p. 1)
Limitations

The study had several limitations. The researcher had no control over the participants’ responses and their honesty during interviews. Since some of the participants may have achieved certification 10 or more years prior to the study, their recollection of events may not be completely accurate. The participants may also have selective memory and may not remember events as they actually occurred. Since a social constructivist paradigm is guiding the research, the participants are constructing their own meaning of their National Board Certification experiences. The researcher has no control over how the participants may have perceived the National Board Certification process, their own teaching quality, and their reasons for not seeking renewal. The researcher had no control over any bias the participants may have in regard to National Board Certification and, specifically, to the researcher.

Another limitation was the possibility of researcher bias, considering that the researcher is studying an experience of which she was a part. The researcher obtained National Board Certification in 2002 and chose not to renew when her certification expired in 2012. An attempt at minimizing this limitation was a description of the researcher’s experience with National Board Certification in this chapter.

An additional possible limitation aligns with the type of data collected. It is assumed that participants will provide truthful information in their responses to the online questionnaire, individual interviews, and focus group interview. Participants were trusted to provide accurate information concerning their eligibility for this study, including their ages and their completion of college degrees and NBC.
Finally, this study was limited in its potential for generalizability, as the nine participants represent only a small sample of Nationally Board Certified teachers. The purpose of this study is not to generalize the results or find implications that are relevant for the majority of Nationally Board Certified teachers. The purpose is to study one specific group of Nationally Board Certified participants in the same county in order to paint a rich description of the factors that influenced their decision to renew their National Board Certification. While emerging themes and possible implications for renewal of National Board Certification were identified, there was no attempt to generalize these findings and apply them to all Nationally Board Certified teachers as they choose to renew their certification.

Summary

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the study, including background on the research topic, the study’s conceptual framework of social constructivism, the problem and purpose of the study, the theoretical framework based on Knowles’ Theory of Andragogy, Bandura’s Theory of Self-Efficacy, and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, a brief description of the methodology, the project’s limitations, and definitions of key terms. Building on the research of National Board Certification and its effect on teacher quality, student achievement, and professional development, this dissertation seeks to explore the factors that influence teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification. Using a qualitative case study methodology and through the experiences and perceptions of nine Nationally Board Certified teachers, the study seeks to describe the process of NBC, the process of renewal of NBC, and the individual stories of
Nationally Board Certified teachers and the factors that influenced them when it was time to renew their National Board Certification.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Perhaps—as a profession—we need to be worried about the one major national attempt to set professional standards of practice. That fact that many states are dismantling their National Board Certification programs (since they’re not getting federal money) is a harbinger of more de-skilling and de-professionalizing to come.

(Ravitch, 2012)

Teachers of high quality are needed in today’s classrooms. Students of all ability levels, of all races, of all ethnicities, regardless of gender, deserve a quality educator standing in front of them every day of every school year. Students bring a variety of issues to the classroom, more responsibilities are added to teachers’ duties every year, technology rapidly changes the teaching landscape, and teachers must continue to provide a quality educational experience to all students, regardless of additional duties and stagnant salary increases. A quality teacher must be able to navigate the ever-changing world of education by making reflective decisions regarding instruction, communicating effectively with administrators, colleagues, parents, and students, and constantly making adjustments in the face of ever-increasing demands. A teaching certificate may not ensure a highly-qualified teacher and may not ensure a teacher of high quality. Many teachers decide to obtain graduate degrees, to acquire additional certifications, and to participate in professional learning activities to develop their teaching skills. Some teachers decide to pursue National Board Certification (NBC) to continue their growth as
educators and to advance professionally. The process of achieving National Board Certification is a rigorous one that requires countless hours of planning, reflection, and analysis. Many studies cite National Board Certification as the crowning achievement for a quality teacher and the highest level of certification a teacher can attain. Teachers have the opportunity to renew their National Board Certification so that they can maintain their status as Nationally Board Certified teachers. Chapter 2 addresses issues in the literature relevant to the study: the process of becoming a Nationally Board Certified teacher, National Board Certification as teaching excellence, National Board Certification and teacher quality, National Board Certification and student achievement, National Board Certification as professional development, the participation of teachers in National Board Certification in different states, and renewal of National Board Certification.

The Process of Becoming a Nationally Board Certified Teacher

Teachers must possess a Bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution, completed three years of successful teaching or school counseling, and hold a valid state teaching license to become a candidate for NBC. If eligible, candidates must choose a field of National Board Certification in which they want to become certified. Fields are based on developmental level and disciplines. Developmental levels include: Early and Middle Childhood, Early Childhood through Young Adulthood, Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood, Early Adolescence, and Middle Childhood. Disciplines include: Art, Career and Technical Education, English as a New Language, English Language Arts, Exceptional Needs Generalist, Generalist (Early Childhood and Middle Childhood), Health Education, Library Media, Literacy: Reading/Language Arts,

Candidates must submit a portfolio containing four entries, with three of them classroom-based. Two of those require video evidence of classroom interactions between the teacher and students. All three entries also require that the candidate collect student work of different types. Each entry requires direct evidence of teaching in addition to describing, analyzing, and reflecting on that evidence. In addition, candidates must demonstrate content knowledge in response to six exercises developed by practicing professionals in their certificate area. They are given up to 30 minutes to respond to each of the six exercises that are administered at computer-based testing centers across the United States. The cost for certification was originally $2,300 but for the 2014-2015 year, was lowered to $1900. Candidates may pay the amount in four installments of $475 and have a window of February 15 to May 16 of the following year to develop and submit their portfolio and to complete the six exercises at a testing center.

National Board Certification as Teaching Excellence

According to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the National Board credential itself is an endorsement of professional teaching excellence (2001). The educational community recognized the certification process as a forceful professional development experience (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2001). Jenkins (2000) stated that teachers’ practices are improved when they become certified through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. This statement is supported by Goldhaber and Anthony (2004) who concluded that children
learn more from nationally certified teachers and that the assessment process is effective in identifying superior teachers among applicants to the program.

Completing National Board Certification is an accomplishment that signifies a teacher has achieved a characteristic of a master educator (Silver, 2007). Completing National Board certification is a rigorous process. Applicants must produce a portfolio of their work related to National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, a reflection of their work, and a written assessment capable of passing the requirements to receive certification. The process takes from one to three years, depending on the teacher’s ability to attain certification the first year of the process. It is the only national certification available to teachers, and it has become a distinctive credential.

Other occupations such as medicine, law, and accounting require that those entering the profession take part in examinations that are designed by practitioners in those fields. Teachers are on the boards of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and are an integral part of designing standards. While doctors help to design the assessments that are taken by aspiring doctors, then, Darling-Hammond (1999) suggests, teachers should help design the assessments taken by aspiring educators. An important characteristic of the standards is that they are performance-based. That is, they should describe “what teachers should know, be like, and be able to do, rather than listing courses that teachers should take in order to be awarded a license” (Darling-Hammond, 1999, p. 14). The Board requires its applicants to draw upon many types of knowledge about strategies, subject matter, and individual students. They must explain how they use that knowledge as they reflect upon their actions and planning in the classroom. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards includes activities and assessments
such as portfolios, assessment, and reflection which many colleges and universities are using to design current programs for their students.

Brantley (2014) conducted a phenomenologic study which sought to understand what it means to be a NBCT in Georgia. The qualitative study employed the use of surveys and interviews to explore the essence of being a NBCT, and three themes emerged from the study regarding NBCTs in Georgia: NBCTs in Georgia are dedicated, passionate, and driven. Questions guiding the research included:

1. What does it mean to be a NBCT?
2. Why do teachers pursue NBC?
3. What, if any, professional impact is there to becoming NBC?
4. What, if any, personal impact is there to becoming a NBC?

The researcher found that candidates pursued the certification for a variety of reasons. Some began the process on the recommendations of colleagues who already had NBC, some pursued it because they felt it was the logical, next step in their educational career, and some simply for the challenge. Many of the participants spoke about the positive impact the certification had on their teaching and how countless job opportunities became available to them because of their NBC. While some participants did mention the financial supplement as a motivator, many also mentioned honoring their profession and that it simply meant a distinguished certification to prove their commitment to teaching.
National Board Certification and Teacher Quality

A wide variety of definitions of a ‘quality teacher’ exist. Clark (1993, p. 10) wrote that, “Obviously, the definition involves someone who can increase student knowledge, but it goes beyond this in defining an effective teacher.” Vogt (1984) related effective teaching to the ability to provide instruction to different students of different abilities while incorporating instructional objectives and assessing the effective learning mode of the students. Collins (1990), while working with the Teacher Assessment Project established five criteria for an effective teacher: “(a) is committed to students and learning, (b) knows the subject matter, (c) is responsible for managing students, (d) can think systematically about their own practice, and (e) is a member of the learning community” (Clark, p. 11).

There are myriad problems associated with teacher evaluation practices such as evaluation inflation, highly subjective instruments, and lack of objective measures. The study also showed that teachers are important to student achievement and that effectiveness is quantifiable (Markley, 2004). Paraphrasing Clark (1993) and Sullivan (2001), an effective teacher is one who demonstrates knowledge of the curriculum, provides instruction in a variety of approaches to varied students, and measurably increases student achievement. Markley’s review reinforces the idea that data-driven assessment combined with observation are clearly the approaches needed to identify quality teachers.

According to Cavalluzzo (2004, p. 2), “Although there is general agreement among policy-makers, educators, and researchers that teacher quality is key to student success, there is less agreement about the contribution that specific professional attributes
make to good teaching.” The discussion on teacher quality is an eristic one since there are many opinions about the definition of quality teaching. Darling-Hammond (1999) suggests that as standards are raised for students, standards should be raised for teachers. If this is the case, then basic training on lesson planning and classroom management will not suffice in preparing future teachers. Decisions on student goals, judgments on the contexts in which students learn, and evaluations of curriculum and instruction are not procedural. These actions require teachers to formulate knowledge about their students, their subject matter, and their classrooms on a daily basis. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards proposes that its national certification does not focus on a teacher’s procedural abilities but focuses on the ability of teachers to implement successful strategies in the classroom and to extensively reflect on teaching practices.

There is growing evidence that teacher quality plays a central role in determining student achievement (Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2005). Testing results can be used as an indicator of a teacher’s quality which, in turn, can be an indicator of a school’s quality and effectiveness. Many states are also providing a financial supplement to those teachers with National Board Certification and are examining the rationale behind this practice. With fluctuations in the U.S. economy and a lack of finances in many systems, it is necessary to question the validity of providing additional money to teachers with NBC. No Child Left Behind is an important landmark in the discussion regarding highly qualified teachers due to its tying of federal funds to hiring teachers that meet its specific definition of exceedingly competent (Mullen & Farinas, 2003).

According to Rice (2003) and Wise (1996), teacher quality is the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement. Izumi and Evers point out in
Teacher Quality (2002) that nothing is as significant to learning as the quality of a student’s teacher. Contemporary research on teaching indicates that teachers are powerful contributors to students’ academic achievement, though the set and interrelationships of characteristics that make for high-quality and effective teaching have yet to be satisfactorily determined (Vandevoort, et al., 2004). Although there is general agreement among policy-makers, educators, and researchers that teacher quality is key to student success, there is less agreement about the contribution that specific professional attributes make to good teaching (Cavalluzzo, 2004).

Goldhaber and Anthony (2004) described the results of a study based on a data set from North Carolina, measuring the relationship between the National Board Certification of teachers by and elementary-level student achievement. Their results indicate that the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is effectively recognizing the more effective teachers among applicants, and that NBCTs, prior to becoming certified, were more effective than their non-certified counterparts at increasing student achievement. Their findings give the impression that the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards assessment process is successful in identifying the more effective teachers among applicants to the program.

There are mixed findings, though, on whether certification should be used as a signal of teacher quality. They continually found that teachers who will eventually be Board certified are more effective, but there are mixed findings about their effectiveness after being identified as an NBCT. The researchers stated that the issue of Board certification serving as a signal of teacher quality is influenced both by the assessment process and the quality of applicants to the program. Their data encompasses the early
years of certification by National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and they state that the applicants early in the program may be markedly different than those who apply once the program has become more reputable.

Wiswall (2013) investigated the premise that teacher quality does not improve except for the first few years of teaching. By using data covering all 5th-grade public school teachers from the state of North Carolina, he duplicated a study from previous findings and found that while teacher quality in reading instruction did not increase, teaching quality in math instruction did increase. While this study did not specifically address teachers with NBC, it does reinforce the fact that teaching experience and teaching quality may be related.

Darling-Hammond and Youngs (2002) focus on a report released by the U. S. Secretary of Education in July of 2002 entitled Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge. The Secretary argues that current teacher certification systems are “broken” and impose “burdensome requirements” for education coursework (p. 8). The report also argues that attendance at schools of education and student teaching should be optional and that certification should be re-examined so as to include a greater emphasis on verbal ability and content knowledge. The four main propositions in the article are as follows:

Proposition 1: Teachers matter for student achievement, but teacher education and certification are not related to teacher effectiveness.

Proposition 2: Verbal ability and subject matter knowledge are the most important components of teacher effectiveness.

Proposition 3: Teachers who have completed teacher education programs are often academically weak and unprepared for their jobs.
Proposition 4: Alternative Certification Programs (ACPs) have academically stronger recruits who are highly effective and have high rates of teacher retention.

The secretary’s report cites a report by Kate Walsh which Darling-Hammond and Youngs expose as “excluding much of the evidence on the topic, misrepresenting many research findings, making inaccurate claims about studies that have examined the consequences of preparation and using a double standard in evaluating the research” (2002). The authors cite specifics in Walsh’s report that are not supported by scientifically based research. While there is evidence to support the validity of verbal ability and content knowledge, there is also evidence to support the importance of teacher education programs. States have also made recent advances in strengthening their teacher education programs, which has resulted in stronger academic backgrounds and higher scores on teacher licensing tests. These trends show that states should stay the course in regard to teacher education programs instead of dismantling them.

Teacher accountability, while not a new issue, is definitely one that sparks much discussion and brings forward a variety of definitions and viewpoints. Legislators are often hesitant to offer an increase in pay to teachers unless teacher accountability is also increased. Assessing and identifying quality teachers is crucial to the process, but the definition of a quality teacher is a contentious one that creates much controversy. The factors used to identify high-quality teachers are not yet agreed upon by most researchers.

National Board Certification and Gains in Student Achievement

The link between National Board Certification and student achievement has been debated and conflicting results exist as to how certification translates into benefits for student learning. Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor (2007) state that the discussion still
continues regarding the effects of a particular teacher qualifications on student achievement, despite the copious amount of research available on the topic. Their study used longitudinal data of all North Carolina students in grades 3, 4, and 5 for the years 1995 to 2004 in math and reading. Because North Carolina has been testing all students in reading and math since the early 1990s, data from all students and teachers in North Carolina were available over a ten-year period. The researchers’ study examined the effects of teacher credentials and teacher characteristics on student achievement. The relevant teacher variables examined by the researchers included teacher’s race and gender, years of experience, and attainment of higher degrees or particular type of license. With regard to students, the variables included test scores in reading or math, previous achievement scores, students’ race, gender, and age, and grade repetition. With regard to classrooms, the variables included class size and achievement of peers.

The researchers found clear substantiation that increased years of teaching experience resulted in increased student achievement. While the benefits in math were greater than those in reading, a clear pattern emerged in both subject areas. The study also showed that having an advanced degree did not equate to increased student achievement in the classroom with the data disaggregated by master’s, advanced, and Ph.D. degrees. Additionally, teacher licensure was statistically significant to student achievement. Licenses were divided into categories of regular, lateral entry, and other. Lateral entry is defined as a teacher with a bachelor’s degree, a minimum GPA of 2.5, and a college major in the area in which they teach. The “other” category included provisional, emergency, and temporary licenses. Negative effects for achievement were found with the “other” types of licenses, provisional or emergency.
Specific to this study are the findings related to teachers with NBC. Studying a total of 300 NBCTs, researchers found that Nationally Board Certified teachers are more effective than teachers without National Board Certification. However, the authors suggest two possible reasons for this. The first is that going through National Board Certification may not have improved the teacher’s quality or effectiveness but that the process attracts teachers who are already of higher quality and will, therefore, show improved student gains. The second proposes that the process, or perhaps the recognition, makes teachers of higher quality than they would have been.

Teachers identified through the assessments of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards are, on average, more effective teachers in terms of academic achievement, one of the many outcomes of education for which teachers are responsible (Vandevoort et al., 2004). The purpose of their study is to prove this point through a comparison of Nationally Board Certified teachers with non-Nationally Board Certified teachers using the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT-9).

The sample included 14 school districts in the state of Arizona and their released SAT-9 scores for the years 1999-2003 for students in grades 3-6. The sample of Nationally Board Certified teachers included only those holding the Early Childhood or Middle Childhood Generalist certificate(s). The participants included 35 NBCTs living in Arizona who agreed to share their SAT-9 data, complete a questionnaire, and allow their principals to complete a questionnaire. Also included were 24 principals representing 24 schools across the 14 districts. The data was obtained from four years of results from the SAT-9 in reading, math, language arts, and mathematics.
The procedures for data collection began with the researchers obtaining a list of teachers attaining National Board Certification in Early Childhood and Middle Childhood Generalist from Arizona prior to 2002 from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Six months later, the Board provided a list of an additional 13 teachers who attained the certification in November of 2002.

Overall, in reading, students of Nationally Board Certified teachers outperformed the students of non-Nationally Board Certified teachers in 12 of the 16 comparisons (75 percent). In math, students of Nationally Board Certified teachers outperformed the students of non-Nationally Board Certified teachers in 11 of the 16 comparisons (68.8 percent). In language, students of Nationally Board Certified teachers outperformed the students of non-Nationally Board Certified teachers in 12 of the 16 comparisons (75 percent). For all the data years combined, AG scores of students of Nationally Board Certified teachers exceeded those of non-Nationally Board Certified teachers by an average of 2.39 scaled score points in reading, 3.11 scaled score points in math, and 1.86 scaled score points in language. The effect sizes between the two groups was of great importance since the mean difference in effect sizes across all of the subject areas and for all the data years was just over +0.12. An effect size of this magnitude indicates that the effect of having a Nationally Board Certified teacher for students is not trivial (Vandevoort, et al., 2004).

The researchers compared their findings to those of a study by Goldhaber and Anthony (2004) and state that they both show that the student achievement effects by NBCTs are higher than those produced by non-NBCTs. Utilizing the standardized achievement test used in Arizona to measure student progress, they found that NBCTs
produced a 1 1/3 months gain in reading and a 3/4 of one month gain in language. When
achievement gains were averaged across several subject matters, achievement gains of
1.2 months were found when compared to teachers who were not NBC.

Smith, Gordon, Colby, and Wang (2005) examined the effect of Nationally Board
Certified teachers on student achievement compared to teachers who attempted but did
not receive NBC. 64 teachers from 17 states participated in the study; 55 percent had
achieved NBC, and 45 had attempted but had not achieved NBC. The study attempted to
answer two questions. First, do students taught by Nationally Board Certified
teachers provide deeper responses to assignments and standardized test assessments than non-
Nationally Board Certified teachers who attempted but did not achieve National Board
Certification? Second, do Nationally Board Certified teachers develop instruction and
design class assignments designed to produce deeper responses than non- Nationally
Board Certified teachers who attempted but did not achieve National Board Certification?
The first question in Smith’s (2005) study is important to this research since it seeks to
address the issue of Nationally Board Certified teachers producing students with greater
achievement gains.

Student work samples were collected and organized and were used as a condensed
illustration of the student’s outcomes in the teacher’s class. 78 percent of student
outcomes, regardless of National Board Certification status, were at the surface level.
However, students of Nationally Board Certified teachers, regardless of achievement of
National Board Certification, were almost twice as likely to achieve deeper learning
outcomes (29 percent for Nationally Board Certified teachers, and 14 percent for teachers
who attempted National Board Certification but did not achieve certification). A
standardized writing assessment was also administered. Writing features such as controlling idea, organizational structure, elaboration, voice, and sentence formation were examined. Students of Nationally Board Certified teachers performed better than non-Nationally Board Certified teachers in all areas of writing. The general results of this study indicate that Nationally Board Certified teachers cultivated a deeper understanding in their students when comparing work samples and standardized writing test scores to non-Nationally Board Certified teachers. The researchers stated that the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is “realizing its goal of identifying accomplished teachers who influence student achievement” (Smith, et al., 2005, p. 154).

The state of Washington regularly ranks in the top five states of most new NBCTs (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2016). Cowan and Goldhaber (2015) studied the effectiveness of Nationally Board Certified teachers in Washington and found that they were 0.01 to 0.05 standard deviations more effective than non-Nationally Board Certified teachers with similar levels of experience based on value-added models in reading and math. Teacher records were acquired from the S-275, a survey of district personnel by the Office of the Superintendent of Instruction. The S-275 provided demographic information about the teachers such as sex, age, teacher credentials, and ethnicity. The researchers then matched National Board Certification data to the S-275 data; 99 percent of candidates were matched to their employment records in the S-275. The four most common certificates in elementary and middle school levels were analyzed: Middle Childhood Generalist, Early/Middle Childhood Literacy, Reading, and Language Arts, Early Adolescence English/Language Arts, and Early Adolescence Math. Standardized test scores in math and reading for grades 3-8
were obtained from the years 2006-2009. It is important to note that baseline scores for Nationally Board Certified teachers were 0.10 standard deviations higher in reading and 0.17 standard deviations higher in math; this fact is consistent with other studies that state that Nationally Board Certified teachers may already have higher achieving students in their classrooms.

The researchers found that the differences in the Nationally Board Certified teachers and non-Nationally Board Certified teachers in this study may have implications for education. The differences could correspond to approximately 1-2 weeks of additional learning in elementary classrooms and middle school reading classrooms and possibly 1.5 months of additional learning in middle school math classrooms (Bloom et al., 2008). The researchers state that their findings are consistent with previous studies in Florida (Chingos & Peterson, 2011) and North Carolina (Clotfelter et al., 2007).

The Strategic Data Project (SDP), located at the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University, works with school districts and school agencies to “bring high-quality research methods and data analysis to bear on management and policy decisions” (2012). It is supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and was launched in 2009 to bring together educational leaders, teachers, districts, and data analysis to improve educational decisions and thereby increase student achievement. The SDP has partnered with nine states, 22 school districts, three charter school networks, and four non-profit organizations and has produced a wealth of information related to teaching and learning. The SDP Pathway for Human Capital is a framework designed to study the movement and allocation of teachers in a specific district. It examines teacher recruitment, placement, development, evaluation, and retention. Researchers connected
student data to teacher human resource data to measure teacher effectiveness that can be linked to teacher characteristics. These studies have been done in several states including California, Colorado, Georgia, Massachusetts, Delaware, Texas, Kentucky, Tennessee, the District of Columbia, and many others.

A 2012 SDP study in Gwinnett County, Georgia, sought to answer the question: How effective are alternately-certified Gwinnett County Public School (GCPS) teachers compared to those traditionally certified? The researchers noted that while there are many alternate pre-service certification programs available, they found no difference in the effectiveness of newly-hired GCPS teachers in who are alternately certified when compared with traditionally certified teachers. They did find, however, that NBCTs did outperform other teachers in English and math when compared to teachers with the same level of experience.

The SDP also studied schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) in 2012 and sought to answer the question: What effects do NBCTs have in LAUSD as compared to those teachers without certification? The study found that, on average, Nationally Board Certified teachers outperformed other teachers with the same level of experience in elementary math and ELA respectively which translates to one to two months of additional instruction. The researchers went on to say that the analysis “cannot parse out whether returns to National Board Certification result from the certification process itself or are a reflection of which teachers successfully complete the program” (p. 12).
National Board Certification and No Gains in Student Achievement

Not all researchers have found that NBCTs have greater gains in student achievement when compared to non-NBCTs. Silver (2007) examined two different aspects in regard to the effect of National Board Certification on student achievement. First, does a trend exist in the achievement of students of Nationally Board Certified teachers before, during, and after certification? Second, if a trend does exist, is it different when compared to students taught by non-Nationally Board Certified teachers? With regard to his first question, the findings showed a statistically significant difference in achievement across the three years on three of the 12 measures of achievement: third-grade reading scale scores gains, third-grade math scale scores gains, and fourth-grade reading proficiency percentages. Each measure of achievement contained three subsets of data which amounted to 36 total measures of achievement. The third-grade reading scale scores and third-grade math scale scores both steadily increased throughout the years before, during, and after National Board Certification. Fourth-grade reading proficiency percentages rose during the certification year but declined during the post-certification year.

With regard to Silver’s (2007) second question, none of the 12 analyses, when compared to students of non-Nationally Board Certified teachers, showed a statistically significant interaction effect for certification over the three years. Silver (2007) suggests that the process of National Board Certification does not ensure that Nationally Board Certified teachers can produce students with higher test scores than those of non-Nationally Board Certified teachers. Additionally, he suggests that the time-consuming process of National Board Certification may take time and attention away from a
teacher’s planning for students in the classroom during the school year. Finally, he posits that National Board Certification may be a desirable achievement to have but that it may not produce significant achievement gains for students.

Cavalluzzo’s (2004) research examined the association between student gains in mathematics in 9th and 10th grades and various indicators of teacher quality. She examined a variety of independent variables that could have an effect on the scores on an end-of-grade test administered to 9th and 10th grade students. The variables included: whether the teacher was new or experienced, the type of certification obtained by the teacher, whether mathematics was the main teaching position for the teacher, completion of advanced degrees, selectivity of undergraduate school, and participation in the process for NBC. Participation was divided into four areas: attainment of NBC, a pending application, withdrawal from the process, or failure to obtain certification.

The focus of the study was on 9th grade students who took a state end-of-grade math exam in the school years 2001-2003 and of 10th grade students who took a state end-of-grade math exam in 2002 or 2003. The author stated that, “teachers who earn National Board Certification have successfully gone through a rigorous, standards-based assessment process to affirm their knowledge of content and pedagogy, use of high-quality instructional practices, and involvement in professional development activities” (Cavalluzzo, 2004, p. 6). While Nationally Board Certified instructors had greater post-test scores than other groups, the students’ gains differed little from those of other teachers. After examining the data, Cavalluzzo found that academically successful students are more likely to be paired with more highly qualified teachers. Students who have a mathematics teacher with National Board Certification are also likely to have a
teacher with more experience and a higher level of education. Teachers with National Board Certification are somewhat more likely to have come from a more competitive college, to hold state certification in mathematics, and to be primarily teaching mathematics.

Stone (2002) investigated whether Nationally Board Certified teachers in Tennessee were exceptionally successful in raising student test scores when compared to non-Nationally Board Certified teachers. He defined ‘exceptional teaching’ as teaching that brings about improvement in student achievement equal to 115 percent of one’s academic growth in the local school system (Stone, 2002). Using a Teacher Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) originated by Sanders (1998), this mixed-model statistical methodology estimates student progress on the basis of how much a student’s test scores increase in comparison to their achievement increases in previous years. Of 40 NBCTs in Tennessee in the year 2000, 16 of those teachers had value-added teacher reports in the state database. Stone’s results showed that none of the 16 teachers were considered exceptionally effective in terms of increasing student achievement. The achievement gains made by students of Nationally Board Certified teachers were no greater than those made by students who had non-Nationally Board Certified teachers.

Stone then went on to suggest that his study posed a serious threat to other studies that suggested a connection between National Board Certification and student achievement. He also recommended that all teacher bonuses for NBCTs should be suspended until it can be “clearly and independently established that National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification delivers what it promises” (Stone, 2002, p. 5). In response, however, Vandevenoort, Amrein-Beardsley, and Berliner (2004) noted that
other groups including the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the Thomas Fordham Foundation, the Harvard Education Letter, the Center for Educational Reform, and Education Week found fault with Stone’s study. They challenged Stone’s study by pointing out two blatant issues in his research, the constancy of effects for NBCTs and the reliability of the TVAAS used in Tennessee. With regard to the constancy of effects, Vandevoort, Amrein-Beardsley, and Berliner (2004) stated that Stone did not report gains made by NBCTs. For example, 65 percent of comparisons showed that NBCTs were more effective in 23 comparisons of gains in mathematics and 65 percent of comparisons showed that NBCTs were more effective of gains in reading. They assert that while the levels gained by NBCTs may not have been ‘exceptionally significant’ as described by Stone, it did not mean they did not yield significant gains when compared to non-NBCTs.

National Board Certification as Professional Development

The Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (2003) stated We believe the process of National Board Certification represents sound professional development practice – it is focused on subject matter content and student learning, uses teacher self-reflection and inquiry linked to the teacher’s own teaching situation and practice, and is highly collaborative. This kind of thorough, focused professional development is far too rare for most of California’s teachers (p. 10).

Much of the professional development for teachers today is considered passive; teachers sit and listen to information given to them by an administrator, a colleague, or a
person designated as an expert in a particular field. Darling-Hammond and Sykes (1999) put forth the following models often used for professional development in schools:

1. The individually guided model: the teacher performs self-assessments.
2. The observer/assessment model: administrators or colleagues observe teacher, then comment.
3. The development/improvement model: the teacher becomes involved in whole-school reform efforts.
4. The training model: the teacher participates in coursework, workshops, and conferences.

Lustick and Sykes (2006) state that these models have not been very effective since the experiences are done in isolation, from an extrinsic motivation, with control in the hands of someone besides the teacher. Hawley and Valli (1999) describe what they term a “consensus model” for improved professional development, focused on seven tenets:

1. Driven by goals and student performance
2. Involve teachers in the planning and implementation process
3. School based and integral to school operations
4. Organized around collaborative problem solving
5. Continuous and ongoing involving follow-up and support
6. Information rich with multiple sources of teacher knowledge and experience
7. Provide opportunities for developing theoretical understanding of the knowledge and skills learned (p. 137)
In this model, the teacher is an active learner, and the learning is embedded in practice. Because the National Board Certification process is voluntary, achievement is attained through an intrinsic motivation instead of an extrinsic one. The National Board Certification process promotes professional discourse and a cooperative relationship among colleagues. It urges teachers to take a closer look at their work not only in the classroom but outside the classroom. Using the data that they collect during the National Board Certification process, they are asked to situate it in the context of their current practices. Both process and product are integral components to achieving National Board Certification with both emerging from the teacher’s knowledge and experience. The National Board Certification goals and standards are clearly related to sound professional practices. Ingvarson (1998) reported that many education authorities are accepting Board certification as strong evidence of an educator’s professional development. Reichardt (2001) affirmed this by asserting that National Board Certification is a powerful tool for professional development and one that can be used a method to improve teacher quality.

Studies Addressing Renewal of National Board Certification

At the time of this study, the researcher had found no studies addressing the factors that influence teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification. However, Petty (2007) addressed the perspectives of NBCTs regarding certification and their intention to renew as they approached their ten-year renewal mark. The study employed quantitative and qualitative methods by sending a survey of open-ended questions to 490 NBCTs who achieved certification between 1995 and 1997. The survey consisted of three parts. The first part included questions regarding certification, state in
which certification was achieved, and number of years taught. The second part asked respondents to indicate the most appropriate job title for their current position. The third part included open-ended questions regarding the ways in which National Board Certification had impacted their teaching careers and their students’ learning, and their plans for renewal. Finally, they asked the respondents if they would be interested in following up with a 15-minute phone interview. Key findings from the survey included:

1. Ninety-eight percent of the respondents indicated that National Board Certification had affected their teaching in positive ways.
2. Ninety-four percent indicated that National Board Certification had affected their students’ learning.
3. Forty-five percent indicated that they planned to renew their NBC.
4. Fewer than nine percent indicated that they did not plan to renew their National Board Certification for what could be identified as a negative reason.

The researcher followed up with 10 of the respondents in a phone interview. Seven of the teachers were still teaching, and three of the teachers had gone on to take leadership positions. They were asked questions regarding their plans to renew and their reasons for those plans. Four respondents said they planned to renew, four respondents said they did not plan to renew, and two respondents were unsure. Seven of the respondents did not have knowledge about the renewal process. Four neutral categories were identified by respondents as they listed reasons for non-renewal. They included: planning to retire, pursuing other areas of education, teaching in a different certification area, and no longer employed in education. Two negative reasons were identified:
participants feeling that the renewal process was too stressful or too-time consuming or that they lacked the funds to renew.

The last question for the respondents was how National Board Certification had affected their teaching over the life of their 10-year certification. The most frequent responses included a change in their teaching, validation regarding their teaching practices, and an impact on student learning. The researchers came to the conclusion that the participants in their study overwhelmingly thought the process was a beneficial one, that most of the participants planned on renewing, and for those that did not plan on renewing, it was either that they found the process too expensive or too time-consuming.

Summary

Chapter 2 provided an overview of the process of becoming a Nationally Board Certified teacher, National Board Certification characterized as teaching excellence, National Board Certification and its designation as teacher quality, National Board Certification and its effect on student achievement, National Board Certification as professional development, and studies regarding the renewal of National Board Certification.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

“While many noteworthy efforts are being made to improve schools, none promises the potential for permanent and systemic transformation of teaching that is offered by the National Board: to establish high and rigorous standards for what teachers should know and be able to do and to certify teachers who meet those standards.”

Towards High and Rigorous Standards for the Teaching Profession

(National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1989, p. iii)

The Qualitative Paradigm

Researchers approach the world with a set of ideas, a framework or ontology that helps them to examine the world in a certain way. This framework guides them as they research a topic and allows a theory to emerge during their research, data collection, and analysis. From an ontological perspective, it compels the researcher to ask: What is the nature of reality? and to realize that reality may have multiple meanings since it is seen through many views (Cresswell, 2013). From this perspective, a researcher reports the different viewpoints that develop as the research is conducted. Additionally, it helps to elucidate the questions and understandings that arise as the study develops. Qualitative research is helpful in illustrating these understandings and investigating questions about specific experiences and perspectives of a group. It is useful since these explorations and understandings often result in new findings or theories (Gay & Airasian, 1996). Research depending solely on numbers may be unreliable in interpreting human feelings, emotions,
perceptions, and attitudes, and these studies may not fully represent all aspects of the human experience. Qualitative research employs an interpretive and naturalistic approach to inquiry and allows the researcher to make sense of the meanings that people bring to their experiences. Since this study seeks to identify the factors that influence teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification, a qualitative approach is necessary so that the participants’ feelings, emotions, perceptions, and attitudes may be explored in an in-depth and comprehensive manner.

Miles and Huberman (1994) described well-collected qualitative data as focusing on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings so that researchers can find out what the real situation is like, especially when the data is collected in juxtaposition to a particular situation. Qualitative data’s focus on people’s “lived experience” is essentially compatible for discovering the significance people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives (van Manen, 1977). Qualitative data is the ideal strategy for discovery, for exploring new areas, and for developing suppositions and theories related to a topic of study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that influence teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification. The influential factors may have multiple meanings since a variety of views were explored, and each participant may have more than one reason that influences their decision for renewing or not renewing their certification. Cresswell (1998) stated that the purpose of qualitative research is to ascertain what an experience means for a person who has had the experience and to provide a complete description account of it. Choosing a method appropriate to what the
researcher is trying to find is essential. When the researcher attempts to make the data ‘fit’ what he is studying, he runs the risk of altering his findings. Being aware of a variety of qualitative research methods and choosing the most suitable one helps to ensure that he is being true to his results.

Research Question

The research question that this study seeks to answer is: What factors influence a teacher’s decision to renew National Board Certification?

Participants

The study focused on nine public school teachers who achieved National Board Certification between the years of 1999 and 2011. One of the participants renewed her NBC, two are considering renewal, and six participants did not renew their NBC. A qualitative case study methodology was employed to address this research question. A vignette of each participant follows, and for the purposes of anonymity and confidentiality, the names of the county and the names of the participants have been replaced with pseudonyms.

Participant Vignettes

Madeline

Madeline is a NBCT who has been teaching more than 30 years. She became aware of National Board Certification through her local education association at a time when few teachers in her area were aware of the process. A friend at her county Board of Education office told her that if she were successful, she would be the first art teacher in the state to become Nationally Board Certified. Proclaiming herself as a competitive individual, she was ready to take on the challenge and attended an informational meeting.
She described herself as a classroom teacher, not someone who wanted to go into leadership, and she felt that National Board Certification was the right path for her. She dove into the process with support from her local education association. Since there was not a Nationally Board Certified teacher in the field of Art, she received guidance from an English teacher who mentored her and read her work. Successfully achieving National Board Certification on her first attempt, she received a stipend of 10 percent of her salary each month but got no recognition from her school or local board office. She was, however, recognized at a meeting of art teachers in her state and she later went on to mentor other National Board Certification candidates. Additionally, she wrote about the National Board Certification process and its positive effects on her teaching in a national art education magazine.

Kathryn

Kathryn had been teaching for seven years in Maryland when she made the decision to apply for NBC. She felt strongly supported by her principal and the teachers that she worked with in her county. Many of them knew of the National Board Certification process and encouraged teachers to attempt the certification. Candidates were required to complete an application through the county in order to receive financial assistance with the cost of NBC. Kathryn described a very supportive network of Nationally Board Certified teachers who served as mentors, read papers, and would meet with candidates to discuss improvements in their work. She was fortunate to have another teacher in her building who was also attempting certification so she was glad to have someone to discuss the challenges she faced. After achieving National Board Certification on her first attempt, she was recognized at her school, at the county board
meeting, and received $4,000 per year for 10 years for her achievement. $2,000 of the funds were provided by her county, and $2,000 of the funds were provided by the state. She later went on to mentor other National Board Certification candidates.

Neil

A 19-year veteran of education, Neil stated that he wanted to participate in something that would “set him apart” from other teachers in his county. He was not interested in an additional degree and had heard a lot of conversation regarding NBC. The pay raise was also an incentive, and he felt the certification was viewed very highly by others in education at the time. He participated in a pre-application process and was selected with others in his county to receive financial assistance to pay the required $2,300 as well as guidance from a mentor through his local RESA. Neil did not achieve certification on his first attempt, and he attributes that to relying more on other teachers going through the process rather than working with his mentor. He did achieve National Board Certification on his second attempt and received commendations from his school and county. He made a point of discussing his National Board Certification in job interviews and felt it was a big selling point at the time.

Wendy

Wendy had been teaching for 13 years when a colleague in Tennessee told her about the process. The colleague was a professor at a local college and heard that the Board needed teachers to score the assessment portion of the certification. Wendy completed the application as a scorer and enjoyed the process. Members of the scoring team offered her a discount on the $2,300 necessary to apply, and she decided to attempt certification. She felt that National Board Certification was the “Ph.D. of education” and
thought that very few teachers were able to achieve the certification. She knew of no one who had National Board Certification but was fortunate to have a mentor who guided her. While she didn’t comment on Wendy’s writing, the mentor gave her tips and suggestions on how to write specifically for National Board Certification since teachers must be very unambiguous about their practices. After achieving certification on the first attempt, she received congratulations from her principal and nothing else. She decided to send news of her achievement to her county’s superintendent who later called a news crew out to visit her school and conduct an interview. Soon, additional recognition came from her school and the board office. Wendy feels that the process helped her look at each individual student, not just a class of students, and feels that she helped her students achieve much more in subsequent years due to her attainment of NBC.

Marsha

A 29-year veteran of education, Marsha began working on her National Board Certification at a phase in her life when her children were young and still in school. She had been teaching for 15 years and was ready for another degree but didn’t have the time to attend classes due to family commitments. She felt could obtain National Board Certification since she could work on it at home and in her spare time. She felt achieving National Board Certification was very elite and knew that she was only one of five teachers in her county applying for certification. A good friend who had been through the process encouraged her to apply and later became her mentor. She read Marsha’s work, made suggestions, and carefully examined her videos to make sure she had addressed all the necessary elements. After achieving National Board Certification, Marsha mentored other candidates and felt empowered by the achievement. She
described herself as a better teacher after going through the process and found that the reflection piece of the National Board Certification process was the most beneficial. She learned to “think, rethink, reflect, and rethink” her lessons. After achieving NBC, she was selected for multiple school and state level presentations as well as a job as the assistant professional development coordinator for her county and later a school improvement specialist.

Tamara

Tamara began her National Board Certification process after obtaining her master’s degree and specialist’s degree. She calls the National Board Certification process the pinnacle of her career, the point that seemed like the next and final step in her journey as an educator. Viewing National Board Certification as a highly regarded achievement, she counted herself lucky to be part of the “elite few of those that were trying to show their talents as a teacher, those who had mastered the teaching profession and knew about the teaching profession and educating students.” She felt her state was really acknowledging Nationally Board Certified teachers at that time with pay and with learning-groups that were helping other teachers to get their certification. Her local education association offered tutoring, paid for candidates to work with National Board Certification mentors, and began cohort groups so that teachers could work together on achieving their NBC. A teacher in her county who had achieved National Board Certification was her mentor as well as the leader of a cohort group of which Tamara was a part. Tamara attributes her mentor’s guidance and the support of the cohort group as one of the factors that helped her achieve National Board Certification on her first attempt. She felt proud to put NBCT on her email signature and on resumes since the
certification was held by so few people. A plaque in her school building displayed the names of the few teachers in her building that had put in countless hours of work and attained National Board Certification status, and Tamara was glad to see her name there. She received recognition at the school and county-level and was invited to serve on state committees regarding various issues in education. While the financial supplement of 10 percent of her yearly salary was certainly a welcome addition, Tamara believes the process was the best thing she ever did in comparison to her other degrees.

Melinda

An enthusiastic teacher with 11 years in the classroom, Melinda is a proud proponent of the teaching profession and a cheerleader for all teachers. Working in North Carolina at the time she achieved NBC, she had a wealth of teachers to look up to since so many of her colleagues had already achieved NBC. She wanted to begin the National Board Certification process after her 2nd year of teaching and was saddened to hear that she had to wait to begin the process after she had taught three years. Melinda described a very supportive environment in which to work on her certification since a program at a local university offered help to candidates. A group of experienced teachers with National Board Certification offered to read her work and answer specific questions about the process. Speakers from other counties were also invited to talk with candidates about their experiences and how candidates could be successful on their first attempt at NBC. Melinda was fortunate enough for her county to pay the entire cost of certification and after achieving National Board Certification on her first attempt, she received recognition from her school and the county and a plaque for her classroom door. Melinda’s school even had specially-made school nametags for Nationally Board
Certified teachers to designate their achievement. She was encouraged to put NBCT on her email signature as soon as possible so that others would recognize the hard work she had put forth, and she began receiving requests for speaking engagements related to her new certification. Melinda believes that attaining National Board Certification status opened many doors for her and helped her to become a reflective practitioner. She was pleased to get the 12-percent pay raise offered in North Carolina and felt it was an additional incentive to a crowning achievement.

Karen

Karen, a 17-year veteran, decided to pursue National Board Certification because of her lack of experience at that time in library media. She had been in education for seven years, but only two of those were as a media specialist. She described media positions as rare, and she described herself as a go-getter. She wanted to do something different that would give her a better opportunity to find employment in other counties, to set herself apart from others, and to prove to herself that she could be successful at such an arduous task. She felt that National Board Certification was highly regarded, and she knew only two teachers who were involved in the process, neither of them achieving National Board Certification in library media. Once she began the process, she was on her own. She was not assigned a mentor and had no financial assistance. There was a teacher in her building who had achieved NBC, and Karen said she would occasionally review her writing and give suggestions. She did pass on the first attempt and was recognized at her local RESA but not at her school and not in her county. She achieved National Board Certification in the final year of the state’s additional financial supplement for National Board Certification so she only received the additional money
for one year. Karen does feel that the certification helped her in job interviews and that she stood out from the rest of the applicants. She later went on to become Media Specialist of the Year for her county and was a finalist for the state Media Specialist of the Year. She described National Board Certification as her own personal professional development, and she is proud of her success.

Daniel

Daniel was the principal of an alternative school when he began the National Board Certification process. He wanted to set a good example for his teachers, and he encouraged them to go through this certification that had a “distinguished feel to it.” Out of 12 teachers in his school, three teachers decided to join him on the journey. Teaching one math class in his school each day gave him the opportunity to work with a group of students for his National Board Certification videos and classroom lessons, and it also showed his teachers that he was dedicated to his profession. Fortunate to have a NBCT in an adjoining county who taught a class on achieving NBC, Daniel learned about “the box” and what scorers would be looking for in rating teachers’ lessons. He achieved National Board Certification on the first attempt and in addition to being recognized at his county Board of Education, he received the additional 10 percent financial supplement for two years and an additional five percent for one year.

Delimitations

Only participants in a specific suburban county in a large metropolitan area of Georgia were chosen. It was assumed that all teachers in the study are certified in their subject and/or grade level area and have successfully passed any and all certification tests to teach in their subject areas. It was assumed that each participant has been teaching for
at least three years since National Board Certification participants must have at least three years of teaching experience before they can apply to become a NBC.

All participants taught in the same county so their experiences may be similar due to that fact. Three of the participants achieved their National Board Certification while living in a different state (North Carolina, Tennessee, and Maryland) and later transferred to Georgia before their National Board Certification expired.

Setting

All of the participants taught in the same county located south of a large metropolitan city in Georgia. At the time of the study, the county employed 5,000 teachers and had approximately 42,000 students. Within the county, there were 50 schools, 28 elementary schools, 11 middle schools, and 11 high schools. It covered approximately 327 square miles with a population of 203,922. Of that population, 55 percent of the citizens were White, 36 percent Black or African-American, 5 percent Hispanic or Latino, 2 percent Asian, and 2 percent two or more races. The median household income was $60,529 with 9.9 percent of the population living below the poverty line. 27 percent of the population had a bachelor’s degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2016), the population of Georgia was 10,310,371. In 2015, the racial make-up of Georgia was 61.6 percent White, 31.7 percent Black or African-American, 9 percent Hispanic or Latino, 4 percent Asian, .3 percent American Indian, .1 percent Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and 2 percent two or more races. The median household income was $49,620 with 17 percent living below
the poverty line. 28.8 percent of the population has a bachelor’s degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

Population and Sample

There were no criteria for participation in the study in regard to age, gender, level taught, years of experience, or degrees. The only criterion was that participants achieved National Board Certification during their teaching career and currently worked in the same county. The researcher used the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards database and found all the teachers in the county with NBC. Forty-five teachers in the county had achieved NBC, and the researcher sent an email to each of these asking if they would be interested in participating in the study. Of the 45 emails sent, 13 teachers replied and of those 13 respondents, nine agreed to participate. Of the nine participants, four were teaching elementary and five were teaching high school. No middle school teachers agreed to participate in the study. For the purpose of the investigation, the researcher gained consent from the nine participants who had achieved National Board Certification and currently held a valid teaching license. Convenience sampling was used and relied on data collection from population members who were conveniently able to participate in the study.

A copy of the informed consent form is located in Appendix C, a list of the online survey questions is located in Appendix D, individual interview questions are located in Appendix E, and focus group interview questions are located in Appendix F.

Case Study

Merriam (1998) states that “a case study is an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social
group” (p. 10) and that a case study can help a researcher to achieve as full an understanding of a phenomenon as possible. The researcher is the major conduit for data collection and analysis (Merriam & Simpson, 1984). Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg (1991) also describe a case study as the model to use when a thorough study of a case is needed. Yin (2003) defines case study in relationship to the research process and describes it as an inquiry into observations or experiences that are current in nature. This approach to research is beneficial so as to bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants. Yin (2003) asserts that a case study design should be considered when: (a) the core of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; (b) the behavior of the participants cannot be manipulated; (c) the research wants to address circumstances in their environment because they are pertinent to the study; and (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon being studied and its context.

Merriam (1998) claimed that researchers may select a case study design model because instead of testing through hypothesis, they want to gain insight and discovery. According to Merriam (1998), the case study method used in qualitative research has four essential properties:

- Particularistic – a case study emphasizes a specific individual, group, phenomenon, or event.
- Descriptive - a case study illustrates the intricacies of a situation since there are many factors that add to the understanding of the phenomenon. Because information can come from a variety of sources, the end result is a rich “thick” description of the phenomenon.
• Heuristic – a case study explains the reasons, the details, the how, and the why a phenomenon has occurred.

• Inductive – a case study seeks to supply strong evidence for why the phenomenon has occurred.

These characteristics make a case study the benchmark for investigating the factors that influence teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification. The researcher can closely examine, from the participants’ viewpoint, what factors influenced them in renewing or not renewing their National Board Certification. Their individual reasons for choosing to renew or not renew were deeply personal and may be rooted in other factors. The issue of renewal is unique to NBC. Whereas other certifications may not expire or may not require the individual to complete the process again for certification, National Board Certification expired after 10 years and required completion of the process, albeit shorter and possibly less rigorous than the original process. In describing case study, Stake (1995) states that “issues are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social, historical, and especially personal contexts” (p. 17). Nationally Board Certified teachers had deeply personal reasons for choosing to achieve National Board Certification as well as choosing to renew their certification.

Yin (2003) explains that case studies are appropriate when a researcher wants to find out why something has occurred and when the research focuses on contemporary experiences. Propositions are used to guide the research process in a case study. These may come from literature, personal experience, or theories. Stake (1995) calls these issues instead of propositions. They are very similar to the hypotheses in quantitative
research since they may be tied to suppositions that the researcher has already made in regard to the topic. Stake (1995) said that issues are a natural part of the elements of research involving case studies. The conceptual framework can be assembled based on the issues that the researcher brings to the topic.

Stake (1995) categorized an intrinsic case study as one that is done because the researcher has a genuine interest in the case. This methodology is suggested when the researcher has a connection to the topic of study and is committed to a fuller understanding of the topic. The researcher may not be attempting to build a theory or generate a new understanding of a phenomenon but simply wants a deeper understanding of the phenomenon by delving into the perspectives of the participants.

Yin (2003) explains that propositions may not be present in intrinsic case studies since the researcher may not have enough “experience, knowledge, or information” from the literature on which to create a proposition. If the researcher is new to the topic of study, he may not have enough background information on which to make propositions although these may become apparent and much clearer after the research process has begun. For this study, the researcher was not new to the topic and had extensive background information about the National Board Certification process and achievement of NBC. There are certain propositions which were already present and were made aware of so that researcher bias did not cloud the findings of the researcher. The research question from this study derived from the researcher’s personal experiences with National Board Certification and the researcher’s reasons for not renewing National Board Certification. Stake (1995) would describe this methodological approach as an intrinsic case study. According to his explanation, “Case study is not a methodological
choice but a choice of what is to be studied. By whatever methods, we choose to study the case” (p. 134).

The researcher refrained from drawing any conclusions about the prevalence of certain attitudes or beliefs found in the data. Focusing on what is clearly seen in the data helped to ensure that the researcher’s preconceptions were not guiding the findings. Results were judiciously examined within the wider context of the topic being studied. Finally, it was imperative that the researcher make personal biases known to the reader and apparent to those using the research in their own investigations. Honesty and transparency strengthened the validity and reliability of this research.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the process of attending systematically to the construction of the knowledge of the researcher, his background, and his reasons for choosing to investigate the topic. The position and perspective of the researcher shape all research, both quantitative and qualitative. Researcher bias has an effect on research, which can lead to preconceptions about the topic. However, Malterud (2001) writes that "preconceptions are not the same as bias, unless the researcher fails to mention them" (p. 484). While some researchers see these biases as a potential problem, others view them as different ways of understanding the multifaceted intricacies of qualitative research.

The Researcher’s Role

The researcher is the instrument in a qualitative study and is central to the methodological approach (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). By entering the lives of the participants, the researcher must use interpersonal skills for the study to be successful. Sensitivity to the interplay of human relationships and the ability to listen with empathy
are paramount to the understanding of the participants’ experiences. The data is disseminated through the researcher (McAslin & Scott, 2003). Since the researcher is the sieve through which the data will pass, the researcher must be clear about her role within the research. For this study, it is important to note that the researcher achieved National Board Certification in 2002 with the certification expiring in 2012. The researcher chose not to renew her certification due to a lack of funds for the process and the lack of incentives that were previously provided by the state when she initially achieved certification. These circumstances led the researcher to want to know why others have chosen to renew or not to renew their certification. The role of the qualitative researcher for this study is an *emic*, an insider, since the researcher has previously achieved NBC, was aware of the process, and had chosen, like some of the participants, not to renew her certification. The viewpoints and perspectives of the participants are meaningful to the researcher since she existed within that same culture.

There are limitations that exist when conducting a study using a qualitative paradigm. Since the researcher gained access through interviewing participants, she may have been seen as intrusive which could have affected the participation of the respondents. Her presence alone could have biased the responses of the participants. Additionally, there may have been private information that the respondents did not share or to which the researcher did not have access. McCormick and James (1988) note that both interviewers and respondents are sources of bias. The interviewer is a source of bias through the questions asked as well as his perceived role and presence. The respondent is a source of bias through his understanding of the interview, memory of the event, ability to answer, and motivation in taking part in the interview.
The researcher’s skills in attending to information gleaned through observations and interviews must be excellent; if not, he may be missing important information that can have an impact on the findings. Not all participants are equally articulate and able to express themselves clearly. The researcher must be careful not to fill in the gaps in the information with his own presuppositions since this, too, can affect the findings.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation is a method used by qualitative researchers to check and establish credibility in their studies by analyzing a research question from multiple perspectives (Guion, Diehl, and McDonald, 2011). Data triangulation entails using various sources of data such as different participant groups in a study to obtain a variety of viewpoints and will be used in this research study. Cohen and Manion (2007) describe how triangulation is used to map out and explain the “richness and complexity” of the human experience by examining it from different standpoints. Triangulation can provide well-defined and accurate results which can be useful in comparing data. Yin (2004) also stated that it is advantageous when two or more independent sources merge and aim at the same set of facts. Triangulation ensures that the researcher gains a complete understanding of the phenomena from different perspectives. It increases the researcher’s level of knowledge of the phenomena and strengthens the researcher’s interpretation of the setting and of the participants.

For this study, the researcher employed triangulation by comparing the data from the online survey, the individual interviews, and the focus group interviews. Data from the online survey was organized into spreadsheets with a section labeled for each participant. Data from each of the individual interviews was then added into the
spreadsheet and compared to ensure that responses were similar. Data from the focus group was then added to the spreadsheet and compared to data from the online survey and the individual interview to ensure that responses were similar. The researcher then examined the all the data that had been entered into the spreadsheet to identify any discrepancies.

Thick Description

Geertz (1973) defined thick description as “description that goes beyond the mere or bare reporting of an act (thin description), but describes and probes the intentions, motives, meanings, contexts, situations and circumstances of an action” (Denzin, 1989, p. 39). Thick description can be used for ensuring transferability and for attaining external validity. It involves describing a phenomenon in such detail that the conclusions can be transferred to other situations, settings, people, and times. It enables the researcher to distinguish meanings within different qualitative contexts and helps to convey the actual situations that have been investigated. Without thick description, the reader will have difficulty truly understanding the findings. This thick description enables readers to make judgments about the applicability of the research findings to their own situations (Mertens, 2010).

The researcher ensured thick description by not only citing the factors that influenced and motivated teachers when it was time to renew their National Board Certification but also included the meanings behind those factors and motivations. Semi-structured, open-ended questions were used in the individual interviews and in the focus group interviews to allow participants to respond freely and openly without the restrictions of a limited set of questions. Because the questions were semi-structured and
open, this allowed the researcher to develop new questions that could follow unexpected leads that may arise in the course of the interview. The data from these unexpected leads were also included in the description to ensure reporting of how the participants thought or felt about something and to explain and account for their perspectives. The researcher relied heavily on the interview transcripts and allowed the data to ‘speak’ for the participants. Thick description of this data ensured that it was transformed in such a way that the reader could fully understand the motives, meanings, and circumstances surrounding the factors that influenced teachers when it was time to renew their National Board Certification.

Data Collection

Data were collected from three sources: an online survey, individual interviews, and two focus group interviews. This method of data collection was employed in order to provide readers with rich and visual descriptions of the experiences of Nationally Board Certified teachers and the factors that influenced their decisions to renew their National Board Certification.

Online Survey

An online survey was used to ascertain general information from participants. Online survey questions are listed in Appendix D, and they are listed below:

1. Name
2. Highest level of degree attained
3. Degree(s) held and Areas of teaching certification
4. Number of years teaching
5. Level (grades) previously taught
6. Level (grade) currently teaching
7. Year beginning National Board Certification process
8. Year National Board Certification achieved
9. Number of years taught before beginning NBC
10. In what state did you begin the process?
11. In what state did you finish the process?
12. Were you able to finish the process in one year?
13. In regard to renewal:
   a. Renewed
   b. Not planning on renewing
   c. Unsure about renewing

Table 3 provides a description of the participants based on responses to the online survey questions regarding gender, current level teaching, and degrees attained.

Table 3
Description of participants regarding gender, current level teaching, and degrees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Level currently teaching</th>
<th>Degrees attained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kathryn</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>AA, BS, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>BS, MA, PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marsha</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>BS, MA, Ed.S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>BS, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madeline</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>BS, MA, PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>BS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>BS, MA, Ed.S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melinda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>BS, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>BS, MA, Ed.S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The degrees obtained by the participants are abbreviated as they are by colleges and universities across the U.S., including Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Master of Education (M.Ed.), and Education Specialist (Ed.S.).

Table 4 provides a description of the participants based on responses to the online survey questions regarding year beginning the National Board Certification process, year achieving National Board Certification, renewal of National Board Certification, and state in which the National Board Certification process was begun and National Board Certification was achieved.
Table 4  

*Description of participants regarding NBC*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Year beginning NBC process</th>
<th>Year achieved NBC</th>
<th>Renewal of NBC</th>
<th>State in which NBC process began</th>
<th>State in which NBC achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kathryn</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marsha</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madeline</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melinda</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant responses to the online survey related to level/grades previously taught, subject(s) previously taught, and subject(s) currently teaching are not included in the table since they did not provide any data that was significant to the study.

All of the participants had achieved National Board Certification since achieving the certification was a criterion for the study. All of the participants had a current teaching certificate. At the time of the study, all participants taught in the same school county in a suburban district south of a large metropolitan city in Georgia. At the time of the study, one participant had been teaching for six to ten years, one participant for 11-15 years, two participants for 16-20 years, two participants for 21-25 years, and three participants for 25 or more years. At the time of the study, five of the teachers were teaching high school, and four of the teachers were teaching elementary school. No middle school teachers chose to participate in the study. One participant had between three and five years of teaching experience when beginning the process of NBC, five
participants had six to ten years of teaching experience when beginning the process, and three participants had 11-15 years of teaching experience when beginning the process.

Only one participant did not achieve National Board Certification on the first attempt. Six of the participants began the process of National Board Certification and achieved it while teaching in Georgia. Three of the participants began the process of National Board Certification and achieved it while teaching in other states (North Carolina, Maryland, and Tennessee).

Individual Interviews

A primary source of data was collected through interviews. Individual interviews took place between January 2016 and February 2016 in neutral locations agreed upon by the researcher and participant with no interview lasting more than 40 minutes. During these semi-structured interviews, the researcher asked specific questions related to the participants’ experience with achieving National Board Certification and reasons for renewing or not renewing their certification. The semi-structured format of the interview allowed each participant to be asked the same questions and to contribute information specific to their experience and their perspective. The researcher asked additional questions based on the answers given to probe deeper into the participant’s responses and focused specifically on answers related to renewal of NBC. An individual semi-structured interview protocol was used to allow the participants to answer carefully worded questions and to ensure uniformity of the administration of the interviews. The interview protocol is included in Appendix A.

Interviews were used as one of the qualitative methods for this study since they allowed the researcher to capture the meaningful and descriptive perspectives of the
participants. In-depth interviews were also used to allow participants to respond freely and openly without the restrictions of a limited set of questions. Each interview was transcribed within 48 hours, and transcripts were read in their entirety within the same week. Each participant received a transcript of his/her interview through email and was asked to respond to the researcher in regard to the validity of the participant’s story. All participants responded to the email; seven participants affirmed that the transcript was correct in presenting their answers to the individual interview questions. One participant asked that the name of an individual be changed to his initials to protect his anonymity. One participant asked that the phrase “articulated what they were looking for” be changed to “articulated their expectations.” No other changes were made to the individual participant interviews or the focus group interviews. In both types of interviews, the researcher will be able to present the meaningfulness of the experience from the participants’ perspective. Individual interview questions are listed in Appendix E.

Focus Group Interviews

The third phase of data collection employed the use of a focus group interview. A focus group is a group of individuals chosen and gathered by a researcher to discuss, from a personal perspective, the topic that is the subject of research (Powell, et al., 1996). The focus group interview was used to discuss the participants’ perceptions of the National Board Certification process as well as the process of renewal. Focus groups are a type of group interviewing but are characterized by the focus on the questions and responses between the researcher and the participants. They rely on the interaction
within the group based on the topics and questions that are supplied by the researcher (Morgan, 1997). Focus group questions are in Appendix F.

Focus group interviews took place in March 2016 in neutral locations agreed upon by the researcher and participants. The researcher initially planned for one meeting of all nine participants but was unable to coordinate this due to differing schedules of the participants. One focus group interview took place in March 2016 with five participants, and one focus group interview took later in March 2016 with three participants. One participant did not participate in either focus group interview due to child-care issues. Focus group interviews were semi-structured with questions similar to those in individual interviews with neither of the focus group interviews lasting more than one hour. The focus group interview gave participants a chance to share their personal perspectives about the topic and to comment on the perspectives of others. Insight was gained from the interaction among the participants about the open-ended questions being discussed.

Data Analysis

Charmaz (2001) describes coding as a crucial bond between data collection and the explanation of the meaning of the data collection. A code captures the essence of a word, sentence, paragraph, or larger section of text. Codes can be applied to interview transcripts, field notes, documents, journals, interviews, drawings, email correspondence, and other types of text. Each individual interview and each focus group interview for this study was transcribed and read within 48 hours. After each interview was transcribed and read, the researcher made notes in the margins of the interview that related to reasons why the participant initially achieved NBC. Data were initially coded based on a priori coding (Creswell, 2009) based on codes relating to the theoretical
framework. Later, open coding was conducted to identify emergent themes. Codes were derived from topics that emerged from the individual interviews and focus group interviews. Data were chunked into small, significant pieces, coded, and organized into major categorical bins (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Finally, all themes were organized and presented thematically. These data were stored, managed and analyzed using appropriate hardware and software, including an external hard drive backup, and software, including QDA Miner, a qualitative data analysis software program that assists researchers in managing, coding, and analyzing qualitative data. Interviews were transcribed within 48 hours and loaded into the software and examined by the researcher to identify patterns and themes related to the factors that influence teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification.

Even though the research question is related to the factors that influence teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification, it is important to identify the reasons why a candidate would initially pursue NBC. The researcher read each transcript twice and made a list of codes based on the theoretical framework of andragogy, motivation, and self-efficacy. Table 5 shows the initial codes.
Table 5

*Initial codes related to theoretical framework*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Theoretical Framework</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AND/INT</td>
<td>Andragogy</td>
<td>Adult learner intrinsically motivated to achieve NBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intrinsic motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND/GOAL</td>
<td>Andragogy</td>
<td>Adult achieving NBC as goal attainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>goal-oriented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND/REL</td>
<td>Andragogy</td>
<td>Adult learner achieving NBC due to relevance to profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relevant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND/RES</td>
<td>Andragogy</td>
<td>Adult learner achieving NBC due to need for respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need for respect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOT/INC</td>
<td>Motivation, incentive</td>
<td>Achieving NBC due to incentive(s) offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>incentive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFF</td>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>Achieving NBC due to intrinsic motivation to persevere</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transcripts were hand-coded with notes made in the margins of the transcript and highlighters used to highlight text based on the code. The researcher revisited the transcripts, reviewed the codes, and made adjustments as necessary. Difficulties were encountered when the researcher was unsure about assigning codes to a particular text, and then re-examined the codes. Changing one code then created the need to change all similar codes. The researcher was open to other possibilities for coding because the method did not seem clear, and the codes did not fully capture the essence of the participants’ meanings.
The researcher then made a list of the most common reasons why participants initially achieved certification. The transcripts were read again, and the researcher organized the reasons into categories for initially achieving NBC. Table 6 shows reasons for achieving National Board Certification and categories identified after subsequent readings.

Table 6

Reasons for achieving National Board Certification and categories identified

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for achieving NBC identified in subsequent reading of transcripts</th>
<th>Categories identified after subsequent readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial assistance provided to help with cost of certification</td>
<td>Support provided during candidacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor assigned to work with candidate during process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group/cohort available to candidate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial supplement provided by county and/or state upon completion of certification</td>
<td>Incentives for achieving NBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of completion of certification by county, state, local RESA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job advancement after completion of certification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling of increased teacher quality after completion of certification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanted to take on challenge</td>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready for next step in career</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher then made notes regarding the reasons why a candidate chose to renew, not renew, or had not made the decision to renew at that time. Reasons were then organized into categories. The transcripts were read again, and the researcher organized the reasons into categories for non-renewal of NBC. Table 7 shows reasons for not renewing certification and categories identified.
### Table 7

*Reasons for not renewing certification and categories identified*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for not renewing certification or still undecided about renewing certification</th>
<th>Categories identified after subsequent readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No financial assistance provided to help with cost of renewal</td>
<td>No support provided during renewal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not aware of mentor or cohort/support group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial supplement previously promised was rescinded</td>
<td>No incentive for renewing NBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No financial supplement offered for renewal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No prestige attached to renewal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No job advancement after renewal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only one participant decided to renew her certification. Table 8 shows participant’s reason for renewing certification and categories identified:

### Table 8

*Reasons for renewing certification and categories identified*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for renewing certification</th>
<th>Categories identified after subsequent readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wanting to be the best</td>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job opportunities provided as long as NBC is renewed</td>
<td>Certification benefit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher then labeled each table: reasons for initially achieving National Board Certification were labeled MOTIVATION TO ACHIEVE NBC, reasons for renewal of National Board Certification were labeled MOTIVATION TO RENEW NBC,
and reasons for non-renewal of National Board Certification were labeled *Demotivation to Renew NBC*.

The researcher uploaded each interview into QDA Miner, a qualitative data analysis software program that assists researchers in managing, coding, and analyzing qualitative data. Using hand-written notes that were made in the margins of each interview, the researcher typed in the categories and sub-categories. Figure 2 shows the categories and sub-categories of the codes used in analyzing the participant interviews.

![Figure 2. Codes used in analyzing participant interviews](image)

Each sub-category was assigned a color to differentiate it from other codes. The researcher then read each interview again, highlighted text using tools in QDA Miner that matched the code, and assigned a code to the text. For example, while reading the
interview with Melinda, the researcher highlighted the text “you got a plaque, they honored you, you were put in a newsletter for your county, and highlighted it on the website. Because like to show you off. It’s a big deal.” and the text “Even on my name tag, when I moved, like on our ID badge. It was turned differently.” The researcher identified each of these as Recognition and added that code to each statement. Figure 3 shows the code to the right of the statement.

Upon finishing the first round of coding each interview using QDA Miner, the researcher then accessed each interview, used the tool to hide all text that had been coded, and re-read the un-coded text to identify any statements that were not coded. This iterative process continued as the researcher revisited the transcripts to account for any statements which had not been coded.

Since the research is a case study approach, it was beneficial to reflect upon the initial propositions in the study. The research question for the study is: What factors influence a teacher’s decision to renew National Board Certification? The researcher revisited the research question throughout the coding process to make sure that the codes
were aligned with the question. Reliance on these propositions helped the researcher to focus the study and to analyze patterns and themes that are emerging during analysis.

Verification

Member checking can help to determine the accuracy of the findings through taking the final report back to the participants and determining if they feel the representation is accurate. The themes, the analysis, and the description should be shared so that the participants can have the opportunity to comment on what was found through the research. Also, the researcher should present negative or discrepant information that runs counter to the themes (Cresswell, 2009). While communicating findings that are in agreement with the theme being researched is important, it is equally important to communicate findings that are in disagreement with the theme being researched. The account becomes more honest and more valid to the reader once this has been accomplished.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the qualitative paradigm, the purpose of the study, the research question, a description of the participants, a vignette describing each participant, the setting and population sample, a rationale for using a case study, reflexivity, the researcher’s role, the use of triangulation, thick description, an explanation of data collection through the use of an online survey and individual and focus group interviews, an explanation of the data analysis, and verification.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

National Board certification exposes teachers to a vision of their profession that moves beyond knowledge and skill acquisition to embrace the beauty, complexity, and uncertainty that is this vision of teaching and learning. (Lustick & Sykes, 2006)

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that influence teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification. Both the individual interview and focus group interviews included questions regarding participants’ reasons for initially achieving NBC, but the research question also explores the reasons why teachers did or did not choose to renew their National Board Certification after ten years when the certification expires. Qualitative methods were used to answer this research question, and a case study approach was used. Data were collected through an online survey, an individual interview with each participant, and a focus group interview.

This section includes participant responses in the online survey, followed by participant responses in the individual interviews and in the focus group interviews. Merriam (1998) states that, “there is no standard format for reporting case study research” (p. 193). Responses to the individual interviews and to the focus group interviews are presented together since the responses in both types of interviews are organized and presented based on their coding. For example, the code Mentor is under
the category of Support During Achievement. Both the individual interview responses and the focus group responses related to Mentor are interwoven to present a detailed picture of the participants’ perspectives related to the category of Mentor.

Conceptual Categories

Table 9 shows the following conceptual categories that were identified during the coding process of the individual interviews and the focus group interviews.

Table 9

*List of conceptual categories and sub-categories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual Category</th>
<th>Coding category</th>
<th>Coding sub-category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to Achieve NBC</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cohort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Financial assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward</td>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Job advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Financial supplement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>Increased teacher quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prestige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to Renew NBC</td>
<td>Reward</td>
<td>Certification benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>Prestige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Renewal)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demotivation to Renew NBC</td>
<td>Lack of support</td>
<td>No financial assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No reward</td>
<td>No financial supplement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No self-efficacy</td>
<td>Lack of prestige</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sub-categories of the conceptual categories were arranged based on the frequency of the code in the individual interviews. Figure 4 is a screenshot from QDA Miner that shows the frequency of each code.

**Figure 4. List of coding frequencies**
Excerpts from Individual Interviews and Focus Group Interviews

The following excerpts are offered in relation to each of the above conceptual categories that emerged from the coding process of the individual interviews. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect each participant’s privacy.

Motivation to Achieve National Board Certification: Support During Achievement

The first conceptual category was labeled as *Motivation to Achieve NBC*. The first coding category in this conceptual category was *Support During Achievement*. While all participants received some supports, not all participants received all supports. The coding sub-categories identified and coded were labeled as *Mentor, Cohort,* and *Financial Assistance*.

Mentor

*Mentor* was the first sub-category under the category of *Support During Achievement*. Participants agreed that having the opportunity to discuss the process with someone was beneficial and, in some cases, therapeutic. Marsha mentioned that her mentor’s suggestions “were in question form and made me re-think and re-evaluate, and when I got ready to do my videos and things like that, she was the one that came out and assisted me with that.” Wendy’s mentor was in Memphis, Tennessee, and they kept in touch through email and phone calls. “We would call on the phone,” Wendy mentioned, and “she would say yeah, give me an idea of what you’re doing, and I’ll tell you if you’re on the right track.” Additionally, Karen’s mentor “looked at stuff and tried to help me continually think how does this affect students, how does this affect students.” For participants who were not assigned a mentor, they mentioned working with teachers who
had previously achieved NBCT or worked in the local RESA (Regional Education Services Agency) and, in Daniel’s case “took very good care of us.” Daniel’s mentor was also a Nationally Board Certified teacher and “did an accomplished teaching course that all of us took together and she was the person I always turned to for help.” Jennifer, who began and achieved National Board Certification in Maryland, stated that,

they had a great network of teachers who had gone through it before us and served as our through the process. I wouldn’t have been able to do that without her around. I don’t know if I would have achieved it the first time without her.

Tamara was present in the focus group interview of four participants and mentioned her mentor who, “after I would finish a section, would read it and we’d talk about it and then she came and videotaped me and all that so she was there to kind of, I guess, make sure I took each step.” Her mentor also helped her organize the materials when she was ready to submit them and helped her pack her box of materials when it was time to mail them. Additionally, Karen was a media specialist while achieving her National Board Certification and had to borrow her classes from a Nationally Board Certified teacher who became her mentor. Karen explained, “I used her students because I had to borrow kids so I used hers. She was a special education teacher and let me do [my lessons] with her special education students.” For those participants who had a mentor, they all agreed that the guidance was invaluable and helped them to navigate the rigors of certification.

Daniel was a principal at an alternative school at the time he obtained NBC. He went back into the classroom to teach algebra so that he could become Nationally Board
Certified and encouraged the teachers in his school to also achieve the certification. He described the support of his colleagues as he mentioned,

I did it for two years while I was an administrator. One year just to practice and get my stuff together about how I was going to do and the next year when I put the box together. But everybody at the school just pitched in and even if they weren't going for it, they were just willing to help.

**Cohort**

*Cohort* was the next coding sub-category listed under the conceptual category of **Support During Achievement**. Melinda, who began and achieved National Board Certification in North Carolina, described a program at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington that offered National Board Certification help for teachers going through the process. She goes on to say that the program offered “insanity Saturdays they set up for us that was completely free, a lot of it was done by the Watson School of Education, professors and teachers along with certified people in the county.” She described the support as “therapeutic, it was helpful but also emotionally helpful because the process was so taxing.” Daniel, who mentioned receiving guidance from his local RESA, stated that the director was also a Nationally Board Certified teacher in an adjoining county who “taught us that class and sort of what things to do and what to look for as we were preparing for it and so several teachers at our school took that class.” Tamara described the support as “one of the things that made it successful. In that cohort group with the others as well, I had others going through the process.” Jennifer mentioned that it “was just nice to know, like, to hear other people and where they were in the process. You
know, I always felt like I was behind, behind, behind, and it was nice to know other people felt like that, too.”

Daniel, a participant in the second focus group, was teaching at an alternative school at the time of his certification, and his principal was the one that encouraged him and his entire faculty to go through the process together. He explained,

I was there when he said let’s all do it. But of course there were only 11 teachers in the school, small school, and I had heard of it, but that got me excited so I wanted to do it. Nobody else wanted to do it. Me and one other teacher tried. [My principal] got it the first year, I got it the second year…so he pushed it. That was basically how I ended up being able to do it.

Tamara responded to Neil’s comments in the focus group interview and added, “PAGE (Professional Association of Georgia Educators) was having sessions at that time where you could go up to Atlanta, and you would have people there that you could break out with in smaller sessions and read them and give you clues, tips and things like that.”

Financial Assistance

Financial Assistance was the last coding sub-category listed under the conceptual category of Support During Achievement. All participants mentioned the prospect of financial assistance to offset the $2,300 fee for initial certification. Not all participants, however, received financial assistance. Melinda, teaching in North Carolina at the time of her candidacy, stated that the process “was funded but you had to prove certain credentials, that you were an active teacher, that you were going to be getting it in the content that you were certified” while Tamara commented that “at that time, Georgia was paying for you to get yours, the whole process, the fees…which was nice.” Madeline,
speaking about the Georgia Association of Educators (GAE), also mentioned that, “They were wonderful. They gave me every kind of support including a full scholarship.” In the first focus group interview of five participants, Marsha explained, “I was at one of the GAE meetings, and they talked about it, and that’s how I ended up being at the state capital at the meeting where I signed up and got a scholarship from them.”

Wendy was the only participant who received a discount on the NBCT process. She had been encouraged by a friend to become a scorer for the NBCT process, and after participating in two scoring sessions, she said that,

evidently they liked my work because they called me back and asked me to go to Fairfax, Virginia, to do middle grades, and then they were like, you know, you can get a discount off since you did this, we’ll take a discount off.

Motivation to Achieve National Board Certification: Reward

The second coding category was Reward for Achievement. The coding sub-categories identified and coded were labeled as Recognition, Job Advancement, and Financial Supplement.

Recognition

Recognition was the first coding sub-category under this coding category. While all participants agreed that National Board Certification was being talked about in the education profession, not all participants received the same amount of recognition.

Melinda was teaching in North Carolina at the time, a state that has recognized and paid its teachers for achieving National Board Certification for many years. She discussed her excitement about beginning the process as soon as she finished her third year of teaching.
She had seen other teachers achieve National Board Certification and knew of the recognition that they had received. She remembered,

You got a plaque, they honored you, you were put in the newsletter for your county, you were highlighted on the website. Because they like to show you off, it’s a big deal. They sent us letters from the county, announced it at our school.

Additionally, she recalled “they put plaques outside all our doors. They knew when you walked through the halls which teacher had reached their certification” and “even on my nametag, when I moved, like on my name badge. It was turned differently.” Karen stated that “after we’d been notified that we were NBC, they had a ceremony down at Griffin RESA (Regional Educational Services Agency) and I got a plaque from them.” When Wendy notified her principal of her accomplishment and only received a congratulatory email, she decided to notify her superintendent and recalled “she was like, this is wonderful! She called the news crew out, and they interviewed me, the news crew, and then the recognition came.” Teaching in Tennessee at the time, she was also called to a Board of Education meeting where she said “I got the Point of Pride at the Board Office. I was a Point of Pride recipient. That’s what they call it.” Daniel and Neil both mentioned being recognized at their Board of Education office, too, and they had their names published in the magazine of a state teaching organization.

Job Advancement

*Job Advancement* was the next coding sub-category under the coding category *Reward for Achievement*. Some participants, like Madeline, started the process for the hope of better job opportunities. She remembered, “I was already looking for a career ladder, and there weren’t many for teachers, especially art teachers.” She also mentioned
that “I wanted to do something more than just stay in the classroom and leadership was not the path for me. So, I was looking for something else.” Karen, who had only been a media specialist for three years, wanted to improve her opportunities in the field and stated “I wanted to give myself a better opportunity, right, I wanted to give myself, you know, a leg up from every other media specialist that might apply. Those kinds of positions are rare so I needed something.” She also mentioned it in the first focus group interview. She recalled, “It did keep my name on the top of that list for media specialists. It’s hard to get job offers, and I needed to get closer to home, and it worked.”

Neil suggests that National Board Certification was a big selling point in his resume and said that “there was the possibility of it making you look a little more attractive as a job applicant” and “I made sure I was putting it in all my letters when I sent them out.”

While the possibility of job advancement may have been an incentive for many participants to begin the process, almost all found that the certification provided them with new opportunities. “I definitely think it helped me to secure interviews,” said Kathryn. Marsha recalled that being offered “leadership roles” in her school. “I went from the classroom to professional development at the county office. I was the Assistant Coordinator for Professional Development and I was a school improvement specialist at the county office.” She also discussed the topic of job advancement in the second focus group interview and explained,

I was putting it on my resume, too, and I had several other positions after that, and I really think because they knew you’d gone through that process that you were determined. You were a hard worker and that you had the ability to stick with it,
you know, with that. Because you had to do so much and budget your time and all those things that an employer looks for and so I think it was a big part of that.

Tamara also recalled that National Board Certification opened up a lot of doors for her at that time. “I went down to Macon for a committee, looking at the master teacher level. I was part of the committee that looked at defining those levels. That was because of National Board.” Wendy was asked to write test questions for standardized testing companies and attributes the experience to her NBC. “You feel like your National Board Certification kind of helped you as far as getting into those types of experiences. I wouldn’t have received the invitation.” Karen also mentioned that,

I was new and media specialist positions are very difficult to get, I needed to do something to make myself look a whole lot better on paper than everyone else that was applying for the same job. That was something I felt like would stand out. I think it did.

Financial Supplement

Financial Supplement was the next coding sub-category under the coding category Reward for Achievement. Each participant mentioned the financial reward as an incentive for beginning the process of achieving NBC, although some did not receive the full amount promised by their county and/or state. In fact, most participants mentioned that while the financial incentive was not their main reason for achieving NBC, it was what caught their attention. During the second focus group interview, three participants were asked about why they chose to pursue NBC. Neil and Tamara engaged in a candid discussion:

Neil: I probably did it for the worst reason, I did it for the raise.
Tamara: I think it was a factor for everyone.

Neil: Yeah.

Tamara: At that time, it was pretty good.

Neil: I also wanted to see if I could do it. To feel like I had something. I wasn’t gonna go for an advanced degree, never have yet gone for an advanced degree.

Tamara: It was kind of like a challenge in a sense of...

Neil: I wouldn’t, to be honest, I wouldn’t have done it if it wasn’t for the money.

Tamara: No, I wouldn’t have either.

When asked about the impetus behind her achievement of National Board Certification in the individual interview, Tamara mentioned that “there was the monetary, the pay, which was quite substantial at the time.” Madeline also stated that “the state of Georgia at that time, it was almost $6000, it was a percentage of your salary at that time.” Daniel, who went back into the classroom to achieve NBC, commented that he “did it for two reasons, one for the pay increase and the other to set an example, use it as kind of, as something to set an example for the school.” Marsha also acknowledged that “another thing at the time, Georgia was offering a great deal of money.”

Motivation to Achieve National Board Certification: Self-Efficacy

The third coding category under Motivation to Achieve NBC was Self-Efficacy. The coding sub-categories identified and coded were labeled as Increased Teacher Quality, Challenge, and Prestige.

Increased Teacher Quality

The first sub-category under this category was Increased Teacher Quality. Several participants discussed a feeling of “being a better teacher” after achieving NBC.
Marsha stated, “I think I’m probably a better teacher, especially at that time when I was in the classroom because I did have that reflection” referring to the reflection component of the National Board Certification process. Tamara asserts, “It is something I have not forgotten. I have probably forgotten some of my master’s classes and specialist’s classes, but I haven’t forgotten any of those portfolio entries, how to develop an assessment.” She went on to say, “I don’t think I would be where I am today with teaching my students had I not done that.” She continues to discuss teacher quality in the second focus group interview as she explained, “It was more valuable than my other degrees. I mean, I appreciated what I had to go through for those portfolios.”

In her individual interview, Wendy explained, “I think my students probably achieved more that year and in subsequent years since because it really makes you look at students. It makes you get to know their background. Get to know who they are outside of school.” Additionally, Melinda asserted that National Board Certification is “just being smarter at what you’re doing and having purpose, being driven with a purpose behind every lesson. It has made me a better teacher and every teacher that I come across who has it is an amazing educator.” Tamara also mentioned that “I think National Board helped me see the kids and what I was doing that really helped them which was good for me, too, because I was new. I was only two years into media.”

When Madeline was asked if she felt different as a teacher after she achieved NBC, she replied,

I was a lot more analytical. Examined everything I did and why I did it, even to write down, write down to how I arranged the classroom. I didn’t do anything
without stopping to think about it and why was I doing it and what effect it had and was it working, so yeah, I became a much better teacher.

When asked about the benefits of achieving NBC, Kathryn replied, “From what I gained, like as a professional, teaching, just the reflective process like, really helped me, reflect on my practices, of what I did in the classroom.” Many participants cited the reflection process of National Board Certification as the most valuable tool that they acquired during the process of certification, and one that they use in their classrooms today.

Challenge

The next sub-category under the category Self-Efficacy was Challenge. While none of the interview questions were specifically related to the rigors of NBC, all participants agreed that they knew before they began the National Board Certification process that it would be challenging and time-consuming. When asked about the impetus behind her decision to begin the process, Melinda explained, “I wanted to take that step for myself. Yeah, that was really it. It’s a choice, but it’s like you taking the initiative to be better.” Karen described herself as “a go-getter. I do things and I am able not to just try but to successfully get it.” Like Karen, Wendy had a strong sense of self-efficacy as she stated, “It was just something intrinsically that I wanted to do.”

Madeline, too, was ready to take on the challenge when she heard about NBC. She attended a meeting at the state department of education and found out she would be the first art teacher in the state to have NBC. In her individual interview, she explained, “I’m competitive, and the minute she said I’d be the first, I decided I would do it.” Kathryn described it as a “big deal if you had gone through the process and then if you
went through the process and got it the first time, that was an even bigger accomplishment.” In her focus group interview, Tamara mentioned that after she achieved NBC, she “was in the same league as someone else in another state. You did almost feel like a doctor or a lawyer. You felt like you had met some sort of bigger standard than your certificate.”

Prestige

The last sub-category under the category Self-Efficacy was Prestige. All the participants had heard about National Board Certification before beginning the process, although they heard about it in different ways. Some heard about it from teachers in their buildings who were already NBC, some from colleagues who wanted others to join them in the process, and some were encouraged by county coordinators or members of local and state teacher organizations. Regardless of the manner in which participants heard about NBC, they all agreed that the certification was a prestigious one. When asked about the impetus behind her decision to achieve NBC, Tamara explained, “I had finished my specialist and my masters and that just seemed to be the pinnacle at that point because I wasn’t gonna go get my doctorate so that seemed like the next and final step.” She added that, “at that time, it was highly regarded. You felt proud to put, you know, on your emails that you were NBC.” Wendy agreed when she stated that she and her colleagues “thought it was something. We thought no one achieves that. It was like the Ph.D. of education.” After achieving NBC, Melinda remembered, “I didn’t feel that way when I graduated college. I didn’t feel that way when I got my master’s. I felt like I truly, it makes me emotional, that I truly accomplished something.”
Motivation to Renew National Board Certification

Nine participants took part in the study, and Wendy was the only participant to renew her certification. Two participants were unsure if they would renew when the time came to make the decision about renewal, and six participants had already made the decision not to renew their certification. Since there was only one participant who had renewed her NBC, there was much less data to use for this category in comparison to the other categories. The participant, Wendy, did not spend much time discussing renewal in her individual interview and in the focus group interview.

Certification Benefit

Wendy had written test questions for several standardized-testing companies and said,

They were looking for teachers who had board certification at the time and also the grant reviewing for the state department, you know to look at some revisions for the Milestones, they would look for teachers who were board certified in that area.”

She felt renewing her National Board Certification would continue to provide job opportunities as a writer of test questions. When asked to talk about renewing her certification, she said,

At first I was going no, because Georgia tricked me here, my 10 percent raise. I got it and then all of a sudden, they took it back. And now they don’t mention it. And then I said why not? Because National Board has opened up a lot of doors for me, and so I went ahead and renewed. It was, you know, fine, and it should carry me well into retirement and beyond.
While none of the other participants saw any benefit to renewing their certification, Wendy felt strongly that renewing her National Board Certification would continue to provide her with unique job opportunities that she would not otherwise have without renewing her certification. She also stated, “I can understand why people don’t renew, because sometimes you’re further along in your career and you’re like, I have too much to do to go through the process again.” She has been contacted by several testing companies to write testing questions since she initially became Nationally Board Certified and after renewal, and she feels sure that the certification is what makes her stand out to these testing companies.

Self-Efficacy (Renewal)

The second sub-category under Motivation to Renew NBC was Self-Efficacy (Renewal). When asked to describe the renewal process, Wendy described it as “more of a professional development” and “more reflective, more reflective of how you teach a whole group.” In the first focus group interview, when she was asked what influenced her decision to renew, she explained, “I think it’s just my personality that I want to be the best.”

Demotivation to Renew National Board Certification

The third conceptual category was labeled as Demotivation to Renew NBC. The coding sub-categories identified and coded were labeled as Lack of Prestige, Lack of Financial Supplement, and Lack of Financial Assistance.

Lack of Prestige

The first sub-category under Demotivation to Renew NBC was Lack of Prestige. All the participants commented that very few people, if any, are aware of National Board
Certification in education today, and they all found that to be a painful realization. Melinda began and achieved National Board Certification in North Carolina and recently moved to Georgia. When asked to describe her experience of coming to Georgia with NBC, she said, “It was a little disappointing” and she commented “Are there not others here? The longer I’m here, I’ve been here a year and a half, and there really is a small number of us. I’d like to know who they are.” Tamara recalled, “I think it’s been forgotten. There are some, you know, my generation, ours, that do remember going through it but I would be tempted to say these new teachers, they have no idea it even exists.” Karen stated, “It’s like they celebrated teachers and their accomplishments and their wanting to do better for themselves and now they don’t.” She added, “I’m not jumping through any more hoops when nobody seems to have any appreciation for it besides the person who does it.” When asked to describe his decision on renewal, Daniel commented, “If I say I’m NBC, I don’t know if anybody else even knows that that means.” Neil was asked how he thought others in education today viewed NBC, and he explained,

It doesn’t really seem to be relevant. And I think it’s a shame because I think getting National Board Certification, it seemed it was a good process. I think it was at least indicative of quality teaching as having an advanced degree because it was all about your teaching in the classroom.

When Kathryn was asked how she thought National Board Certification was viewed in education today, she commented,

In Georgia, I don’t feel like it’s valued, you know, like, I felt so proud. Vying for positions in Jefferson County, the first thing I put is National Board Certification
because in Maryland, that’s a sure ticket to getting a job and interview because it’s so highly valued.

Both focus group interviews sparked passionate discussions about the lack of prestige surrounding National Board Certification today. Daniel, a principal who went back into the classroom and encouraged his teachers to pursue NBC, was asked if he thought other teachers went forward later to pursue it after he and two other teachers in his building achieved it. He replied, “Well, it wasn’t long after that the National Board stuff started to be less important in Georgia. I think other people would have followed, but at the time, it just wasn’t right on that.” He later went on to say,

Mine expired in November 2015, and I never thought about renewing because I always had a feeling it was a political ‘screw Roy Barnes’ kind of thing. He was a big proponent of it, and he lost the election. Then the Republicans came in and you just got the feeling ‘we’re going to show Roy Barnes this is one of the things we are going to do.’ If they cared today, I would even consider it without the pay raise. But nobody knows or cares.

The discussion continued as participants shared personal stories of designing elaborate plans, videotaping lessons under very specific restrictions, and studying for the National Board Certification assessment questions. They all agreed, though, that they did not do the work for a commendation or a pay raise. Melinda summed it up for the group when she said, “When you matter, it makes all the difference. And that mattered to us and it would just be nice when people recognize that it matters. That’s all it really is. It’s not about the pat on the back.”
Lack of Financial Supplement

The second sub-category under *Demotivation to Renew NBC* was *Lack of Financial Supplement*. When asked about renewing his NBC, Neil went directly to the point by responding, “I’m not going to renew and it’s completely because of the money.” He also mentioned that “it was a good bit of work. It was a real pile of work” and “you know, I’m not gonna get paid for it.” Daniel, too, expressed disappointment in the lack of the financial supplement and said, “Mine expired in November, and I just let it expire because the two reasons I had done it were the pay raise and the prestige, and both are gone in Georgia.” Marsha mentioned that “the money just disappeared” and “you can get a degree and get a pay raise in a sense but you can’t do that with National Boards anymore.” Kathryn, who began and achieved National Board Certification in Maryland in 2006, came to Georgia in 2007. She recalled,

> When I started in Georgia, it was 2007, and 2010 was when I received the letter in the mail. I was just, I couldn’t believe that, I don’t know, it just shocked me that out of everything teachers do, the teachers who take the initiative to do National Board and then they can’t be, I don’t know, they just aren’t rewarded for that.

> When asked about the factors that influenced her when it was time to renew her National Board Certification, Tamara explained, “It was the money, yeah. The time commitment to write it, that was no big deal to me but at that time, the most important thing was the money commitment to renew.”

Participants in both focus groups expressed disappointment about the lack of financial reward for their hard work in NBC. No participant received the financial supplement for the full 10 years as promised, and some, like Karen, only received it for
two years. When asked if she would renew, Madeline replied, “I absolutely would not consider it. Because I feel that the Georgia Department of Education broke its promise to us. I was not about to play that game and get cheated again.” Tamara, too, mentioned in her focus group interview that she thought about renewing her certification.

I did take pride in it and in myself. I felt like an accomplished person because I did achieve that. It just left a bad taste in my mouth and I didn’t, I felt I had gained a lot from it, I still use a lot of what I learned from it, but I just didn’t see the benefit at that time of spending the money to renew it. I just didn’t see that I would gain anything further from it at that point, especially after they took the monetary thing away.

Lack of Financial Assistance

The next sub-category under Demotivation to Renew NBC was Lack of Financial Assistance. When asked to describe her decision on renewal, Marsha replied, “It was, you know, no one was trying to encourage it, and all the money had disappeared, and I felt it just didn’t benefit me at that time professionally.” Tamara described the time period as one of financial difficulty due to the economy and furlough days in her county and said, “Well, at the time, when mine was up, that was a rough time here in Jefferson County and it was just not an opportunity that I could take hold on financially to try to go through the process.” Madeline was quick to answer that “it was obvious I wasn’t going to get any money out of it and it was expensive, and by that time, I’d gotten pretty cynical.” Kathryn, whose certification had not expired at the time of the individual interview, said she and her husband had some heated discussions about whether or not she should seek to renew her certification since it was expensive to renew. Her
certification would be expiring soon, and she called her county office and after asking if there were any scholarships, she was told there were “no resources available for teachers who want to renew. Which tells you the county does not value that.” She went on to say, “Could we come up with the $1200 to do it? Probably.” Kathryn became very emotional during the interview, even crying and having to stop speaking for a moment. She continued,

I’m really on the fence, to be honest with you. I’m sorry to get so emotional. It’s like this, you worked so hard for it, do you just let it expire? You know, 10 years ago when I got it, I never in a million years would think that I’d feel the way I do now.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that influence teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification. While there is extensive research available on the benefits to achieving National Board Certification and the impact that National Board Certification has on student achievement, there is a gap in the literature regarding renewal of NBC. A qualitative intrinsic case study was employed and three forms of data were collected: 1) an online survey, 2) an individual interview with each of nine participants, and 3) two focus group interviews, one consisting of five participants and one consisting of three participants. Data were analyzed using a priori codes to organize data into categories, and open coding was also used to identify themes (Cresswell, 2007). Thick, rich descriptions are shared in this chapter to elucidate the stories of the participants.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“The nations that exhibit the greatest trust in their teachers are the nations that have made the greatest effort to improve the quality of their teachers.

Those first-rate teachers have – predictably – produced the highest student achievement in the world.”

(EdWeek, 2015)

Review of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that influence teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification. While there are many studies that address the connection between National Board Certification and student achievement (Cavalluzzo, 2004; Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004; Vandevenoort, Amrein-Beardsley, & Berliner, 2004; Harris & Sass, 2009) and many studies that address the connection between National Board Certification and teacher quality (Cavalluzzo, 2004; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003, 2005; Izumi & Evers, 2002; Rice, 2003; Wise, 1996), there is little research related to the choices that teachers are making in regard to certificate renewal. This study would be an important piece to add to any existing literature in this area. The research question was addressed using qualitative methods including a case study approach grounded in a social constructivist paradigm.
Discussion of Findings

The findings of this dissertation study surfaced from a qualitative analysis of a case study of the factors that influence teachers when it is time to renew their National Board Certification. Data were collected from an online survey, individual interviews, and focus group interviews with nine participants who had achieved National Board Certification between 1999 and 2011. Of the nine participants, only one renewed her NBC, two were considering renewal, and six had decided not to renew. All data were examined through the lens of social constructivism using a theoretical framework based on Knowles’ Theory of Andragogy, Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory, and Maslow’s Theory of Motivation. A priori coding and open coding were used to examine the individual and focus group interviews, and 14 codes were identified after extensive readings and reviews of the individual interviews and the focus group interviews. All of the findings surfaced from the multiple forms of data collected. The following conceptual category chart was constructed to organize the codes during data analysis:
Table 10

List of conceptual categories, coding categories and sub-categories

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<tr>
<th>Conceptual Category</th>
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<th>Coding sub-category</th>
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<td>Motivation to Achieve NBC</td>
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<td>Motivation to Renew NBC</td>
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<td>Self-efficacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demotivation to Renew NBC</td>
<td>Lack of support</td>
<td>No financial assistance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No self-efficacy</td>
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Addressing the Research Question

An online survey, individual interviews with each of nine participants, and two focus group interviews were conducted, recorded, transcribed, and coded to address the research question: What factors influence a teacher’s decision to renew National Board Certification? Many findings surfaced from the data analysis. There were nine factors that influenced teachers to initially pursue National Board Certification. Those nine factors were categorized into three groups: support, reward, and self-efficacy.

Participants had a variety of supports that motivated them to achieve National Board Certification (in order based on frequency identified in coding): involvement with a mentor, participation in a cohort, and financial assistance to pay for the process. The
support of a mentor was the most significant support factor in achieving NBC. Not all participants had access to all supports.

Participants had a variety of reward factors that motivated them to achieve National Board Certification (in order based on frequency identified in coding): recognition of their achievement, job advancement after achievement, and receiving a financial supplement. Recognition of their achievement was the most significant reward factor in achieving NBC. Not all participants received the same rewards.

Participants experienced feelings of self-efficacy (in order based on frequency identified in coding): increased teacher quality, the feeling of challenge, and prestige. Increased teacher quality and the feeling of challenge were the most significant self-efficacy factors in achieving National Board Certification. Not all participants experienced the same feelings of self-efficacy.

One of the nine participants chose to renew her certification. Her reasons were related to self-efficacy (wanting to be the best) and a certification benefit related to a job opportunity. For the participants that chose not to renew their certification, three factors were identified (in order based on frequency identified in coding): lack of prestige, lack of financial supplement, and lack of financial assistance. Lack of prestige was the most significant factor for non-renewal of National Board Certification. Not all participants chose non-renewal for the same reasons.

Themes Emerging from Data Analysis

Several themes emerged from the analysis of the individual interview transcripts and the focus group interview transcripts. The first theme to emerge was the importance of support during the National Board Certification process. For those participants with
access to a mentor, they mentioned their appreciation for someone who could guide them through the process and answer questions. Some participants had a mentor they met with regularly, who read their work and gave suggestions, and some participants only had communication through phone and/or email. Regardless of the communication, it was agreed that having someone to help them navigate the intricacies of the National Board Certification process was invaluable. Participants also mentioned the importance of working with a cohort throughout the process. Some participants were part of a group designated by their county, and others simply formed their own groups with one or more other teachers also going through the process. Being able to talk with others on the same journey was, as one participant stated, “emotionally helpful because the process was so taxing.” Lastly, financial assistance to offset the cost of National Board Certification was appreciated by those who had access to this support. For these nine participants, the cost to begin the National Board Certification process was $2,300. Some received partial scholarships to offset the cost, and some had full scholarships and only had to pay the application fee. One participant received no financial assistance to offset the costs of NBC. For those who received financial assistance, they were appreciative of the support. While all participants did not have all supports, all participants had access to at least one type of support throughout their candidacy.

Another theme that emerged was the importance of reward of the achievement of National Board Certification. All participants mentioned receiving some type of recognition of their achievement and how it made them feel valued and appreciated for their hard work. While some participants only received a congratulatory letter, others experienced recognition at the school level and the county-level. Some were given
plaques, special nametags, honored in receptions, recognized at board meetings, asked to speak at local and state conferences, and were the topics of articles in teacher organization magazines. Job advancement proved to be a welcome reward for many participants. Several discussed new opportunities that arose after their certification such as working in county-level positions, invitations to work on county and state-level committees, writing test questions for standardized-test companies, and being at the top of the list for upcoming teaching positions. While not all participants took advantage of these opportunities, many agreed that achieving National Board Certification opened up new doors for them. The financial supplement was the least mentioned reward in the individual interviews and focus group interviews. Participants mentioned that the financial supplement is what caught their eye in beginning the process but that the rewards of recognition and job advancement were even more powerful.

Themes that emerged in regard to non-renewal were the lack of prestige, lack of financial assistance to renew, and lack of a financial supplement upon renewal. All participants agreed that National Board Certification is practically non-existent in Georgia at this time. Few teachers and even fewer administrators are aware of the certification and for those that have yet to renew and still include NBCT in their email signature, they are often asked what NBCT represents. Lack of prestige was overwhelmingly cited as the reason for non-renewal of National Board Certification. The lack of the monetary supplement was also cited as a reason for non-renewal. Since Georgia rescinded the promise to pay Nationally Board Certified teachers for their certification, many participants expressed anger and a distrust of the legislature and as one participant stated, “I won’t be tricked again.” Even though the cost to renew is
significantly less than the cost to initially certify, participants felt that the lack of financial assistance to complete the renewal added to the idea that National Board Certification is no longer a prestigious certification in Georgia. As Daniel stated in his individual interview, “If they cared today, I would even consider it without the pay raise. But nobody knows or cares.”

A common theme in the individual interviews was related to the financial supplement. Many participants stated that it was what attracted them to the National Board Certification process. They had heard of the National Board Certification process, they knew it was rigorous, they knew it was prestigious, but the promise of a salary increase was what motivated them to start the process. Once they achieved National Board Certification, they were grateful for the increase in salary, but they were even more moved by the prestige they felt of achieving National Board Certification. They felt more powerful as educators, they felt that their certification set them apart from others in education, and they were proud of themselves for accepting such a challenge and being successful.

When the financial supplement was rescinded, participants were, of course, angry, and some of them met with other NBCTs in surrounding districts to examine how the state could break such a promise. One participant mentioned that a local teaching organization discussed filing a lawsuit against the state for breaking their agreement but soon found that it would be too costly. Losing the money was a financial strain, especially when the state was in the middle of a recession and the district had given teachers five furlough days. Evening school programs and summer school programs were also cut from the county budget, so teachers who had long used those avenues for
additional monies were suddenly under even more financial pressure. The focus group interview brought out a discussion on money as an incentive for teaching, and several participants discussed the monetary supplement as their initial attraction to National Board Certification. One participant, Neil, when asked why he was initially attracted to achieving National Board Certification stated, “I probably did it for the worst reason, I did it for the raise.” Melinda responded by saying,

There's no shame in that. And what we do, there's one of these (certifications) that we get and what else? The enjoyment of our kids and that's all we get as teachers. The monetary thing as teachers is not why we got into it. An opportunity to better ourselves financially? We should never feel bad about doing that because we are teachers.

What upset participants even more than losing the financial supplement, though, was that the prestige of their achievement lost so quickly. They had been encouraged to accept the challenge, had given countless hours of their time to achieve National Board Certification, and then it seemed that no one even really cared about their efforts, except for other NBCTs. One participant who achieved National Board Certification in North Carolina and later moved to Georgia stated,

I don’t want to come across as belittling the state of Georgia or Jefferson County, but it’s a little disappointing. It’s like, ‘Oh, you’re National Board!’ It’s almost like you look at someone and you think, ‘Yeah, I gotcha.’ Like, ‘Yeah, I know. I know.’ And you have this understanding of what you did no matter what content you’re in. It’s a different club.
All participants were proud of their accomplishment and mentioned that discussing their certification journey in the individual interviews and in the focus group interviews brought up many memories for them, some pleasant and some unpleasant. Regardless of the difficulties and the challenges, everyone agreed that the certification was worth it.

Self-efficacy was important in the initial certification process, and many of the participants discussed the pride they felt in themselves for achieving something that few teachers will ever attempt. Their self-efficacy in regard to renewal was apparent in the individual interviews and in the focus group interviews. None of the participants doubted that they could renew their certification. Several had looked into the renewal process and commented that it did not appear to be extremely time-consuming or expensive. They simply did not see how the certification would benefit them professionally or personally. Karen was quite blunt when she stated, “they celebrated teachers and their accomplishments and their wanting to do better for themselves and now they don’t. I’m not jumping through anymore hoops when nobody seems to have any appreciation for it besides the person who does it.”

**Relationship to Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study was based on Knowles’s Theory of Andragogy, Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory, and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Knowles’s Theory of Andragogy (1968) includes motivation as one of its six assumptions, specifically that internal motivations are more powerful for adults than external motivations. Motivation is also tied to the other assumptions. Assumption 1 states that adults move away from a dependent personality to a self-directed personality, so adult learners, such as Nationally Board Certified candidates, are motivated to seek out
experiences in which they can direct their own learning while Assumption 2 states that adult learners can use their previous experiences as a rich resource to assist them in these new experiences. Assumption 6 recognizes that adults need to know why they are learning something and how it can be beneficial to them. The participants in this study, while intrigued by the promise of a financial supplement, were also motivated by an internal motivation to seek out a new and challenging experience, the experience of becoming a NBC. Additionally, the participants found that the National Board Certification experience improved their teaching quality which they found beneficial, even many years after achieving certification.

The impetus behind the participants’ decisions to pursue National Board Certification came from many sources. Some attempted to achieve National Board Certification due to a financial supplement offered by their county and/or state, some for recognition by others, and some simply for the challenge of the painstaking process and the self-satisfaction gained from the achievement. Knowles recognized that intrinsic motivators are more powerful for adults than extrinsic ones. While financial incentives and recognition often came with the achievement of National Board Certification, self-actualization was often the unexpected reward. Knowles (1968) made the assumption that while adult learners are often receptive to external motivators such as promotions and raises, they are more responsive to internal motivators such as job satisfaction and self-esteem. The participants all spoke of an increased quality in their teaching, of being “a better teacher.” The nine participants engaged in a voluntary certification process in which they received extrinsic rewards but also intrinsic satisfaction for their achievement.
Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory (1994) explained that a person’s beliefs about his abilities are essential in producing a specific level of achievement or mastery. The participants in this study, all NBCTs, accepted the challenge of a rigorous program in an effort to prove that they could be successful in achieving a higher level of certification. They approached the process not as a difficult task or obstacle that they could not overcome but as a set demanding goals for themselves and stayed committed to them. If they encountered setbacks or obstacles during the process, they continued to persevere without limiting themselves to self-defeating beliefs. They perceived those obstacles as within their control and easily surmounted them so that they could be successful. Self-efficacy enabled these participants to make judgments about their abilities and then achieve certification.

Bandura (1982) believed that learning and performance are affected by an individual’s self-efficacy in three ways: the goals that individuals choose for themselves, the effort that individuals put toward learning, and the persistence with which people attempt new and difficult tasks. The participants in this study set high goals for themselves by beginning the National Board Certification process, and they put in a remarkable amount of effort to achieve those goals. All the participants pointed out the amount of time they lost with their families and the increased difficulties of their jobs due to the time needed to complete portfolios, design complex lesson plans, and study for demanding assessments. For those that had the guidance of a mentor, they discussed the many re-writes needed to articulate their teaching strategies and their teaching personality. Those without a mentor confessed to spending their own money to hire an
editor to help them with the advanced level of writing and the amount of editing required to be successful in the National Board Certification process.

Maslow (1943) described the uppermost levels of the Hierarchy of Needs, esteem and self-actualization, as being needs (“b” needs). These involve a person’s desire to grow and reach their full potential. Esteem needs encompass individual self-esteem and esteem from others, and these needs reveal themselves in independence, recognition from others, and high achievement. The achievement of National Board Certification increased the self-esteem of the participants in this study as many of them mentioned their feelings of increased teacher quality. Several stated that the National Board Certification process brought them more professional fulfillment than any other degree they had earned. Recognition was included in the coding category Reward for Achievement and was present in 100 percent of the cases. It was mentioned in every individual participant interview and in both of the focus group interviews. All participants experienced some kind of recognition after their achievement of NBC. Plaques, letters, commendations at the school, county, and state level as well as recognition at faculty meetings and board meetings were common forms of recognition for participants, some receiving few and some receiving many of these.

Maslow (1943) also wrote about the highest level of needs, self-actualization, which occurred when an individual was working at his highest level, maximizing his potential, and willing to embrace the unknown or the abstruse. Many of the participants stated that the National Board Certification process was more rigorous than any degree or professional development of which they had been a part. They spoke of countless hours away from their family, working late into the night, writing, revising, and re-writing their
portfolios. Achievement of National Board Certification arises from esteem and self-actualization needs since the certification is voluntary. Educators can increase their salary or improve their job opportunities by achieving an advanced degree or obtaining a leadership or a learning coach certification. To obtain NBC, however, is to achieve the highest certification that education has to offer. NBCTs chose to take on the challenge due to a desire to improve their teaching skills and worked to meet their needs at the level of esteem and self-actualization.

This study is grounded in the social constructivist paradigm since the constructive stance on learning depends upon individuals and their formed meanings of what they experience in the world. More specifically, the basic tenet of this social constructivist research approach is that the reality of the National Board Certification process is socially, culturally, and historically constructed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The nine participants chose to participate in the process for various reasons related to their own social, cultural, and historical stance. Additionally, their reasons for renewal were related to their social, cultural, and historical stance at the time of their renewal decision. This research sought to recognize the social phenomena of National Board Certification and the renewal of National Board Certification in the particular context of these nine participants who had achieved National Board Certification and made a decision about renewal of their certification. Each participant possessed a set of personally-held values that affected their responses to the interview questions and their interactions with other participants in the focus group interviews.

The study focused on nine adult participants, each situated within the context of andragogy, each motivated by intrinsic and extrinsic factors. While the participants may
have been initially attracted to the process for external motivators such as financial reward or recognition, their interviews elucidated an internal desire to be better at their craft. When the extrinsic motivators were no longer present, the feelings of increased teaching quality and the success of achievement were still apparent. Their high levels of self-efficacy supported them throughout the process and became motivators, too, as they achieved a level of certification held by few in education.

Implications

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (1996) stated that “if students are to achieve high standards, we can expect no less from their teachers and other educators” (p. 67). This statement is of great importance to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and legislators since society expects a great deal from its teachers. They should be knowledgeable, they should be innovative, they should be reflective, and they should be willing to achieve at high levels so that they can help students achieve at high levels. But what about teachers who achieve those high standards? Specifically, what about teachers who achieve NBC, noted by many as the highest and most respected standard in education? What about these teachers who achieve this high standard of education only to find out later there is no recognition of their achievement? Or, even worse, most are even unaware of what the achievement represents? For all the teachers that put in countless hours to achieving National Board Certification and for those who had to spend their money to achieve NBC, the lack of recognition is a painful one.

Participants in this study described the process as “purposeful”, “reflective”, “an initiative to be better”, and “a motivation to be the best in your craft.” These teachers
took on the challenge to become NBC, they were successful, and they transformed not only their own classrooms but the field of education. They took the time to improve themselves and to become better teachers for their students and for their schools. They made a commitment to the process, and the state of Georgia made a commitment to them. Unfortunately, the state of Georgia broke its promise of a financial supplement and then later insulted them when Bert Brantley (2009), Governor Sonny Perdue’s spokesman, said,

This is a certification process that is not tied to any student achievement. The governor realizes how difficult it is to get [the national board certification]. There is definitely a benefit you get from going through the process. But philosophically, do you reward achievement and performance [of students] or certification and training?

There was much suspicion by educators at the time that the new governor didn’t want to continue the process since it was so closely tied to the previous governor, Roy Barnes. Governor Perdue’s office denied the allegations, but there were misgivings by many educators. The following year, all financial supplements connected to National Board Certification were cut from the budget. Discussion in Georgia at the time was focused on merit pay which is where, Mr. Brantley stated, the state would put its money instead of keeping its promise to Nationally Board Certified teachers.

edTPA, formerly called TPA (Teacher Performance Assessment), is an evaluation system developed by researchers at the Stanford Graduate School of Education to prepare pre-service teachers for the classroom. Stanford University faculty and staff at the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) developed the system
and received advice and feedback from teachers and teacher educators. Similar to assessments in medicine and law that evaluate how well a candidate has mastered a body of knowledge and skills, the system began with the National Board Certification portfolio and the INTASC (Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium) assessments of beginning teachers that were implemented in Connecticut. Many states, including New York, Washington, Hawaii, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and Georgia, employ this system for teacher candidates wishing to enter the classroom. Candidates must pass the performance evaluation which requires the candidate to demonstrate pedagogical skills associated with quality teaching: planning lessons, demonstrating effective presentation skills, and evaluating the work of students. It has become a widely accepted, appropriately rigorous means of promoting effective pedagogical practices among teacher candidates (EdTPA, 2017). Approximately 160 colleges of education have field-tested the assessment with the hopes of transforming the licensure of teachers, expanding the education of teachers, and refining accreditation. Darling-Hammond (2012) stated, 

This may be the first time that the teacher education community has come together to hold itself accountable for the quality of teachers who are being prepared and to develop tools its members believe are truly valid measures of teaching knowledge and skill.

The state of Georgia employs this system for its preservice teachers and believes that it is a rigorous assessment that ensures new classroom teachers are fully prepared to enter Georgia’s classrooms. If this system is based on the portfolio assessments from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, then why are current classroom teachers who achieve National Board Certification no longer recognized and rewarded in
An explanation is owed to Georgia’s Nationally Board Certified teachers who have gone through this rigorous process but are given no reward or recognition of the certification while preservice teachers are required to be evaluated through edTPA before entering Georgia’s classrooms.

Current State of National Board Certification and Renewal in the United States

North Carolina continues to have more NBCTs than any state in the U.S. with 20,873 teachers achieving the certification, 18.4 percent of the NBCT population (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2016). 1,961 candidates are seeking certification, second only to the state of Washington with 3,772 candidates seeking certification. 916 North Carolina NBCTs renewed their certification in 2015-16 which amounts to 27% of all the NBCT renewals in the United States. As a result of legislation adopted in 1994 and heightened by the Excellent Schools Act in 1997, North Carolina offers statewide support for teachers interested in pursuing National Board Certification. To offset the cost of the program, eligible candidates may apply for a low-cost loan after completing the application. The first year of the loan is interest-free and is three percent thereafter. Candidates are given three years in which to repay the loan. As initial candidates, teachers are granted three days of release time, if eligible. Upon achievement, teachers receive a 12-percent salary increase and are issued full licensure renewal, regardless of achievement.

Florida has 13,576 NBCTs, 12 percent of the NBCT population, with 81 candidates seeking certification. 138 Florida NBCTs renewed their certification in 2015-16 which amounts to 4% of all the NBCT renewals in the United States. Florida is not funding financial incentives for NBCTs, although some districts do offer a salary bonus.
Brevard County, for example, offers a $260 per year supplement to offset the cost of certification and renewal. Additionally, National Board Certification does satisfy Florida’s requirements for renewal of the Florida Professional Certificate (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2016).

South Carolina has 8,928 NBCTs, 7.9 percent of the NBCT teaching population, with 330 candidates seeking certification. 428 South Carolina NBCTs renewed their certification in 2015-16 which amounts to 12.6% of all the NBCT renewals in the United States. South Carolina offers new NBCTs an annual salary supplement of $5,000 for the life of the certificate as long as the teacher is employed in a teaching or school-based coaching assignment. Some districts use professional development funds and/or Title I funds to provide fee support to candidates seeking certification. The Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) offers candidate support workshops, a list of district NBCT contacts, and a National Board Toolkit with additional workshops and resources.

The state of Washington regularly ranks among the top five states with most new NBCTs. The state currently has 8,596 NBCTs, 7.5 percent of the NBCT teaching population, with 3,772 candidates seeking certification. 272 Washington NBCTs renewed their certification in 2015-16 which amounts to 8% of all the NBCT renewals in the United States. Conditional loans are offered that cover the majority of the application fee, in addition to NBCT candidate support programs (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2016). An annual NBCT bonus of $5,000 is eligible to all K-12 public school NBCTs and for those teachers who teach in schools designated as challenging, an additional bonus of up to $5,000 is also available based on the teacher’s
percentage of time at the school. Candidates who complete the assessment process receive the equivalent of 45 continuing education credit hours. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards site also notes that “more than 60 non-profit agencies around the state [have] hired trained NBCTs as facilitators to support candidates through the certification process to ensure each candidate has access to quality support” (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2016).

Georgia has 2,598 NBCTs, 2.2 percent of the NBCT population with 15 candidates currently seeking NBC. 13 Georgia NBCTs renewed their certification in 2015-16 which amounts to .3% of all the NBCT renewals in the United States. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards site states that “many state and local districts offer bonuses for teachers that achieve National Board Certification” and that “even though legislation currently permits providing a stipend for NBCTs, it has not been funded in recent years” (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2016). Fee support may be available from districts that use professional development and/or Title I funds to assist with the process, and candidates are encouraged to contact their local professional organizations and colleges and universities to find other support.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research regarding National Board Certification, specifically the topic of renewal, would benefit teachers, administrators, district level personnel, and legislators. There is great potential for further research in the future. Additional research should continue to explore the idea of National Board Certification and its connection to teacher quality, teaching excellence, and student achievement. While a wealth of studies already exists, the landscape of teaching is rapidly changing. The role of National Board
Certification in today’s current educational climate is assuredly different than in previous years.

For teachers who are considering beginning the process, research on the National Board Certification process and how it affects classroom practices is still needed. There is literature to support the idea that Nationally Board Certified teachers are of higher quality and literature to refute the idea that Nationally Board Certified teachers are of higher quality. Additional studies, with and without a focus on standardized-test scores, would help to inform all stakeholders in education.

For teachers whose certification has not expired, additional research on the benefits of renewal would be helpful to them as they make their decision to renew. While the Board publishes specific numbers by state on renewal, there is little research on renewal and the effects it has on Nationally Board Certified teachers and on their classrooms.

Research about administrators and their perceptions of the National Board Certification process and their experiences with NBCTs in their schools would be valuable to current administrators as they hire new teachers and as they seek to create safe and challenging environments for struggling and exceptional students. All schools hope to hire the best and the brightest emerging from colleges and universities, and research about the role that the process can play in preparing new teachers would be valuable to teachers and administrators. Additional research on NBCTs in schools and the impact they have on classroom environments and on student achievement would also be of interest to administrators as they seek to set high standards for the teachers in their buildings.
Additional research about the number of teachers who attempt the National Board Certification process and do not achieve certification on the first attempt and those who do not achieve certification would be beneficial to identify their perceptions of the process, their teaching practices, and their perspectives regarding the impact that National Board Certification has on student achievement.

It would be beneficial to research the number of teachers who attempt the renewal process and are not successful. Their perspectives on the renewal process and what motivated to attempt it would add to any existing literature in this area. It would be advantageous to replicate this study in other counties in Georgia to ascertain if other NBCTs in Georgia feel the same as the participants in this study. Additionally, it would be constructive to replicate the study in other states, specifically those that continue to provide financial incentives to candidates who achieve NBC.

It would also be useful to research the perceptions of NBCTs in other counties to find out what motivated them to seek National Board Certification and how those motivators relate to teachers’ decisions regarding renewal. This study contained participants who achieved National Board Certification from 1999 to 2011. A study of participants who achieved National Board Certification after 2011 would be helpful to ascertain if their perspectives are different.

Additional research on what motivates teachers to pursue additional certifications is essential since there is much debate on how these additional certifications can affect classroom environments and student achievement. Most importantly, research must continue regarding teacher prestige. The idea of prestige was prevalent in the discussions with the participants in this study. Teachers worked hard to achieve a certification that
mattered to them and also, at the time, mattered to the state as it offered incentives to them for their achievement. They were angry when the incentives were taken away, the supplement was taken away, and they felt as though their prestige was taken away. As one participant mentioned when discussing achievement of NBC, “That mattered to us and it would just be nice when people recognize that it matters.”

Final Thoughts

The researcher of this study had to be particularly careful as she interviewed the nine participants in the study. She had achieved National Board Certification in 2002 and felt angry and disappointed at the state breaking its promise to her. Her certification expired in 2012, and she chose not to renew because of financial reasons and a lack of prestige surrounding NBC. She relived her own National Board Certification experience each time she interviewed a participant for this study. She felt a close bond with each participant, almost as though they were each a part of an exclusive club from a previous time in history, a club that was only important and only known to them. Their stories reminded her of why she chose to achieve National Board Certification in the first place. She wanted to prove her abilities as a dedicated classroom teacher, and she wanted to achieve something that very few had achieved. Then, as now, only two percent of teachers have achieved NBC. That statistic alone was a constant encouragement to her as she worked tirelessly and as she knows each participant in this study worked tirelessly. The stories of these participants show a group of educators who are proud of the work they do every day in their classrooms and that, regardless of incentives, they continue to do that work on a daily basis. The researcher thanks the participants for sharing their stories and for sharing their feelings about an achievement of which many are longer
aware. The researcher would like to say to each participant, “I know how hard you worked. I know what you did. And regardless of what our certificates may say, we are Nationally Board Certified Teachers. And we will always will be.”
References

Archer, J. (2002). National board is pressed to prove certified teachers make a difference. Education Week, 21(20), 1-11.


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

PROTOCOL NARRATIVE
Protocol Narrative for Dissertation Study

Student: Kelly L. Teague

National Board Certification: What factors influence the choices that teachers make when it is time to renew their certification?

While there is research to support and refute the claim that Nationally Board Certified teachers are of higher quality, there is little research to explain why teachers do not reapply for certification. This study seeks to identify the factors that influence the choices that teachers make when it is time to renew their National Board Certification.

The study will focus on nine participants (Nine classroom teachers) teaching in a suburban area of a large Southern metropolitan city. Each participant has achieved NBC; Six have chosen not to renew their certification, two are considering the idea of renewal, and one has renewed certification in the past two years. Data will be collected through three sources: semi-structured one-on-one interviews, focus group interviews, and a survey.
APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL INFORMED CONSENT
INFORMED CONSENT

National Board Certification: What factors influence the choices that teachers make when it is time to renew their certification?

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators

Investigator:

Kelly Teague
PhD student, Department of Education, Mercer University

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Harriet A. Hathaway, Ph.D.
1400 Coleman Avenue
Macon GA 31207
Hathaway_ha@mercer.edu
478-301-54349

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the study is to discover what factors influence the choices that teachers making in regard to renewing their National Board Certification. While there are many studies that address the connection between NBC and student achievement and many studies that address the connection between NBC and teacher quality, there is little research related to the choices that teachers are making in regard to certificate renewal. This study would be an important piece to add to the already existing literature in this area.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey, participate in a one-on-one interview, and participate in a focus group. Your participation will take approximately 3 1/2 hours, 15-30 minutes for the online survey, 1 to 1 1/2 hours for the one-on-one interview, and 1 to 1 1/2 hours for the focus group.

Potential Risks or Discomforts

There are no foreseeable risks associated with the study.
Potential Benefits of the Research
There are no benefits to the participant. However, other National Board Certified educators or educators wishing to attain National Board Certification may benefit from this research.

Confidentiality and Data Storage
A pseudonym will be used to protect the identity and promise of confidentiality to the participant. The data will be stored with the researcher, who will have access to the data. Recordings will be transcribed, and the investigator will have access to them for three years, after which time they will be destroyed.

Participation and Withdrawal
Your participation in this research study is voluntary. As a participant you may refuse to participate at any time. To withdraw from the study, please contact Kelly Teague at Kelly.lynne.teague@live.mercer.edu.

Questions about the Research
If you have any questions about the research, please speak with Dr. Harriet A. Hathaway at 478-301-5439 or at Hathaway_ha@mercer.edu.

This project has been reviewed and approved by Mercer University’s IRB. If you believe there is any infringement upon your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Chair, at (478) 301-4101.

You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and these have been answered to your satisfaction. Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this research study.

__________________________________________ Date
Signature of Research Participant

__________________________________________ Date
Participant Name (Please Print)

__________________________________________ Date
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Rev.08/19/2010

http://www2.mercer.edu/ResearchCompliance/default.htm
Phone (478) 301-4101
Fax (578) 301-2320

July 26, 2011
Office of Research Compliance

Page 2 of 2
APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL INFORMED CONSENT FOR WEB SURVEY
this research may not benefit you personally, it will help us understand the factors that influence Nationally Board Certified teachers as they make decisions regarding renewal of their certification. Only the primary researcher, Kelly Teague, will have access to your personal information. All of your responses will remain confidential.

**Participation or Withdrawal**

Your decision to participate or decline participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question and you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time. If you do not want to participate, click on the “stop survey” arrow or close the browser window. If you do not want to receive any more reminders, you may email me at

**Kelly.lynne.teague@mercer.edu.**

**Contacts**

If you have any questions about the study, contact the investigator Kelly Teague at 404.731.4423 or send an email to Kelly.lynne.teague@mercer.edu. You may also contact the research advisor, Dr. Harriet A. Hathaway at (478) 301-5439 or Hathaway_ha@mercer.edu. Mercer University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed study ---- and approved it on ------.

**Questions about your rights as a research participant**

If you have questions about your rights or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at 478.301.4101 or email at ORC.Research@Mercer.edu.

If you agree to participate in the research study, click on the following link:

**https://www.surveymonkey.com-------**

Thank you in advance for your time and participation!

Sincerely,

Kelly Teague

**Please print a copy of this document for your records.**
APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL FOR CONTINUING REVIEW
Friday, January 13, 2017

Ms. Kelly L. Teague
1501 Mercer University Drive
Tift College of Education - Atlanta
Macon, GA 31207-0001

RE: National Board Certification: What factors influence the choices that teachers make when it is time to renew their certification? [H1512333]

Dear Ms. Teague:

On behalf of Mercer University’s Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, your application submitted on 20-Dec-2016 for the above referenced protocol was reviewed in accordance with Federal Regulations 21 CFR 50.103 and 45 CFR 46.110(b) (for expedited review) and was approved for continuation under category(ies) 6, 7 on 19-Jan-2017.

This approval period of your continued protocol is for one year of study and expires on 12-Jan-2018.

Item(s) Approved:
Second year continuing review

NOTE: Please report to the committee when the protocol is initiated. Report to the Committee immediately any changes in the protocol or consent form and ALL accidents, injuries, and serious or unexpected adverse events that occur to your subjects as a result of this study.

We at the IRB and the Office of Research Compliance are dedicated to providing the best service to our research community. As one of our investigators, we value your feedback and ask that you please take a moment to complete our Satisfaction Survey and help us to improve the quality of our service.

It has been a pleasure working with you and we wish you much success with your project! If you need any further assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

Ava Chambless-Richardson, M.Ed., CIH, CIOM.
Associate Director of Human Research Protection Programs (H809)
Member
Institutional Review Board

“Mercer University has adopted and agrees to conduct its clinical research studies in accordance with the international Conference on Harmonization’s (ICH) Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice.”
APPENDIX E

ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS
ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Name
- What is your highest level of degree attained?
  - Bachelor’s
  - Master’s
  - Specialist’s
  - Ph.D. or Ed.D.
- Degree(s) held and Area(s) of teaching certification
- Number of years teaching
  - 0-5
  - 6-10
  - 11-15
  - 16-20
  - 21-25
  - 25+
- Levels (grades) previously taught
- Level (grade) currently teaching
- Subject(s) previously taught
- Subject(s) currently teaching
- Year beginning National Board Certification process
- Year National Board Certification achieved
- Number of years taught before beginning National Board Certification
  - 3-5
  - 6-10
  - 11-15
  - 16-20
  - 21-25
  - 25+
- In what state did you begin the process?
- In what state did you finish the process?
- Were you able to finish the process in one year?
  - Yes
  - No
- In regard to renewal:
  - Renewed
  - Not planning on renewing
  - Unsure about renewal
INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Describe the impetus behind your decision to achieve National Board Certification
- How do you feel National Board Certification was viewed by others in education when you began the process?
- Describe the kind(s) of support, if any, you received during the process.
- If you received support, explain how each type of support helped you achieve National Board Certification.
- How do you feel National Board Certification was viewed by others in education after you achieved National Board Certification?
- Describe the incentives, if any, you received after achieving National Board Certification.
- Explain how these incentives encouraged you, if at all, to achieve National Board Certification.
- Explain the benefits, if any, to achieving National Board Certification.
- Describe your decision to renew/not renew your National Board Certification.
- What factors, if any, influenced your decision to renew/not renew?
- How do you feel National Board Certification is viewed by others in education today?
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

- What prompted you to become a NBCT?
- When you began the process, what was the view of National Board Certification by others in education?
- What type of support did you receive, if any?
- What incentives did you receive, if any?
- What was the response from others in education upon your achievement of National Board Certification?
- Did you encourage others to participate in the National Board Certification process?
- What factors influenced your decision to renew/not renew?
- How do you feel National Board Certification is viewed today by others in education?
- Would you encourage others to participate in the National Board Certification process today?