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The Teacher Pay for Performance Phenomenon

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The Teacher Pay for Performance Phenomenon

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Doctoral Candidate, **Deborah Viscardi**, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ph.D.** during this **Fall Semester 2014**.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	1
Significance of the Problem	2
Significance of the Study	6
Research Questions.....	7
II. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	8
Definitions of Teacher Pay for Performance	8
History of Teacher Compensation Policy and Reform	11
Theoretical Background and Models	15
Empirical Research Review	23
Conclusion.....	33
III. METHODOLOGY	35
A Qualitative Approach	36
Research Site	38
Participant Selection	39
Data Collection	40
Data Analysis	42
Data Coding	44
Role of the Qualitative Researcher	47
Limitations of the Study	48
Protection of Human Subjects	49
IV. FINDINGS	50
Emergent Themes.....	50
Participant Profiles	51
Four Major Themes	63
Evaluate This! Stressful New Teacher Evaluation Policy.....	63
Pay Me! Low and Uncompetitive Salary	65
Future of Health and Retirement Benefits	69
Don't Become a Teacher	74

Summary77

V. CONCLUSION79

 Overview of the Study79

 Research Approach and Design.....80

 Theoretical Framework82

 Research Method 85

 Summary of Findings and Discussion 86

 Implication for Policy and Practice88

 Suggestions for Future Research90

 Conclusion92

REFERENCES94

APPENDIX A. Interview Guide.....101

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

An overwhelming majority of public school districts across the nation are paying teachers on a step and lock scale, based on years of service and acquiring academic credentials in the form of higher degrees. Are teachers paid just for showing up year after year for doing just the minimum? Does teacher pay have any impact on student academic performance? Is the current system considered to have an expected reward, regardless of teacher performance or student achievement? The majority of public school districts across the country have a teacher compensation plan which discourages a productivity output (student achievement) from the given input of teacher performance. As Corcoran and Roy (2009) put it simply, “The single salary schedule provides practicing teachers no incentives to produce results” (p. 1). In fact, much of the literature supports teacher compensation reform such as incentives for superior performance, suggesting that school districts design pay for performance plans to recruit and retain high quality professionals to enter the field, (Ballou, 2001; Podgursky & Springer, 2010).

Policy makers, pundits, and politicians have often urged teacher compensation reform as a means to improve the American public education system. An extensive reform of teacher performance in an effort to improve student achievement has recently been instituted with the adoption of the Common Core State Standards by 46 states in 2010 (Youngs, 2013). Embedded in these incentives, including the four billion dollar Race To The Top and Teacher Incentive Fund, is a promise to support the goal of the Common Core State Standards in changing the teaching/learning paradigm to prepare students for “college and career readiness” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012). Soon thereafter, the new teacher evaluation systems,

adopted in most states, including New Jersey, were redesigned to link a portion of a teacher's yearly performance evaluation to students' test scores on state assessments as well as locally developed assessments (Youngs, 2013).

Currently, school districts, state departments of education, and federal programs provide funding to design and administer compensation plans for teachers based on market conditions (Lazear, 2001). However, the majority of these plans are based on the antiquated and rigid pay scales developed nearly a century ago. These plans provide little to no incentive and motivation for teachers to perform effectively in serving the needs of students and promoting student achievement. These step and lock pay scales also vary from state to state and from school district to school district, indicating considerable gaps in teacher salary between districts. For example, the average teacher salary in two New Jersey school districts differs greatly, despite being in the same state: Paramus at \$70,000 versus Milltown at \$45,000 (PERC, 2013).

Significance of the Problem

The pay for performance phenomenon continues to resurface time and again. President Obama emphatically stated, "We know that from the moment our kids enter school, the most important factor in their success—other than their parents—is the person standing in front of the classroom: the teacher" (Sommerfeld, 2011, p. 1). Recognizing the prominent role of teacher in student academic success, the Obama administration's platform on improving teacher performance rests on the notion that using cash for test scores will motivate teachers to perform at higher productivity rates.

Can performance-based compensation motivate teachers to work harder, be more innovative, take risks and exhibit innovation, all to improve student achievement? Does money

really matter in teacher performance¹, or is a desire to educate our youth derived from altruistic/intrinsic motivation? Although several interest groups, including teacher unions and privately funded educational organizations (e.g., The MET Study; Vanderbilt POINT Study; NEA et al.) have provided arguments for both positive and negative implications, empirical evidence is scarce. Table 1 summarizes key arguments for both sides of the debate.

Table 1

Teacher Pay for Performance, Pros and Cons

Pros	Cons
Encourages a sense of competition and collaboration, incentivizing teachers to work harder	Competition among the teaching staff becomes dangerous, dividing the school community
Promotes the use of empirical measurements on teacher effectiveness linked to specified factors, such as student achievement and teacher practice	Measuring a teacher's "effectiveness" and linking it to pay is subjective; teacher unions argue the lack of validity and fairness of measuring effectiveness
Creates a sense of urgency to recruit, retain, and reward the highest level of professionals to the field	Corporate-driven reform will not improve the quality of the teaching workforce
Levels teachers to the professional playing field of lawyers, doctors, accountants, etc., rewarded based on performance and financial incentives	Teachers work because of the positive impact they make on a child's life, not for money or status

The research on pay-for-performance programs has been extensive, employing predominantly quantitative survey methods examining salary incentive bonuses awarded for test scores and large-scale statistical data (Goldhaber et al., 2010). For example, Figlio and Kenney (2007) used a combination of data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS:88) and their own survey examining the impact of teacher incentives and its link to teacher performance and student achievement. In their study, the authors found a positive connection between motivating teachers with monetary incentives and student achievement. However, they argue that the research on pay for performance is mostly "micro education data sets" with "little information about schools' personnel practices" (p. 902), given that quantitative oriented studies

¹ *Performance*, for the purpose of this study, refers to "effective instructional practice" as measured by student test scores and professional evaluations (Johnson & Papay, 2009).

use pre-selected variables that might not adequately address the variety in teachers' perceptions regarding motivation.

Additionally, a body of research on the pay for performance phenomenon focuses, not on the benefits of these types of compensation systems, but on the failure of implemented plans. For example, some researchers claim that several factors have contributed to the failure of implemented performance-based compensation plans in the past including an ambiguity and opaque sense of teacher understanding of behaviors indicative of excellent performance and worthy of attaining bonuses according to their administrator's standards (Rockoff, 2004; Murnane & Cohen, 1986). Furthermore, research in the same vein claims that over the last decade a whirlwind of uncertainty has overcome teachers with the imposed NCLB and RTTP legislation tying student test scores to teacher evaluations (Rockoff, 2004; Murnane & Cohen, 1986).

Although some research claims (Dixit, 2002; McCaffery et al., 2004) that the new generation of twenty-first century teachers view pay very differently from their veteran colleagues, wanting financial rewards for excellent performance, the teacher unions (in which leadership is mostly comprised of veteran teachers) seem to be a major factor in the unsuccessful attempts of pay for performance in school districts. In fact, studies have concluded that there is nothing that differentiates the teaching profession from others that use merit pay. It is the pushback from teacher unions concerning no guaranteed compensation, unlike the comfortable and reliable single salary schedule to which teachers have become accustomed (Ballou, 2001).

Other research (Hanushek, 2010) claims that the stress of the Common Core State Standards, making students college and career ready and conformity to imposed federal initiatives, has shifted the teaching and learning paradigm from educating an informed electorate

and creating contributing members of a democratic society to preparing students for a globally competitive workforce, therefore changing the ways in which teacher performance is measured and subsequently compensated.

Thus, given the current policy initiatives, there is a need to explore the motivations of the current teaching force. Little is known as to how the input from teachers themselves on their own performance and productivity motivates them and affects the output of student achievement. This study sought to fill a void in the literature by understanding the perceptions of teachers about the influence of performance-based incentives on their own teaching practice.

The theoretical framework used in this study is based on expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964; Lawler, 1981). This theory posits that a person is motivated to behave in a certain manner because he or she expects a desired result. Therefore, one may assume that a pay-for-performance system for teachers is a viable option to improve schools' overall student achievement as well as entice more professional and capable candidates to become teachers. This also may motivate teachers to be more productive. Johnson and Papay (2009) link the incentive of performance pay with teacher performance by explaining that "teachers must reasonably expect that they will achieve the reward if they put forth the additional effort" (p. 15). Thus, investigating the motivational values teachers place on performance and the earned awards, whether it be monetary or otherwise, might provide some valuable insight into the problem of the existing teacher compensation plans.

In light of the current teacher compensation problem, past studies have suggested that economic and motivational theories drive the teacher compensation system design and that researchers should be cognizant of the impact of monetary incentives on productivity (i.e., cash for test scores, student achievement, etc.) (Lazear, 2001). However, interest groups, like teacher

unions, are opposed to this seemingly logical, research-based approach and are vehemently against linking compensation to teacher performance to student achievement in schools. They believe teachers are motivated by many factors (for example, making a difference in a child's life), and the craft of teacher practice and performance cannot be quantified by a mathematical equation (higher test scores = more pay) (Eberts et al., 2002; Johnson & Papay, 2009; Liang, 2011; Murnane & Cohen, 1986; Rockoff, 2004).

Lortie's (1975) study provides a perception of the "nature of teaching as an occupation" and an understanding of what drives teachers within the profession. Lortie recognized that in order for teachers to express themselves truthfully and in their own "language," field work and extensive open-ended interviews were necessary; therefore, this study affords teachers the opportunity to describe their lived experience, thereby providing policy makers and other stakeholders of educational reform empirical insight into the nature of quality improvement. The result can provide a platform for a performance-based compensation plan on those explored motivators to improve teacher productivity and student achievement.

Significance of the Study

In recent years, legislators and school districts have pushed for teacher compensation reform as the solution to increasing student achievement. The goal of performance-based compensation systems is to motivate teachers to increase student achievement. However, the controversy revolves around which criteria are appropriate and effective in evaluating teacher performance for compensation; e.g., tests scores. The purpose of this research study was to make meaning of teachers' perceptions about the influence of performance based compensation on the profession and practice of teaching. This study sought to extend the understanding and add to the discussion of compensation policy as linked to teacher practice and performance.

Research Questions

This study explored the perceptions of teachers in the current K-12 public education system on the influence of monetary performance incentives on teaching. For the purpose of this study, *motivation* is defined as “the psychological process that gives behavior purpose and direction; the will to achieve and, the inner force that drives individuals to accomplish personal and organizational goals” (Lindner, 1998, p. 2). More specifically, Herzberg (1959) classifies motivation as intrinsic/internal (from within the individual), seeing the success of students, and extrinsic (rewards given by another person), giving monetary performance incentives to teachers demonstrating teaching quality.

The following research question guided this study:

What is the relationship between teacher motivation and performance-based compensation?

Additional sub-questions were addressed:

1. From teachers’ perspective, what is the level of performance motivation given the current compensation policy environment?
2. How does the interplay between teacher motivation and teachers’ remuneration needs influence teacher performance?
3. From teachers’ perspective, what conditions, practices, and policies related to compensation contribute to or constrain motivation for performance?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter provides a critical review of the literature on teacher pay for performance with an emphasis on the links between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and teacher performance. The first section includes definitions of teacher compensation systems where many interchangeable terms exist within the literature. This is often confusing to those attempting to grasp the fundamentals of the issue. The second section describes the theoretical models, which may be utilized in explaining the link between extrinsic motivation and performance. The third section reviews existing empirical research about pay-for-performance plans and plans already in place. The fourth section evaluates a landmark ethnographic study on teacher motivation and performance, *School Teacher* (Lortie, 1970), one of the only studies of its kind in the twentieth century. This leads into the final section of this paper proposing directions for future research for education policymakers and practitioners to consider the ethnographic and qualitative measurements of teacher motivations and related performance.

Definitions of Teacher Pay for Performance

There is much lingo and interchangeable phrases in reference to teacher compensation. Some of the prominent writers in the field, Odden and Kelley (2002), and Podgursky and Springer (2007), have compartmentalized teacher pay for performance into four categories as summarized by Johnson and Papay (2009, p. 13):

1. Knowledge and skills: pay for undertaking professional development or acquiring skill- based credentials.
2. Roles: pay for assuming special roles and responsibilities.

3. Market factors: pay for teaching in hard to staff subjects or schools.
4. Performance: pay for effective instructional practice and student achievement.

(Johnson & Papay, 2009, p. 13)

Among these categories, peeling another layer into the center of the problem reveals the most widely used pay system for teachers across the country: the single salary scale. Also referred to as the step-and-lane pay, this formula was instituted in the early twentieth century to promote equity in pay (Odden & Kelley, 2002). According to this plan, teachers are provided with an annual increase, by step, until reaching the top. Typically, to reach the peak, ten to twenty years of climbing is necessary depending on the school district. “Lanes” are also available for the climb as teachers can switch into a higher paying column upon gaining graduate credits and degrees. This introduces another layer to the problem: if “lanes” promote salary increases with degree attainment and/or course enrollment, how is higher education responding to the waves of compensation reform for teachers? Nevertheless, this single salary scale is considered to be “lock-step” and prohibits teachers from earning more pay by demonstrating initiative or excelling in daily operations (Johnson & Papay, 2009).

Alternative compensation plans are referenced in many districts, public and private periodicals, and policy initiatives via different expressions. In Table 2 below, Rowland and Potemski (2009, p. 12) attempt to provide a common language:

Table 2

Quick-Reference Glossary of Terms Related to Alternative Compensation

Alternative compensation	Using indicators other than those used in the single-salary schedule (teacher degree and years of experience) to determine teacher pay.
Differential pay	A general term used to describe a different form of pay from the single-salary schedule for teachers who accept assignment in hard-to-staff schools and/or subject areas.
Knowledge-and skills-based pay	Performance-based pay that is based on teacher performance indicators that may include acquiring and demonstrating a new or improved knowledge or skill, taking on a new or enhanced role in a school or district, or excelling at parent or community outreach.
Market pay	Incentive pay for teachers in hard-to-staff schools and/or subject areas.
Merit pay	Often associated with alternative compensation from the 1980s, “merit pay” refers to teacher compensation that is based either on principal evaluations (old-style merit pay) or student standardized test scores (new style merit pay).
Performance pay, pay for performance, or performance-based compensation	Generally refers to programs created since 2000 that base teachers’ pay on their performance in the classroom. Performance pay can be based on either teacher performance (evaluation, professional development) or student performance indicators (value-added, gains scores on standardized tests; objective evaluations of student performance; or other valid and reliable assessments of student performance).
Teacher bonuses	Additional pay for teachers that goes beyond the traditional single-salary schedule but does not reflect a change in base pay.
Teacher incentives or incentive pay	Another general term for providing teachers with additional compensation beyond the traditional single-salary schedule. Incentive pay can be based on a variety of indicators and is often used as a tool to recruit teachers for particular schools or subject areas.

Rowland and Potemski (2009) also note that the widespread and interchangeable use of these varied labels causes confusion in policy for all stakeholders involved. They have created a working set of explicit vocabulary to assist in the clear dissemination of knowledge to public stakeholders which “avoids the pitfalls surrounding the language and terminology of past attempts” (p. 2).

History of Teacher Compensation Policy and Reform

At the turn of the twentieth century, American public education entered a societal progressive era. Elementary and secondary schools had a purpose: to unite society and to produce effective citizens. Teaching, as a profession, began to evolve and new ideas on compensation arose. Primarily, two types of teacher compensation were practiced: the “grade-based” compensation model and the “single salary” schedule (Prostik, 1995). The former paid teachers based on which grade or school level they taught with additional pay for annual performance reviews written by school administrators. The grade-based compensation model was highly inequitable as it granted merit pay-like bonuses unfairly and discriminatorily to females or anyone other than White male teachers (Adkins, 1983). Secondary school teachers earned more pay than female elementary school teachers. Half of the schools in the United States in 1918 compensated teachers similarly to the grade-based pay programs (Fenwick, 1992).

In 1921, Des Moines and Denver school districts implemented the “single salary schedule” acknowledging unfairness among administrative evaluations and discriminatory pay practices for women (Odden & Kelley, 2002). Developed almost a century ago, this is the most widely used compensation system for teachers today. This system rewarded teachers based on years of service and degree held. At the time, these scales provided a level of stability for equal pay across the lines of race and gender and grade level taught. Additionally, this single salary

schedule provided some relief in the strained relationships between school boards and teacher unions during contract negotiations (Springer, 2009).

However, the lock and step method was unacceptable to many progressive educational stakeholders at the time, as it did not reward for performance. Earlier forms of merit pay evolved in the early twentieth century following Frederick Taylor's "scientific management" movement (Mitchell, Lewin, & Lawler, 1989). According to Moehlman (1927), these advocates of Taylor's theory were proponents of teacher compensation such as the following:

. . . provided as scientifically possible for the best returns to society for the increasing public investment by approaching salaries from their economic and social aspects and not in terms of their sentimentality (Moehlman, 1927).

Despite the growing number of school districts that attempted to maintain this pay system experiment, administrative evaluations of performance were filled with abuse, contaminating the intent of merit pay for teachers (Young, 1933). The single salary scale essentially replaced nearly all of American public school districts' compensation systems by the 1950s (Johnson, 1986). In the 1960s, with the Cold War underway, a "Sputnik provoked" era of merit pay proposals resurfaced. In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* and in 1986, *A Nation Prepared* were published, highlighting the need for standards-based reform based on underpaid teachers affecting poorly achieving students and recognizing that measurable inputs that appear simple have a limited effect on the output of student achievement. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, reformers proposed legislation tied to educational inputs and processes. In various forms, these merit pay movements have disappeared and have been reinvented through a rebranding of some sort of the times (Ballou & Podgursky, 1997).

Murnane and Cohen (1986) recount several reasons for the failure of pay-for-performance programs in the past. Among the contributing factors is a profound one: an absence of “transparency” between administrators and teachers through the evaluation process. Murnane and Cohen describe an evaluation process in which teachers were unaware of the behaviors indicative of performance worthy of attaining bonuses. This lack of clear direction, along with an unstable source of funding for these programs, not only did not incentivize teachers to enhance their teaching practices, it created an acrimonious and exasperating relationship between teachers and administrators.

Johnson and Papay (2009) also add that performance-pay-programs have failed largely due to a “one size fits all” mentality. Empirical research stands on the premise that not every school district operates the same way and the “political, cultural, and organizational realities” (p. 12) of local school districts play a significant role in the success and/or failure of compensation programs.

In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act changed the game dramatically for accountability in public education. This legislation supported the standards-based reform and required states to administer standardized tests in which achievement was measured as Adequate Yearly Progress. Test scores had to improve progressively each school year per cohort of students, or schools risked losing federal funding. The early twenty-first century also witnessed a push in the charter school and school choice movements, proving to create a truly competitive arena for public schools (Rockoff, 2004).

By 2003, there was a 25% increase in the use of pay-for-performance bonuses reported from 1999 (Podgursky & Springer, 2007). School districts like New York City designed their own pay for performance programs centered on the single salary scale with incentive bonuses for

test scores (Gootman, 2007). In 2009, President Obama enlisted the Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, on a mission to improve American public education. The president stated in a 2009 speech, “It’s time to start rewarding good teachers, [and] stop making excuses for bad ones” (Bazinet, 2009). In a similar speech, he proclaimed that teachers should be rewarded for student test scores: “Success should be measured by results . . . That’s why any state that makes it unlawful to link student progress to teacher evaluation will have to change its ways.” (Obama, 2009). Shortly thereafter, the president made billions of dollars available in discretionary funds, under the auspices of Duncan, for Race to the Top. This legislation’s primary mission, although an increase in charter schools and development of common core academic achievement and assessment systems flourished, was to create widespread merit pay programs for teachers (Hunter, 2010).

Muddled in the fishbowl of this standards-based reform era and swimming with legislation like RTTP, “cash for test scores” may not be the only integral economic factor driving the support for pay for performance programs. According to Lazear (2001), the single salary schedule is ineffective for teachers in this era because the input does not currently supersede the output, or more specifically, student achievement. He contends that a pay for performance system will invite and retain people who are skilled at teaching and receive monetary incentives to perform and force out people who are not. He takes it one step further to posit that performance incentives will not only increase the “productivity” of a teacher, as defined by student achievement, but will also increase the quality of the candidates entering the professional pool. Thus, again, the antiquated single salary schedule developed to combat discriminatory pay practices is no longer applicable to today’s standards-based achievement and reform.

Lazear (2001) claims that it is necessary to rid American schools of the single salary schedule because it promotes a “disincentive” for talented and driven candidates from even approaching the field, as they are open to other professions with more lucrative earning potential. This intrinsic or “psychic” motivation (Lortie, 1970) is not considered when qualified individuals have a fair and open playing field for other lines of work with higher pay, like law or engineering. These opportunities today also provide meaningful work and “psychic” rewards, which has dismissed or overlooked by those not in the teaching profession (Johnson & Papay, 2009).

Theoretical Background

Basic tenets of educational progressive theory rest on the idea that in order to help engage students to be creative, intuitive, productive, and achieving, a structure within the classroom must be designed conducive to their individual and group needs and follow with appropriate compensation; i.e., grades, scores, celebrations, exhibits, projects, fairs, etc., to encourage their efforts (Dewey, 1914). Why is the same structure not applied to the performance of our teachers? Would they not be motivated to create these meaningful learning environments for our students even more so if a similar structure in the form of monetary incentives were to be created for their efforts? As described earlier, this is not the current pay structure, as it is not based on performance.

Given our global economic position, where competition is fierce in all sectors of the job market, why not entice a better pool of candidates who will embrace a reward structure for hard work and dedication just as any other corporate entity would do? Why enable teachers to ride the wave of complacency when so much more could be done for our students if an external motivator were present? When teacher compensation is characterized as a policy problem, the

question is part of the many aspects of teacher motivations that can be manipulated by policy makers to increase teacher performance and productivity, thereby having a positive impact on student achievement and overall school outcomes. This greatly affects global competition.

Reform to the teacher compensation systems should be based on sound research, grounded in market-based elements of inputs and outputs (Adams et al., 2009). Yet, the question arises again: What are the barriers preventing a competitive, market based compensation system for teachers from being effective? Attempting to find answers to any of the questions posed above requires a dip into the deep end of the pool of research. However, little research has been done on the structure and existing design of the performance-based compensation programs forum regarding incentives *not* focused merely on test scores.

Motivational Theory

I begin with the fundamental merit of any study—empirical research. First, examining the theories of motivation of input (money or intrinsic) and its influence on output, or productivity, is crucial to understanding the pay for performance compensation systems. *Motivation* is defined as “the psychological process that gives behavior purpose and direction, the will to achieve, and the inner force that drives individuals to accomplish personal and organizational goals” (Lindner, 1998, p. 2).

Human nature dictates that people “work hard” and focus their behavior toward outcomes because they are motivated. Yet, the motivations can be classified as intrinsic/internal (from within the individual), seeing the success of students, and extrinsic (rewards given by another person), giving monetary performance incentives to teachers demonstrating exceptional teaching quality. Both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards are essential to motivating employees (Herzberg, 1959).

Understanding how employees are motivated, what factors motivate employees, and what factors contribute to their productivity has been the focus of much research over the past century in both public and private sectors. Major theorists have added to the knowledge base of motivational theory, including Maslow (1943), Skinner (1953), Vroom (1964), and Herzberg (1959). The *Hierarchy of Needs*, designed by Abraham Maslow (1943), identifies and organizes basic needs of all humans into categories: psychological, security, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. Once each level or category of need is met, an individual will be motivated by and “strive to progress and satisfy the next higher level of need.” Basic education and teacher preparation courses stress the importance of understanding Maslow’s hierarchy and the basic needs and motivations of learners so that teachers can design and implement effective instruction, ultimately impacting student achievement. Should not the same principle hold true for employee performance—an understanding of the needs and motivations of teachers so that the administration can provide them with the necessary incentives to teach effectively and productively based on student outcomes?

Frederick Herzberg (1959) took Maslow’s *Hierarchy* one step further and split employee needs into two distinct categories related to job satisfaction: “maintenance factors” which cause job dissatisfaction to include status, salary, work conditions, relation with peers, supervisors, and subordinates; and “motivational factors” to include autonomy, recognition, achievement, responsibility, and advancement opportunities. Herzberg’s theory asserts that in order to motivate teachers to perform, a working environment must be designed to ensure that the primary level motivators are adequate, including salary, school district policy, building conditions, and interpersonal employer-employee relationships. If the primary motivators are in

place, then teachers can strive for higher performance and productivity (i.e., student achievement) and advance to the next level in their careers.

Another layer can now be added to the motivational theory in context of teacher quality: B.F. Skinner's reinforcement theory (1953). Skinner explained that performance can be guided through a system of reinforcements. Negative reinforcement stops the behavior and rewards an encouraging and positive outcome. Therefore, teachers rewarded for improved performance in the classroom will be motivated to continue advancement in performance and increase student achievement. Paying teachers in a lock and step pay system only maintains the status quo, giving teachers little motivation to improve the quality of their craft and ultimately student achievement.

Victor Vroom (1964) incorporates Herzberg's and Skinner's assumptions that not only do people behave based on internal and external motivations (i.e., self-satisfaction, recognition, etc.) but they also base behaviors on a ranked system in which their motivators take precedence over expected outcomes. Thus, if teachers expect to advance in salary based on longevity or years of service, rather than evaluation of their performance, they have no reason to try to improve productivity and student achievement. The status quo behavior may then be the result of a lack of placement of meaningful primary motivators.

Given the theoretical background, the need for motivating teachers, as with any field of employment, is critical. Just as teachers are continuously trained to be the vessels of motivation for student learning and achievement as dictated by their own reward system for students (i.e., grades, alternative assessments, scores) so too must there be an analogous model for the administrator-teacher dynamic relative to reward for performance (cash for scores). Motivated teachers are needed in our evolving global economy as the demands for efficient twenty-first century employees continues to grow. The mission of K-12 education has shifted from a

educating an informed electorate and creating contributing members of a democratic society to include the value of human capital and the “college and career ready” graduates prepared for the globally competitive workforce (Hanushek, 2010). As students are now competing on the twenty-first century global stage with major policy and initiatives influencing that aim, the composition of the teaching force needs to be re-evaluated and redesigned to meet the changing, performance-driven motivations to succeed.

Have We Lost Sight?

Unfortunately, the research that goes beyond the scope of quantitative analysis, as previously stated, has a gaping hole when it comes to understanding teachers, their motivations, and willingness to work in schools for the public good. It would behoove future researchers to reference the social justice theory of Paulo Friere (1970), the neoliberal theories of Noam Chomsky (1999), and/or the progressive educational theories of John Dewey and Edward Lee Thorndike (Tanner, 2007). Providing a rich social and theoretical framework sets the pay for performance issue in an appropriate political, economic and educational context for those designing effective policy. Neglecting the social and theoretical framework may misconstrue the context for policy makers.

Perhaps researchers would have had a more compelling stance on the issue if they had applied Paulo Friere’s critical social theory (1970) to analyze the pitfalls of the current systems. To illustrate this point, Johnson and Papay (2009) describe the pay for performance issue as a monumentally difficult policy decision requiring public approval. In order for a program to be successful, the teachers themselves must be involved in the decision making process of the plan. Moreover, the teachers must be involved in the dialogue of the structure and design of the plan. As Friere explains in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), positive social and

institutional change is brought about by dialogue and not “communiqués” directed by the authoritarian group. Imposing pay for performance plans on teachers, which link the rewards solely to student test scores violates Frierean theory because all players are not involved in the authentic solution to the problem. This would evidently support the conclusion that pay for performance based on test scores is unproductive for teachers (Ballou & Podgurskey, 1993; Murnane & Cohen, 1986; Johnson & Papay, 2009). Therefore, it is essential for higher education institutions, administrators, union leaders, teachers, and policy makers to commit to educating the teaching workforce on the big picture and the merit of pay for performance, not just for the teachers and the students, but also for the economic stakeholders.

Friere’s *banking* model of education, describing the teacher-student relationship, can be applied to the relationship between the school board and teachers. According to Friere, the system of education is set up for teachers to bombard students with facts and information, preventing them from thinking and minimizes their creativity, with little room for relative thought or action and absolutely no sense of reward. The same may be said about the system of governance between the school board and the teachers, in which teachers are bombarded with mandates and measures dealing with test scores that are intrinsically linked to their value as educators. Similarly, this leaves little room for teachers to design a system around problem solving and reflective practice with no motivational value of external reward (money). This opens the door for researchers to design a reward system based on reflective practices for teaching in order to improve student achievement.

Combining the aforementioned with a discussion of the current inequities in educational policy to support suggestions for a comprehensive performance pay plan for teachers is worth contemplation. If the researchers consider the basic principles of social Darwinist theory

(Tanner, 2007), the use of standardized tests as the only indicator of student achievement and data driven decisions about teachers is clearly a practice designed to fuel the elite within several of the districts that the authors reviewed with regard to failing performance pay plans (Johnson & Papay, 2009). This theory is based on a reward to only those who survive within an optimal environment, clearly leaving behind those who work and live among the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. The realm of research should take advantage of this by explaining to what extent teachers are motivated through a combination of external/economic factors and intrinsic/altruistic factors. The discussions should lead to a coherent system of performance pay based on building high social capital among teachers versus unhealthy and unfair competition. This is similar to best practices promoted within a problem solving classroom setting of teachers and students (Tanner, 2007), utilizing empirically sound research. Would not it then logically fit that researchers should design a pay for performance plan based on “comprehensive” measurements which are fair and objective and reward teachers based on their achievement based on an unbiased formula?

It appears as if the research community has lost sight of presenting a valid educational issue and possibly a viable and productive concept within the pay for performance arena by electing to leave out much theoretical framework to support hypotheses. Given our current political environment, with the large teacher strike this past September in Chicago (2012), the battle between Wisconsin’s governor and the public sector, President Obama’s desire to reward teachers by measured results (and the lists goes on), the identification of and awards to highly effective teachers is increasingly strong in our nation. With this heightened awareness, the research should “capitalize” on the widespread neoliberal attitude and policy pervading our education system by describing the aspects of a fair and equitable performance pay plan for

teachers. Neoliberal education policy may purport that teacher performance pay is one of the only alternatives, alongside charter schools, increased graduation rates, and the Core Curriculum Content Standards, to save struggling public schools and bad teaching. This trickles down into a crisis that has been created for a profitable market on the newly mandated teacher evaluation systems, just to name one example. The public and educational community should beware that the current pay for performance plans, based only on cash for test scores, is the essence of neoliberalism. This phenomenon echoes Chomsky's (1999) sentiments on economic transparency and encouragement of full participation in the market. If the workforce of teachers is to be involved in the decisions and design of the plan, it would therefore increase the value of the profession overall. Ironically, as the politicians continue to proclaim that the proof is in the numbers, The Vanderbilt POINT Study (Springer et al., 2011) proved that cash for test scores created a pay system for teachers that was an epic failure. Yet, major contributors to the field like Johnson and Papay (2009) used neither the research findings of this study or Chomsky's theoretical framework to aid in support of their argument.

While this basic ideology of rewarding employees for good work appears as the podium for the performance pay controversy in front of the large public audience, it is the speaker behind the microphone that has embodied the issue in different disguises. It is up to current public educational policy makers to step up to the plate and manifest their desire to improve the public education system and, more specifically, the idea of improving teacher quality by involving the shareholders in the decision making of the high stakes of the institution of public education. Researchers must present issues like performance pay within the context of our evolving twenty-first century education system as an investment and not an expense to our growing nation.

Empirical Research Review

Public and private interest groups all have a stake in the teacher pay for performance controversy. Although many of these groups point out that the limited reward of cash for test scores is a design of epic failure, the discussion of a holistic system combining subjective and objective measures of evaluation for incentivized pay is often overlooked as a possible alternative for compensation plans or cash for test score plans. This combination of measures fall into the empirical research categorization of “performance pay” as defined by Odden and Kelley (2002) and Podgursky and Springer (2007): “pay for effective instructional practices and student achievement.” (Johnson & Papay, 2009, p. 13).

Since the inception of the Cold War, the United States has taken the concept of competition to varying and extreme levels. Relative to education, the pursuit of increasing student achievement through measurable test scores has remained a constant. Linking student achievement to test scores via effective teaching performance became the next sensible component, or so public policy makers had most convinced.

Interest in teacher quality is not a new phenomenon. In 1983, a report published by the U.S. government on the status of K-12 education shocked the nation. *A Nation at Risk* claimed that “salaries for the teaching profession should be increased and should be professionally competitive, market sensitive, and performance based.” This report publicized the growing movement for standards-based reform during the Reagan era and spurred several school districts to dabble in pay for performance plans. States including Tennessee, California, Texas, Florida, and California attempted to implement performance-based compensation, but met much resistance from teacher unions. These plans also failed due to the vagueness and ambiguity of appropriate knowledge between evaluators and teachers to achieve required incentive exception

thresholds. The other major problem with these experimental plans was that there was an unstable and unreliable source of funding to finance these incentives (Murnane & Cohen, 1986).

It was not until 2000, during the Bush administration, that a highly controversial educational reform law was federally passed changing the entire scope of school accountability and performance. During the 1990s, individual states had already become accustomed to rewarding or punishing schools and teachers for test scores. However, The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) required schools to be held accountable for student performance on a building level using tracked longitudinal data, rather than measuring individual learning and growth of students. This legislation has provided the impetus for many school districts to link teacher pay with success on test scores. Fast forwarding to the presidential campaigns of 2008 and 2012, Barack Obama announced that in order to raise student achievement and close the achievement gap, teacher pay reform is necessary (Johnson & Papay, 2009).

But why have privately funded corporations and popular icons, such as Facebook giant Mark Zuckerberg and Microsoft's Bill Gates, usurped the publicly run educational decision-making arena about teacher quality? In 2009, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, a privatized interest, dipped into the local and federal educational policy sphere of influence and decided that its platform was going to be to endorse programs related toward teacher quality. The Measures of Effective Teaching Project (MET) describes a value-added model (VAM) to identify effective teachers. This "value-added assessment" looks at test score growth rather than test score proficiency from one year to the next. The model attempts to quantify what value a teacher adds on student achievement apart from other influencing factors on achievement, such as socioeconomic status. The value-added model is used to approximate a teacher's input (instructional performance) to student output (achievement over time). This model allows for a

comparison from year to year for students based on how much content they have learned. These norm-referenced evaluation systems compare the previous test scores of a teacher's students. Thus, this system allows for the ranking of similar content and grade level teachers. School districts like New York City, Chicago, and District of Columbia are now using value-added model rankings of their teachers for decisions of teacher retention, bonuses, and need for professional development identification. However, many critics of this system argue that the value-added model neglects significant factors affecting student achievement, like socioeconomic status, which skews the results in the rankings. These critics strongly favor a comprehensive evaluation system that not only "values" test scores as a measurement of teacher effectiveness, but also a set of comprehensive values that exhibit a thorough depiction of teacher performance year to year (Johnson & Papay, 2009).

Soon thereafter, the United States Department of Education designed a waiver in 2011, for the No Child Left Behind Act based on recommendations by Bill Gates. Now, a substantial portion of the total evaluation score for teachers rests on student test scores. This could be upwards of 40% in some cases. Bill Gates noted, "Test scores have to be part of the evaluation. If you don't ground evaluations in student achievement, evaluation will conclude that 'everyone is excellent,' and that holds teachers back" (Gates, 2009). These value-added models have pervaded the teacher pay for performance debate and have simultaneously detracted from implementation for a truly meaningful and successful model of incentivized pay.

In 2010, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, donated \$100 million to the Newark, New Jersey, Public Schools. The goal was to make the Newark Public Schools a "model" for the rest of the nation. Since 1995, Newark Public Schools have been controlled and operated by the state due to overall low performing schools, poor student achievement, and lack of teacher quality. In

late 2012, the Newark Teachers' Union and state department of education approved a contract using the bestowed Facebook gift to establish a merit pay system. Teachers evaluated as "highly effective" (on a four-point rubric: highly effective, effective, partially effective, and ineffective) could earn a bonus on top of their scheduled annual salary for \$5,000 and twice the amount if they choose to teach in the districts' lowest performing schools. The teachers' union president stated that this merit pay system amidst some fears about tying pay to test scores, would assure the nation that teachers would be involved in their own evaluation and that "teachers have to take control of their own profession, their own destiny" (Karp, 2010) The MET study, as described above, has become the pinnacle for teacher evaluation policy in school districts like Newark in spite of the research negating cash for test scores.

Cash for Scores

Several studies and experiments have been conducted attempting to crack the code of the pay for performance mystery. A significant amount of the literature lies with Johnson and Papay (2009) from the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, DC. Their underlying argument in much of their reports is predicated on the notion that a comprehensive and "coherent" performance pay plan for teachers would improve the current, and often poorly designed, programs in place currently. Johnson and Papay structure their argument based on a platform of common sense. As the authors put it, "It makes sense to pay people for how well they do their work; to separate the strivers from the slackers and those who deliver from those who don't" (p. 9). Unfortunately, as in much of the research conducted on the nature of the teacher pay for performance issue, qualitative evidence-based solutions on the issue are few and far between.

Quantitative examinations of the National Educational Longitudinal Survey on schools (Goldhaber et al., 2010), students and families, coupled with additional independently designed

research surveys and complicated statistical equations comprise the body of the reporting. For example, Figlio and Kenny (2007) used a combination of data from the NELS and their own survey to study the impact of teacher incentives. The purpose of their study was to understand the relationship between performance based monetary incentives for teachers and student performance. Interestingly enough, Figlio and Kenny claim that the research that exists is mostly “micro education data sets” with “little information about schools’ personnel practices” (p. 902). They further assert that these survey studies provide few variables that are meaningful to investigation of teacher incentives; rather, they provide a “nationally-representative context” in which to study policies. While Figlio and Kenny conclude that there is a positive connection between motivating teachers with monetary incentives and student achievement, there is still a lack of understanding of this connection due to the nature of survey analysis (versus an ethnographic method of analysis).

Other researchers have provided a wealth of commentary on performance pay programs over the past century—failures and successes. The pay for performance phenomenon has a dark past (indicative of failure) followed by a series of complicated and expensive designs. This ambiguity has thus shrouded a competition amongst educators. The good news extracted from the conclusions of many is the idea that the educational community is in the midst of a movement in the right direction for pay for performance because the new systems include more “objective evidence,” like teacher practice, student performance, and new standardized teacher evaluation systems to level the playing field for all teachers. Some also hypothesize that the new twenty-first century teachers view pay very differently from their veteran colleagues; they want to be “rewarded financially” for their performance as good teachers (Johnson & Papay, 2012;

Dixit, 2002; McCaffrey et al., 2004). In a higher education context, this creates a very different realm of teacher preparation programs geared toward this new system of testing accountability.

While attempting to take something substantial away from many of these pay for performance articles, the authors of these studies discuss many of the downfalls of the merit pay programs, yet offer little as a solution to the problem. For example, Johnson and Papay (2009) first reviewed the three types of plans evident in the four districts researched: test scores or classroom observations, competitive or standards-based awards, and individual or group awards. Next, they discussed the basic structure of pay for performance plans in the four school districts to provide evidence for their argument: current plans are a step in the right direction to future successful plans, but they have not completely evolved from those unsuccessful ones of the past as discussed in the earlier portion of this paper. Third, the authors conclude that pay for performance based on a group structure is the best and most successful option because it “recognizes and rewards these teachers’ collaborative efforts and achievements” and “group awards also prevent competition among teachers that could result from individual awards” (2009, p. 16). However, they failed to provide sufficient evidence for the rationale behind their proposed success of the group-awarded pay plan. Johnson and Papay could have used several different theoretical frameworks to support their hypothesis for an undescribed “comprehensive” performance pay plan.

As much as there are differing opinions and theories on the topic of teacher pay for performance, so too is the research on its effectiveness. The primary criticism of pay for performance is that due to the nature of the teaching profession, it is inherently difficult to evaluate teachers. As evidenced with many of the unsuccessful attempts at pay for performance in the past, criteria on which performance is based needs to be clear and defined. Another

concern is whether the criteria on which the performance is rated will lead to competitive rather than cooperative workforce (Murnane & Cohen, 1986).

Other research supports that there is nothing that differentiates the teaching profession from others that use merit pay. Ballou (2001) uses examples from private, non-sectarian schools which use a merit pay/reward system. These schools show that the lack of success of public school attempts at merit pay are not because of the profession itself, but because of resistance from the teachers' union, as it is a grey area with no guarantee, unlike the comfortable and reliable single salary schedule to which they are accustomed.

Both schools of thought exist on why merit-based pay has not been widely used or is ineffective. However, Dixit (2002) builds on Murnane and Cohen (1986) by saying that it is the nature of teaching and its characteristics along with the interest of private groups that lead to low incentives. In fact, Dixit states that "we should expect to see weak explicit incentives, many constraints, and evaluation by evidence that the rules were followed" (Dixit, 2002).

What the research neglects to truly examine is that when performance pay is linked to student test scores, or any single factor, other factors may be ignored. Once a test is only a sample of the knowledge base, it cannot be used to determine the overall learning and educational experience that Murnane & Cohen (1986) call "opportunistic behavior." They suggest that merit pay based on a single measure, such as test scores, creates voids in the system and areas of neglect; i.e., anything that is not tested upon.

Furthermore, Murnane and Cohen (1986) argue that if the merit pay incentives are not clearly communicated to the teachers, they will be unmotivated to achieve those incentives and it will taint the relationship between the administration and teachers. Teachers will fear going to a supervisor with a problem if they think they will be penalized.

The Ethos of Teaching and Dan Lortie

Perhaps Murnane and Cohen, Johnson and Papay, and other notables making headway into the research of performance pay are missing a critical component of their research. They have hypothesized that teaching is a profession unlike any other and that teachers are motivated to perform their duties as teachers by similar and/or different factors than others. Yet why has a majority of the research on the inefficiency of pay for performance plans centered on quantitative methods?

Is a quantitative approach necessary if the research is to be taken seriously within the scholarly educational community? One sincerely would hope not. In fact, a qualitative research study on the motivations and ethos of the teaching profession would provide a profound understanding that surpasses abstract and/or disconnected statistical analysis. Why, then, have data from longitudinal studies like the Vanderbilt P.O.I.N.T. study been weighted so heavily in the scholarly research community regarding pay for performance? The two methods, quantitative and qualitative, operate on opposite end of a research spectrum. Data are collected and analyzed in completely divergent processes. A quantitative study focuses on amounts and numerical descriptions of relationships. Conversely, a qualitative study attempts to explain meanings and define traits of people, events, and relationships, and interactions between people with others or with organizations, environments, and settings. Qualitative research allows the researcher to really understand the subjects of the study. Allowing the researcher to interpret findings in specific contexts and environments, qualitative researchers can truly delve into the deeper motivations, attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions of individuals and organizations. Thus, it makes sense that a detailed research study include first hand interviews and field observations surround the pay for performance issue.

Why not expand on Dan Lortie's (1970) landmark study into the ethos of teacher motivations and build upon the baseline data to design a pay for performance plan that is relative to the nature of teachers themselves? A study like Lortie's could only be accomplished using a qualitative methodology. A quantitative methodology would not lend the research to understand patterns, practices, and beliefs that differentiate teachers from other workers (xviii).

Unfortunately, the amount of actual pages in the book *School Teacher* dedicated to the description of Lortie's methodology is sparse, 2-3 pages combined, to say the least. Lortie does discuss that embarking on a qualitative approach, he attempted to "match the method" to the problem he would be studying (xix). He further explains the necessity of a qualitative approach in his study, as quantitative analyses are limited by sample size and representation into general categories. Lortie states in the preface of his book that he designed the study using a comparative method because for him it was the "most useful strategy in studying a familiar sector" like teaching and compare it to other occupations (xix). However, because Lortie designed the study in this manner, he exposed himself to criticism by quantitative researchers who may question the validity of his entire study on the basis that Lortie did not provide enough information to evaluate the sample. He restricted the sample to five random towns; therefore, the sample's representativeness cannot be judged against national data. Despite these quantitative pitfalls, Lortie recognized that in order for teachers to express themselves truthfully and in their own "language," so to speak, field work and extensive open-ended interviews were necessary to conduct the study. Lortie's primary intent of this study, again, was to lay a foundation of "social insight," as his study allows the reader to acquire a perception of the "nature of teaching as an occupation" (xix).

Lortie alludes to the problems associated with the qualitative method and comparative design for his study. Lortie explains that because he compares the teaching occupation to other occupations, he must delve deep into the meanings that people attach to their careers. This, in and of itself, is an arduous task, as one has to “penetrate the rhetoric of prestige-seeking defense” and truly get to the bottom of the authentic feelings and thoughts regarding the occupation (p. 107). In other words, Lortie describes the methodological problem of sifting through the sands of the fervent persuasion that most use in justifying their positions and occupations and finding the pieces of gold that are authentic for analysis. The solution that Lortie uses to solve the methodological problem involves the emphasis of his analysis on the aforementioned “cathected attitudes” along with specific, personal, grounded, and well-defined interview responses to compare against one another. Moreover, the methodological problem that Lortie contends with is knocked out of the ring, as he describes the extensive interviews permitting him to understand the teachers’ “language” and subsequent field observations of the authenticities of classroom teaching (p. 107).

In order to uncover the hidden sentiments of teachers seeking refuge behind “opaque language” (p.110), Lortie identifies themes within the types of questions in the interviews. He describes the barometers used in measuring different types of data on sentiments: “indirect versus direct questions; personal versus impersonal referents; concrete versus abstract referents; and cathected versus low-affect issues.” (p. 110). In each of these categorizations of the interview questions, Lortie describes the ability of being able to distinguish between the genuine and disingenuous responses that teachers provide as well as allow flexibility and opportunity for them to express evaluative feelings, ideals, and thoughts, all forming true sentiments. By identifying the questions in this way, Lortie is able to mitigate the methodological problem of

lack of transparency within teacher responses. Understanding these true sentiments, after analysis of each categorical response to interview questions, results in explaining the research problem of the study as understanding the ethos of the teaching occupation. Lortie labels this entire process as “phenomenological analysis” (p. 110).

Performance Pay and the Evolution of *School Teacher*

It is incredible too, that Lortie’s study and findings on the nature of the teaching occupation conducted in the 1960s is congruent with the ethos of the teachers of the twenty-first century. Lortie eloquently provided a platform for discussion about challenges facing the educational arena while reflecting on the essential nature of those who drive the profession, teachers. However, he did provide specific policy suggestions, leaving his study open for future researchers to build upon in conducting national comparison studies and is therefore the place in which I commenced my research study.

Conclusion

There is a critical need for more research about teacher pay for performance systems, especially as it relates to motivation, student achievement, and the profession of teaching. Policy makers and educational practitioners will find it ever so crucial to continue this research, as it directly correlates to their teacher preparation programs and training teachers to enter this twenty-first century educational workforce of standards-based performance of inputs and outcomes. First, a common language is needed to describe teacher compensation systems, their characteristics and components. Second, more converging reports are needed on the theoretical research of motivation theory and its connection to teacher performance to make marked and clear the understanding of how monetary and intrinsic incentives may motivate teachers to

perform. Third, qualitative and ethnographic research is needed to truly understand what, how, and if financial incentives motivate teacher performance.

The guiding question for this investigation was as follows: What is the relationship between teacher motivation and performance-based compensation? Additional sub-questions were addressed: (1) From teachers' perspective, what is the level of performance motivation given the current compensation policy environment? (2) How does the interplay between teacher motivation and teachers' remuneration needs influence teacher performance? (3) From teachers' perspective, what conditions, practices, and policies related to compensation contribute to or constrain motivation for performance? and (4) Are (and to what extent) teachers motivated by economic/external factors? Until these questions are researched comprehensively and thoroughly, through a variety of methodology, the controversy of the teacher pay for performance phenomenon will continue.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Podgursky and Springer (2010) assert that the current teacher compensation plans—made up of two factors, years of experience and graduate education—are ineffective in motivating teachers to perform. One may postulate that restructuring the compensation plan, in a form that provides motivation for teachers as an input may lead to higher productivity measured by student achievement (output), thus improving public education overall. Scholars and those advocating school reform have attempted to propose and implement policies based on fiscal budget reports and school performance reports submitted to state departments of education. Teacher compensation policy has largely been established and enacted with little input from teachers. Although teachers are the intended beneficiaries of teacher compensation reform, their voices have been left out of the policy discourse. Insights from the teachers themselves on which factors motivate performance would add much to the policy analysis and dialogue on education reform.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teachers' perception of the pay-for-performance phenomenon and its impact on teacher performance in an attempt to answer the following questions:

(1) What is the relationship between teacher motivation and performance-based compensation? (2) From teachers' perspective, what is the level of performance motivation given the current compensation policy environment? (3) How does the interplay between teacher motivation and teachers' remuneration needs influence teacher performance? and (4) From teachers' perspective, what conditions, practices, and policies related to compensation contribute

to or constrain motivation for performance? This chapter describes the research methodology and design for this study. A discussion of participant selections, data collection and analysis follows. Finally, limitations, reflexivity, and ethical considerations conclude this chapter.

A Qualitative Approach

A qualitative study aims to describe and understand people's experiences, events, and relationships, interactions between people with others or with organizations, environments and settings (Creswell et al, 2007). The qualitative research process holds much value within the public education arena. To listen to the voices of teachers is crucial to the academic community as policy is created, directly affecting their work. Creswell et al. (2007) comments that researchers "face a baffling array of options for conducting qualitative research" (p. 236). For the purposes of this study, a phenomenological approach was selected based on the defining characteristics adapted from Creswell et al. (2007, p. 242).

Table 3

Characteristics of Phenomenological Qualitative Designs

Characteristics	Phenomenology
Types of problems best suited for design	When the researcher seeks to understand lived experiences of a person about a phenomenon.
Discipline background	Education, psychology
Unit of analysis	Several individuals who have shared the experience
Data collection forms	Primarily interviews (although documents, observations, and art may also be considered)
Data analysis strategies	Bracketing statements, meaning units or themes, textual descriptions, structural description, essence of the phenomenon
Degree of structure in methods	Structured approach in data analysis

Specifically, Van Manen's (1990) phenomenological research approach guided this study. Van Manen provides the basis for the selection of research methodology for describing phenomenological research as a "caring act" (p. 5). He expands this idea of research in detail:

To care is to serve and share . . . We desire to truly know our loved one's very nature . . .
If our love is strong enough, we not only will learn much about life, we also will come
face to face with its mystery. (p. 5)

If one does not "care" about the subjects, people, and humans representing that which one is trying to understand, what does that leave for providing suggestions for the improvement of the phenomenon? Van Manen (1990) describes the phenomenological method as *human science*, emphasizing a humanistic side to research rather than identifying rigid parameters. Moustakas (1994) describes that the "aim" of phenomenology is to understand the essence of the lived experiences directly from individuals and to make meaning of those experiences (Van Manen, 1990). Qualitative research allows the researcher to understand and to interpret findings in specific contexts and environments, by delving into the deeper motivations, attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions of individuals and organizations. In this study, connecting the voices of teachers and their teaching experience in relation to teacher pay and to the formation of effective policy that enhances motivation, performance, and achievement is of utmost importance. This study sought to provide a deeper understanding of the relationships and connections of teacher motivations directly from the words, sentiments, perceptions, and insights of teachers.

In this study, it was my intention to understand teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding pay for performance and enable their voices to be heard in order to improve the profession of educators from teachers' point of view, whether one is a quantitative or qualitative researcher.

Research Site

The research site was located in the northeast section of the United States. Northeast High School serves 1,333 students in Grades 9-12. According to the New Jersey School Report Card (2011-12), approximately 62% of students enrolled full time at Northeast High School are White, 2% Black, 8% Hispanic, 28% Asian, and less than 1% are considered of two or more races. Enrollment trends by program participation for Northeast High School include students with disabilities, making up 17% of the total enrollment; economically disadvantaged students making up 4% of the total enrollment; and less than 1% of students making up the total enrollment with limited English language proficiency. There are approximately 110 staff members at Northeast High School, making the student to faculty ratio 12:1, and the student to administrator ratio 166:1. The faculty of Northeast High School is comprised of eight academic departments: Business, 4%; Fine, Practical, and Performing Arts, 13%; Humanities, 25%; Math, 13%; Science, 13%; Special Education, 14%; Wellness and Physical Education, 10%; and World Languages, 10%.

According to the New Jersey School Performance Report, Northeast High School “outperforms 75% of schools statewide . . . and 57% of schools (2011-12) educating students with similar demographic characteristics as noted in its peer school percentile ranking.” Schools that have similar grade levels with similar demographic characteristics such as the percentage of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch, Limited English Proficiency programs, or special education programs are noted as “peer schools” for comparative measure in this report.

Northeast High School was selected as a research site for several reasons: First, my familiarity with key administrators would be useful in identifying participants. Second, because of my knowledge of the school community of Northeast High School, a neighboring school

district of the one in which I am employed, district staff programs and instructional programs were useful in understanding the background and context of the participants to be interviewed.

Northeast High School teachers are paid on a step and lock scale similar to most of the traditional public school teacher compensation programs in the nation. According to the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC, 2013), there are 22 steps on the guide. A first year teacher, Step One, with a bachelor's degree has a starting salary of \$50,106. Salaries for Step One teachers are higher, based on the graduate credits they hold at the time of hire. For example, a teacher on Step One, BA + 15 earns \$50,734; Step One, BA + 30 earns \$50,792; Step One, MA earns \$51,821; Step One, MA + 30 earns \$53,315; and Step One, MA + 45 earns \$53,926. Each year, according to the contract, teachers earn an annual increase of 3% to their salary. After 22 years of service, a teacher earns \$92,015 on Step 22, BA; on Step 22, MA +45, a teacher earns \$112,740. A teacher earns an additional stipend of \$990 for earning a doctorate degree. In addition, Northeast High School teachers can earn "service credits" to advance on the salary guide. A service credit, according to the published contract, may be given for curriculum work, educational travel, educational writing, or service to a professional organization. A Service Credit Evaluation Committee, made up of the superintendent, building administrators, and teachers, grant the number of credits appropriate to each request.

Although there is only one school district in this state that has a teacher compensation system other than the step and lock scale, this school district has pieces of what may resemble performance based compensation, like the "service credit."

Participant Selection

A phenomenological study requires the researcher to evaluate the human responses of participants. Thus, careful consideration must be made in selecting participants. I used

purposeful sampling strategy to recruit individual teachers who were willing to share their experiences (Creswell, 2009). More specifically, in order to understand the motivations of teachers, a selected group of teachers were interviewed. In order to fill the gap in the literature about high school teachers' perceptions of the pay for performance debate, participants in this study were selected based on the following criteria: (1) teachers of the two academic departments that have the largest proportion of teacher population in the school because they represented the majority of faculty perspective; (2) teachers with a variety of years of experience, ranging from more than one year's experience up to 30 years of experience; and (3) the level of the teacher's education. These criteria allowed the researcher to gain a rich variety of responses. A recruitment flyer was placed in the teacher mailboxes (see Appendix A). The number of participants interviewed depended on the number of those responding, until saturation of data was achieved. However, I made every effort to recruit at least four teachers for each variable.

Data Collection

The main source of data was personal interviews with teacher participants. This interview process delved into how and why the participants (teachers) perceive the pay for performance phenomenon within their given environment and context. The interview process gives a human face to the research question or problem. Furthermore, the interviews allowed me as the researcher to understand how teachers explain behaviors, thoughts, processes, and emotions related to their own motivation relative to performance. The interviews were conducted at the research site, Northeast High School, in classrooms, conference rooms, or faculty break rooms. Additionally, interviews were conducted on the telephone or at a location such as a coffee shop which was convenient to the participant. Each interview lasted about one hour during the participant's lunch hour, planning period, or after school. Follow-up interviews were conducted

if the researcher and the participant felt that the time constraint of the first interview limited responses.

I used semi-structured, open-ended interview questions, covering topics such as personal experience as a teacher, perspectives on educational or instructional effectiveness and philosophy, quality of teacher licensing as compared to other professions, collegial relationships as related to performance, teacher evaluation, etc. Some interview questions are provided below:

How do you feel that you take educational and professional risks as a teacher?

Can you describe whether or not you feel that you are an effective teacher?

How do you feel a sense of competition and/or inequity among your colleagues?

How do you feel you have grown as a teacher? Explain.

How do you feel that the school that you work in has helped you to enhance your craft?

How do you feel about the actions of your peers/colleagues on your performance as a teacher? Does it impact you to do more or less?

How would you define an incompetent teacher? Do you see incompetent teachers at your school? Please give examples.

What made you enter the profession of teaching as opposed to other professions such as medicine, banking, law, etc.?

How have the Highly Qualified Teacher requirements increased the effectiveness of teachers?

Think about the time you spent preparing for the Praxis exam. Have you realized the results of sitting for that exam? Was the exam useful?

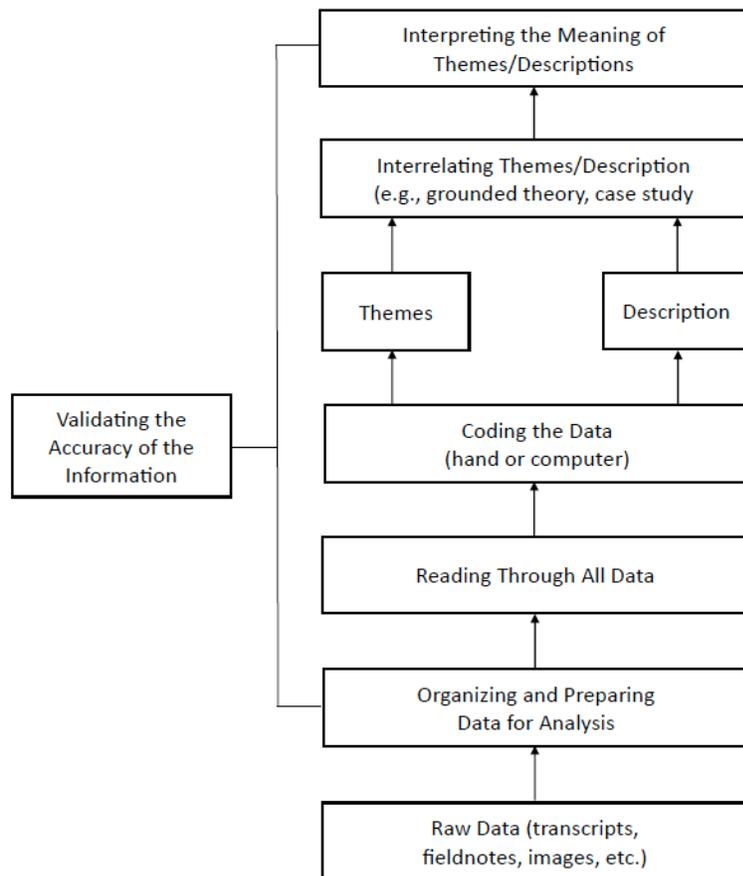
How do you feel the evaluation system has affected your performance and exceeded your expectations of work up to this point as a professional?

Data Analysis

To ensure the validity of the qualitative data, I followed Creswell's (2009) qualitative data analysis process depicted in Table 4 below (p. 185):

Table 4

Data Analysis in Qualitative Research



After the interviews were conducted, they were be transcribed verbatim. Throughout the interviews, I took field notes, listening attentively to interviewees' responses and accounts. Later in the analysis process, I listened to the transcripts for reflections to patterns and themes and recorded them in the researcher's journal. Next, I analyzed the data with a coding process. As

Creswell (2009) describes, “Coding is the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information” (p. 186). A qualitative codebook was developed using “color code schemes” to highlight “text segments” (p. 188). Third, I identified, as Moustakas (1994) classifies, an “essence description,” and I analyzed significant statements and interpreted the emergent thematic responses.

To acquire Moustakas’ (1994) “essence description,” I used his model of phenomenological research, and I attempted to understand the teacher pay for performance phenomenon as it appeared through the experiences of the participants. Moustakas’ four steps in the data collection and analysis process are as follows: epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis. First, epoche requires the researcher to reserve all judgments and assumptions. The researcher must conduct the interview acknowledging his/her own bias and preconceived notions and how they may influence the interview process. The researcher must be open to understanding everything about the actual experience as described by the participants. Second, phenomenological reduction entails bringing pieces of meaning and significance to statements made by the participants, which are to be reflected upon. The researcher’s challenge is to investigate each statement, sound, and feeling, and “bracket” elements that define the experience in the researcher’s conscious. Third, imaginative variation requires the researcher to describe how the phenomenon is experienced and how it came to be for the participant. This step is used to identify qualities of the experience that are similar to each participant, leading to the essential structure of the experience. Last, synthesis, or intuitive integration, is the “textural” and “structural” descriptions that the researcher takes from the interview and synthesizes into a complete description of the essence of the lived experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Data Coding

As explained above, data were collected and analyzed to gain the “essence description” (Moustakas, 1994) of this study which was an attempt to understand the teacher pay for performance phenomenon as it appears through the experiences of the participants. To acquire this “essence description,” I followed Moustakas’ four steps of data collection and analysis: epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis. I then constructed codes to define emerging themes from the data, gaining an understanding and insight into capturing the perceptions of teachers on the link between motivation and performance-based compensation.

Data were analyzed using Saldana’s (2009) two cycle coding method in which the data evolve gradually as they are examined repeatedly. First, data analysis began with the transcription of the interviews. Then the first cycle of coding, *initial coding*, of the transcribed data and field notes began. Saldana describes *initial coding* as a method that is “truly open-ended for a researcher’s first review of the corpus” (p. 66). For example, one participant said, “. . . thinking in terms of salary, my first reaction is that this district doesn’t pay very much compared to other districts.” This statement was similar to many statements other participants made throughout their interviews. Therefore, data such as this one were coded as “Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction With Current Compensation Structure.” During this initial coding, almost every line and key phrase of the transcripts were coded. (see Table 5 below).

Simultaneous coding was used in the first cycle of analysis, as well, because there was an “overlapped occurrence of two or more codes applied to sequential units of qualitative data” (p. 62). These overlapped codes were also *rested codes* within the primary *hierarchical code* (p. 63), as in the following example:

¹We just, you know, and as English teachers we feel like, you know, we always have paper load, when it comes to getting things disseminated to the school, since all the students take an English class, that's the way they often are administrative, kind of communicate in that always they're pretty sensitive about that, but classroom visits, all those sorts of things.

You know, guidance comes in, they seem to come at, from our perspective as English teachers, we think that we have more than

^{1A}our fair share of the burden. So, but that isn't even competition, it's just there is, the district is constantly trying to create parity amongst all the schools, so that elementary school teachers are working the same number of hours as the high school teachers.

¹COMPARISON TO
COLLEAGUES

^{1A} ACTIONS OF
PEERS AFFECT
YOU

The *pattern coding* approach was used for the second cycle of coding. According to Saldana (2009), pattern codes are used to “develop major themes from the data,” to “search for explanations in the data,” and for the “formation of theoretical constructs and processes” (p. 152). After examining the initial and simultaneous coded data, several themes emerged. As new themes emerged within categories in each description, all previous analysis was reexamined for similar themes (Guba, 1978). Organizing the data in this fashion allowed the researcher to easily identify several themes that emerged strongly from the interviews.

Table 5

Code Scheme

CATEGORY	Compensation	Current Education Policy Environment	Participant's Personal Teaching Experience
SUBCATEGORY	Salary	New Teacher Evaluation	Career Choice
CODES	Low Uncompetitive Financial struggle	Overwhelming stress Useless paperwork Exhausting	Inspiration Second career Parental discouragement Discourage other prospective teachers
SUBCATEGORY	Benefits	Negative Impact on Profession	Pre-professional Preparation
CODES	Rising healthcare contributions Cuts to pension/retirement	Decreasing motivation Decreasing creativity and productivity Devaluing professional worth	College/course of study Usefulness of preparation program/experience
SUBCATEGORY	Reform necessary		In the School and Classroom
CODES	Better compensation model Monetary incentive to motivate performance		Professional risks Administrative support District bureaucracy
SUBCATEGORY			Inequitable Feelings
CODES			Inequity across teaching subjects Inequity of professional responsibilities Inequity of pay

Role of the Qualitative Researcher

A qualitative researcher assumes a different role than a quantitative researcher.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) a qualitative researcher must engage in a three -step process. First, one must assume the role of a naturalistic researcher and embrace the idea, as Patton (1990) claims that there are not “absolute characteristics of qualitative inquiry, but rather strategic ideals that provide a direction and a framework for developing specific designs and concrete data collection tactics” (p. 59). Second, the qualitative researcher must create an appropriate instrument with which to conduct research and a process to collect, interpret, and analyze data.

Furthermore, Eisner (1991) explains, “There are no operationally defined truth tests to apply to qualitative research” (p. 53). Because of this naturalistic approach, it is of the utmost importance that every effort to preserve trustworthiness be maintained. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified criteria corresponding to analysis of qualitative research: “credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability” (p. 300). It was my intent to clearly describe the codes, categories, themes, patterns, and conclusions extracted from the interview transcripts, as well as to remain as objective as possible and to address the potential personal influence and views upon the analysis of the data collected in Chapter IV of this study.

Finally, as a proponent of teacher pay for performance as a means of motivating teachers to improve overall, this research topic evolved over the past decade through my personal investment as a teacher and curriculum supervisor in the public education system. I feel that in my experience in the public education system, moving from a teaching to a supervisory role, my motivation to improve myself as an educator has only grown stronger. Often I would wonder why I had continuously sought to improve myself and had the motivation to work harder while

many of my peers did not. A sense of complacency seemed to affect those who achieved tenure (at the time, three years of service plus one day), and the drive for continuous improved performance flat-lined. This troubling pattern created a sense of great frustration for me as a teacher- I felt as though I worked ten times as hard as most of the teachers in my building and was compensated with the same salary or less, regardless of my performance. This was one of the reasons that I sought to become an administrator.

Now, as an administrator in the K-12 public education sector, I take momentous responsibility to ensure that the needs of the teachers for engaging students in activities within a respectful learning environment are met. This is essential in empowering teachers and helping them capitalize on their own motivations and ambitions to continue to improve their performance. I hope that this research study will provide insight as to why the pay for performance controversy and the teacher compensation process need to include the voice of the teacher. Teachers should play a major role in the decision-making process. Moreover, it is my intent as a researcher to encourage stakeholders to recognize the need for a tenacious advocate for teachers, acting as a liaison between legislative ideals and teacher realities.

Limitations of the Study

It is important to note several limitations of this study. The participants selected for this study were employed in a public school district other than the one in which I am employed. I do not have authority as an administrator over these teachers. However, the teachers being interviewed may feel the need to tailor their responses to what they believe I wish to hear as I have an administrative role in another school district.

Second, as a former teacher, a perpetual student, and hopeful researcher, participants in this study were presumably comfortable sharing their experiences with me during the interviews.

I was mindful to work collaboratively with the teachers to collect data appropriately and ensure that all interpretations of the responses accurately represented their views, opinions, and perceptions.

Third, participants' views were not intended to represent the views of all of the teachers in the school in which the study was conducted, nor did their voices claim to represent the voices of all of the teachers in the school district.

Fourth, the selection criteria for the participant sample limited the study to focusing on the two largest faculty departments of the high school, rather than faculty as a whole. This study was restricted to a single data source to learn about the perceptions of teachers on the pay-for-performance phenomenon, thus limiting triangulation of the data from other sources, such as administrators.

Protection of Human Subjects

Protocol for research adhered to the guidelines set by Seton Hall University's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. All of the identifying information of selected participants was protected, preserving their anonymity. Identifying participant information was removed from interview recordings and transcripts and was used solely for research purposes by this researcher.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teachers' perspectives about their teaching experiences in relation to teacher pay. In this chapter, I present findings based on the analysis of semi-structured interview data with 14 teachers at Northeast High School. More specifically, this study sought to better understand teacher motivation and its connection to performance based compensation.

Emergent Themes

Four main themes were identified in this study:

1. **Evaluate This! Stressful New Teacher Evaluation Policies:** This theme identified the saddling pressure of the newly implemented teacher evaluation system and how teachers' motivation and performance are negatively impacted by the copious data collection, paperwork, and reporting.
2. **Pay Me! Low and Uncompetitive Salary:** This theme explored teachers' needs for a monetary incentive to motivate their intrinsic performance. Also, this theme discusses the financial struggles that teachers face due to the single salary schedule as well as their perceptions of unjustified compensation for effort into their work.
3. **Future of Health and Retirement Benefits:** This theme focused on the effects of the radical monetary increases required of teachers to contribute to their health plan premiums and the major reform cuts to their pension benefits on teachers' performance and desire to remain in the profession.
4. **Don't Become a Teacher!** This theme identified the unfortunate discouragement by many teachers to their own students, colleagues, and others from choosing teaching

as a profession due to the lack of perceived professional value and uncompetitive wages as compared to other professional fields such as law, medicine, etc.

In this chapter, I also include a description of the study participants. The intent is to contextualize teachers' narratives within the discussion of the themes and involve the voices of the teachers about their own personal experiences to inform discussion about policy that affects them and enhances motivation, performance, and achievement. In doing so, I sought to understand the phenomenon from the participants' standpoint.

Participants

This section briefly provides a brief description of 14 teachers who participated in this study. Two teachers from the Math Department participated, and 12 teachers from the Humanities Department participated (six teachers of English and six teachers of Social Studies). Overall, the average years of teaching experience among participants was about 11 years. Interestingly enough, a common quality that came up after the selection process, through no intention of mine at all, was that the majority of the participants were second-career teachers. Table 6 describes the demographic information of the participants.

Table 6

Demographic Information of Study Participants

	Department	Years of Teaching Experience	Teaching as a Second Career
Brenda	Humanities (Social Studies)	18	Yes
Donald	Humanities (Social Studies)	9	Yes
Geoffrey	Humanities (English)	18	Yes
Jennifer	Humanities (Social Studies)	6	Yes
Kyle	Math	9	No
Larry	Humanities (English)	18	Yes
Lily	Humanities (Social Studies)	13	Yes
Melissa	Humanities (English)	9	Yes
Mike	Humanities (Social Studies)	5	No
Nadine	Humanities (Social Studies)	9	Yes
Rebecca	Humanities (English)	8	Yes
Rose	Humanities (English)	8	No
Sam	Math	11	Yes
Yvonne	Humanities (English)	9	Yes

Profiles of Participants

Participant One: Brenda

Brenda has been teaching social studies for 18 years. She chose teaching as a second career. In her former career, Brenda worked in international business as a project coordinator for the U.S.-Poland Chamber of Commerce. Her undergraduate degree was in Asian Studies and she lived in Japan for a year. Brenda was involved in helping U.S. companies conduct business in Poland or start up partnerships with government organizations after the fall of communism. Brenda traveled extensively for her job and realized that it was too much of a burden if she wanted to be married and have children. Although Brenda's mother, a chemist, discouraged her from becoming a teacher, "The profession is so thankless." Brenda decided, "I like it . . . It comes naturally to me." Brenda already had a graduate degree in international relations with a focus on international political economics; she went back to school and earned a graduate degree in education.

Brenda says that she chose teaching, "but it certainly wasn't for the enticing salary!" Brenda says about her choice: "Well, I'm hesitant now [about happiness of career choice] because I certainly get a lot more out of teaching." She adds that if she had stayed in her former career, she would have "ended up making a lot more money" and her family would not have financial hardships as they do now. Brenda is "exhausted" and "professionally dying" because due to the new legislation and continuous data reporting required from the state, she does not have the time to really put all of her focus on her instruction any longer. Brenda is concerned for future candidates for the teaching profession and would offer advice to seek out a more lucrative career.

Participant Two: Donald

Donald has been teaching for the past nine years. Donald worked for an advertising agency writing for on-air broadcasts before choosing teaching as a second career. Donald felt that working in advertising didn't "soothe" his creative need and he felt that he would gain much more enjoyment from teaching children. Interestingly enough, Donald's father was a social studies teacher for 30 years and discouraged him from pursuing teaching as a career, saying, "You're not going to make any money. It's going to be a tough life."

Nonetheless, Donald loved teaching when he first started and "never felt like it was work" because he enjoyed it so much. Now, given the current policy environment, Donald feels that it has become harder to teach and to do his job well because the new evaluation system requires him to collect data, make charts, and "sort of apply a business model" to students using test scores, only to inflate those scores in order to say that the United States is more competitive with other countries in student achievement. Donald expresses frustration with the compensation structure, as raises in the contractual salary steps are mostly negotiated for teachers with the most years of experience, leaving him and those not at the top of the ladder with low pay.

Participant Three: Geoffrey

Geoffrey has been an English teacher for 13 years. This is his second career. He worked in financial services for about seven years. Geoffrey was looking for a more fulfilling career and "decided to take the plunge and try to get a job as an English teacher." He enrolled in the alternate route program and feels "passionate" about what he does as an English teacher and loves helping students. Geoffrey describes that he did not realize that his "plunge" into teaching would be so "interesting, engaging, and dynamic . . . [it's] refreshing to be around their [students'] enthusiasm and their energy . . . [it's] really contagious."

Geoffrey believes that teacher compensation should provide monetary incentive that “rewards, that encourages initiative, vision . . . innovative instruction that speaks to students where they live . . .” Interestingly enough, Geoffrey believes that teachers, especially English teachers, should be compensated in the form of “billable hours” for all of the paperwork and grading they do outside of the confines of the school day. Given the current policy environment, Geoffrey feels teachers do need to be involved in the process of creating a system of reward that works rather than being disseminated by legislators with no concept of teaching or education reality. Geoffrey says that a performance-based compensation model is “something that could happen; it could, you know, change education or could make it a lot better than it is.”

Participant Four: Jennifer

Jennifer has been teaching for the past six years. Before she was a teacher, Jennifer was a creative director for an advertising agency. After much debate with her husband, despite the over 60% reduction in salary she would take (but she would gain better health benefits and a pension), Jennifer decided to jump into a teaching career because she would have more time at home with her children. Jennifer says that if she were still in advertising and wanted to make the career change into teaching at this point, her husband would not support it because the major cuts to the teachers’ pension and benefits system would not balance out with all of the late-night grading, planning, and other take-home work that she does.

Jennifer feels that salary “would be a huge incentive” to continue to be motivated and even attract quality candidates into the field of teaching. She says that ten years ago she was making more money than she does right now; and comically she adds that when she’s ready to retire, at step 22 on the salary guide, she will be earning the same salary she earned when she left advertising. She feels that there are many teachers that “just do what they need to do to get by,”

and the problem that she has with the current compensation guide is that there are teachers who “don’t care and it is clear to everyone,” yet their salary is the same.

Participant Five: Kyle

Kyle has been a math teacher at Northeast High School for the past nine years. Kyle was a music major in college but decided during his junior year that he wanted to be a teacher. He decided to take the alternate instead of the traditional route. Kyle had no interest in basic educational foundation or philosophical courses; he just wanted the skills necessary and on the job training to perform. Kyle feels that he has job security being a math teacher and is confident that if a performance-based compensation structure were in place, he would do well. In fact, he immediately relates the new policy legislation with Student Growth Percentiles to some form of merit pay. At this stage in his life, Kyle makes just enough to pay his bills for his wife and three children; if he needed more money, he states that he would have to find a different job. However, Kyle firmly believes that the teaching profession is “built around the idea that payment is building relationships.

Participant Six: Larry

Larry has been teaching English for the past 23 years. This is his second career. Larry worked as an actor in his former career. When Larry was in high school, his parents discouraged him from pursuing teaching because the “compensation . . . was particularly meager.” Larry was encouraged to pursue acting. He worked for about 14 years in New York and Chicago as an actor and “had a heck of a time, but didn’t make a living.” Once he was married, Larry decided that he needed “a steady job” and was “looking for more in life” in terms of his career. He chose teaching because he was able to apply his theater and acting skills and knowledge background into the instruction of English. Larry went back to schools and earned a master’s degree and his

teaching certification.

Larry describes that teaching was the right choice for his family because his wife was climbing the proverbial ladder with her marketing career and it required them to move to different states for about ten years. Larry was able to find teaching jobs in other states rather easily and had a schedule conducive to raising their children. Larry has been teaching at Northeast High School since 2001 and is happy.

Participant Seven: Lily

Lily has been teaching for the past 13 years. Lily's first career was in television production, in which she traveled extensively. When it became time for Lily to start her family, she wanted to find a job that minimized her time away from home. After working as an office manager in a doctor's office for several years, she was encouraged to become a teacher as she was always editing the papers of college students who worked with her; "It just felt good" to help.

Lily, who is also a Board of Education member in the town in which she resides (not Northeast as it would be a conflict of interest), uses the following analogy to the current policy environment which, although in motion and gaining momentum, is greatly flawed and fragmented: "It is like he [the Commissioner of Education] is building a plane while in flight . . . Do we really want to be on this flight?" Lily says that from a teacher's perspective, the new evaluation system is "just more paperwork" and "justification by politicians" to prove that they are trying to better the education system.

Lily feels very strongly that teachers are being forced to carry the burden of policy makers who are detached from the realities of the day-to-day operations of K-12 educators, compensation included. Even though Lily feels that soldiers in trenches receive more respect

than teachers “because you have to keep up morale in the war” she feels that education right now is just like war and teachers are told “just go in there, just do whatever, you know, dive into death and keep piling stuff on you.”

Participant Eight: Melissa

Melissa has been teaching English for the past nine years. This is her second career. Melissa formerly worked in downtown Manhattan in the public relations field, in which she was very happy. She decided to pursue a career in teaching after the events of September 11 because her firm lost many clients in the tragedy and she was not comfortable commuting to the City every day. Melissa’s mother, a teacher for 30 years, encouraged her to apply as a substitute and try teaching to see if she liked it. Soon thereafter, Melissa “fell in love with it” and started teaching at a local Catholic school. She went back to school and earned her master’s degree in education and then landed a job at Northeast High School.

Melissa feels that teachers are not compensated fairly for the job that they do, especially English teachers who are often “slighted,” because “we have significantly more take-home work and we get paid the same.” Even though teachers are encouraged to acquire advanced degrees and sharpen their skill set, Melissa says that her salary increased only \$500 after receiving her master’s degree—hardly a fraction of the cost to benefit ratio within her profession. These are some of the many reasons that Melissa—and she would argue many of her colleagues—feel they are not valued as professionals yet stay in the profession because they love students.

Participant Nine: Mike

Mike has been teaching for the past five years. He is new to Northeast High School this school year. Mike is enthusiastic about the school community and chose teaching as a career because he “really liked my high school principal and it kind of made me want to go into

education and be involved in all that.” Even though Mike feels that English and history teachers “read a lot more essays than other subjects” and essentially have a much heavier workload than other teachers, he thinks, “Each teacher has their own responsibilities . . . their own kind of role that they have to take.”

Given the current policy environment, Mike is burdened with time and paperwork due to the Student Growth Objective initiatives. He exclaims that he is not a “fan” of the new evaluation system and thinks it is “designed to shake the tree and the bad apples will fall off and then it will go away eventually.” Mike claims that he is very self-motivated and does not see how a system of performance pay would ever be fair given that it would be too subjective in nature because of the “baggage” students bring with them into the classroom each day.

Participant Ten: Nadine

Nadine has been teaching for nine years as a psychology teacher in the Humanities Department at Northeast High School. This is her second career. Formerly, Nadine worked as a recruiter on Wall Street. When the tragic events of September 11 took place, Nadine was “in the middle of what had happened” and decided that she “just didn’t want to do that [corporate recruiting] anymore . . . I decided to call it quits.” Nadine went back to school and earned a master’s degree and landed a job teaching at Northeast High School.

Nadine feels that after nine years, teaching is “not fun,” as most of her time is spent on testing. She says that one of the best things about teaching is using one’s creativity and personality to encourage students, but now she “feel[s] like it’s sort of being sucked out of me because there is no room for innovation.” She says that she would not recommend anyone to enter the field because of the current policy environment. She discouraged two of her former students from becoming history teachers because she felt that “they were better than that” and

after a few years, they would peak and become disinterested because of their intelligence. She feels that many of her colleagues share the same sentiments. Nadine is considering leaving teaching and returning to her former profession as she “still makes less than half” of her former salary and the teacher compensation package “is a big insult.”

Participant Eleven: Rebecca

Rebecca has been teaching for the past eight years. This is her third year working at Northeast High School and also her tenure year. Teaching in the K-12 public school system was not what Rebecca had originally planned for herself. She earned an undergraduate degree in English and then feared, “What am I going to do with this?” She then continued and earned a master’s degree in creative writing and was offered a position as an adjunct professor. Rebecca “loved it and had so much fun.” Unfortunately, teaching as an adjunct was only part-time and Rebecca needed a full-time position to support herself.

Rebecca decided to give teaching in the K-12 realm a chance. She worked in a parochial school while obtaining her teaching certificate through the alternate route program. A year later, Rebecca landed a job in one of the largest urban public school districts in New Jersey. Within the current policy environment, Rebecca expresses exhaustion amidst the data collection, extra paperwork, and heavier course load. “I have taught ten different classes in three years; that is a lot and when you care about your job and you want to be effective in what you are doing . . . I just don’t have the time to dedicate to anything and that to me, you know, is not really very helpful.” She also feels that teachers who are effective and work hard, like herself, are being “punished” with the new teacher evaluation system and is unhappy with legislators because “they don’t understand the plight of the teacher in 2014 in the public school.”

Rebecca shares that she is considering leaving the field because her salary is

“unacceptable” and she “cannot survive.” She is unable to be approved for a mortgage because her salary is too low. Rebecca is upset when she compares her income as a profession in the teaching profession to that of her peers. “I am a professional . . . I have friends that are making \$90,000 and they have time . . . and do all kinds of things.” Rebecca’s final sentiment is “What is the reward for us?”

Participant Twelve: Rose

Rose has been teaching for the past eight years. Rose knew she wanted to be a teacher since the second grade. She loved her second grade teacher, who is now one of her teaching counterparts. Rose went to college and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in English, rather than education because her GPA was not high enough. Nonetheless, that did not discourage her from pursuing her dream, and she became a teacher’s aide. Rose then landed a job as a full-time teacher in a parochial school and earned her teaching certificate through a master’s program in education before finally landing a job in the public school system.

Rose feels that she is an effective teacher and prides herself on working as hard as she can to make connections with her students until they reach the “ahhh, I get it” moments. Rose is not discouraged by the rampant competition amongst her colleagues. She uses it as an advantage to continue her motivation to succeed. Although trying to keep positive, her salary discourages her, as Rose would like to move out of her parents’ house and live on her own; but for now, that is just not possible. When asked if she would consider leaving teaching to pursue a more lucrative career, Rose adamantly responds, “No, I’ll just figure it out eventually.”

Participant Thirteen: Sam

Sam has been teaching math for 11 years. He chose teaching as his second career. Sam was formerly an international financial reporter for BMG Music Corporation for 16 years. He

traveled all over the globe to work with the corporation's subsidiaries. Sam felt, after many mergers and acquisitions, that his job "was sort of meaningless . . . it had no added value to anything." However, he did mention twice that he was handsomely compensated for his role. Sam, although having an MBA and several other degrees, decided that he needed to refresh his skills and went back to school to take the necessary credits to acquire his teaching certification. Soon thereafter, he applied for several teaching jobs in the New York City and northern New Jersey region and landed a position in the Dunellen schools where he worked for five years before landing a position at Northeast High School, where he currently works.

Sam is happy that he made the decision to become a teacher, even though he "makes less than a third" of his salary of 11 years ago. Sam feels that money would provide a financial incentive for the intrinsic motivation of a teacher to continue to better himself. He feels that he constantly tries to challenge himself to do a better job, and it would be satisfying to be rewarded financially; but in teaching there is no such reward.

Participant Fourteen: Yvonne

Yvonne has been teaching English for the past 16 years. This is her second career. Yvonne was formerly a full-time playwright and writer. During her life as a playwright, Yvonne wanted to "pursue something more substantial, and teaching fit with my lifestyle and scheduling." Therefore, she went back to school and acquired (another) graduate degree and her teaching certification. Yvonne worked in New York City at several international language schools, teaching English and drama to adult learners. She applied for several positions in the New York public schools because although she loved the international schools, the pay was very low. Because Yvonne was unable to land a permanent teaching position in a public school at this time, she decided to work abroad as an English teacher. She spent time teaching in Switzerland

and then in 2000 she went to Bosnia to teach English as well as conduct drama therapy for refugee women and children.

Shortly after she returned home, Yvonne applied for and landed a teaching position at Northeast High School. After 16 years of teaching, she is content and comments that she can be “satisfied because I have other income.” Yvonne believes that it is “more important to have options than money in a bank.” She feels that she has many “marketable skills” and one never knows whom one may meet that may bank on one’s experiences.

Four Major Themes

Four themes across the 14 interviews emerged from this study in response to the guiding research question: What is the relationship between teacher motivation and performance based compensation? These themes included: (1) Evaluate This! Stressful New Teacher Evaluation Policies, (2) Pay Me! Low and Uncompetitive Salary, (3) The Future of Health and Retirement Benefits, and (4) Don’t Become a Teacher!

Evaluate This! Stressful New Teacher Evaluation Policies

All 14 teachers participating in this study expressed dissatisfaction with the arduous policies implemented for teacher evaluations during the school year. Teachers felt burdened by setting Student Growth Objectives (SGOs) and charting data weekly, monthly, and quarterly. These SGOs are created by establishing a baseline of data through administering a pre-assessment on the first day of classes. Throughout the school year, SGOs are then monitored with benchmark assessments. At the end of the school year, teachers are evaluated on whether or not they have met their targeted score by administering a post-assessment to their students. If a teacher does not meet the targeted score, he or she will face punitive reporting on his or her final evaluation.

All 14 teachers felt that this new system is intended to weed out incompetent and ineffective teachers, yet has been implemented in a haphazard and hasty manner. Teachers are very vocal about the effects the new system has had on their performance and the motivation to continue to perform at an optimal level. As Kyle put it, “You’re either effective or not effective.” Teachers discussed that they have a sense of being over-monitored by their administrators and to attain the “highly effective” ranking (the highest of the four performance ranks for yearly evaluation) to go above and beyond is just simply not good enough anymore; there has to be a deluge of paperwork, charts, graphs, data tables, etc., created by the teacher to provide evidence of exceptional performance. Brenda discussed that she is “dying professionally” and is so “exhausted” by the paperwork and the constant need to validate her performance on paper while the administration diminishes her motivation. She said, “If I can only be an effective teacher and never qualified to be highly effective because the paperwork has to show that, why should I strive?” All of the participants also expressed their decreasing motivation to be creative because they were concerned about “effectiveness,” which has to be documented and evidenced on paper. Lily described this in the following interview excerpt:

How effective can I be when, especially now, SGO stuff where we are writing these really in-depth lesson plans, I can’t effectively plan for four different classes every week and expect it to go well. I just don’t have the time to dedicate to anything and that to me, you know, is not really very helpful.

Creativity has also been an idea that seems to be losing steam with teachers given the current policy environment. As Nadine said, “I teach with my personality and I feel like it’s sort of being soaked out of me because there is no room for innovation.” Testing and other assessments needed to fulfill the requirements for appropriate SGO attainment have seriously

modified the instruction in the classroom, as teachers have had to shift to a heavily tested and document management environment.

In discussing the SGO process and the reporting of student test data, all of the teachers noted how the data could be manipulated to anyone's advantage. Teachers described how inaccurate a picture the data represent, compounding their feelings of distress and wasted energy. For example, Donald expressed the sentiments of most in the study by saying, "This is justification by politicians to the media that 'look what we are doing to make education better' . . . This is smoke and mirrors, you know that those numbers could be manipulated and everything . . ." Another teacher, Melissa, echoed Donald's point by noting that teachers, whether competent, effective, or not, are able to skew the scores and represent the data in a favorable manner. Rebecca spoke of the supervision and monitoring by her administrators. "They want to look at your documents; you know you can have the student work given to them, but I mean it's kind of a joke." In sum, the newly implemented teacher evaluation system appears to be a waste of time, exhausting valuable instructional preparation and delivery, as well as demotivating teachers' desire to work in the field.

Pay Me! Low and Uncompetitive Salary

The majority of teachers in this study (11 out of 14) felt that the occupation they chose as a career—in this case, mostly second careers—would better them personally and professionally. Those 11 teachers in this study were looking for a career that would be more fulfilling and rewarding intrinsically. As one teacher, Kyle, put it, "The profession is built around the idea that . . . part of your payment is . . . the resulting relationships." Another teacher, Yvonne, exclaimed, "We didn't go into this for the money . . . we have to earn a living wage, which is very important . . . if you wanted to be rich, then you should have done something else!" In all

cases, the teachers are happy they changed their career to the teaching profession. However, given the current policy environment—radical cuts to pensions and benefits, harsh testing for students, and rash teacher evaluation procedures—all of the teachers found it increasingly difficult to maintain a positive level of motivation to perform while struggling financially.

Brenda, although she believed that teaching is her calling, discussed how difficult it has become to support her family since she left her first career, “. . . [my] salary is probably a quarter of what it was then and it’s harder for us to survive now than it was before.” The shared sentiment is that although teachers do not enter the teaching profession for the money, they feel “insulted” by the low salary guide and that a different compensation structure would provide financial incentive to support their intrinsic motivation to teach.

With the increasing amount of tedious paperwork piling up on teachers because of the new teacher evaluation system, coupled with the many additional requirements weighing heavily on their backs, the motivation to maintain a positive attitude and optimal performance level is not matched by the current salary scale. The antiquated system that takes 22 years to ascend to the top hardly compensates teachers fairly for the amount of time, hours, and effort put in just to maintain the status quo for teacher performance. Several teachers (6 out of 14) expressed that the amount of work should be equated to “billable hours” as other professionals receive. This, in turn would justify the amount of time outside of the classroom that is necessary to achieve the required level of performance. As Rebecca, said, “Put a camera in here and you’ll see how many hours I spend here; I’ll log it, and you pay me for all the papers I grade. I would love that!” Another teacher, Geoffrey, who volunteered to create an incentivized compensation system, matching it with the cost of living in the county in which he lives, commented:

I'd love to sit down for a summer and try to work that out; that would be a great professional development plan. Presumably, it would be something that rewards, that encourages initiative, vision and, you know, something with innovative instruction that speaks to students where they live, in effect, and delivers, you know, meaningful, you know, skill based, you know, educational development opportunities on a continuum . . . that would be something I would love to, you know, really sit down and do, because I think it's something that can be achieved.

The resonant sentiment of many teachers is that the compensation system is “unacceptable” and “insulting.” One teacher, Rose, specifically described her feelings:

I never was somebody who was all about money; that is not who I am as a person, but as I get older and I realize the cost of living, particularly in Bergen County, I mean this is unacceptable. I cannot survive on this, I can't. I can't get approved for a mortgage on my salary.

Most teachers compare their level of education (12 out of 14 teachers have at least one MA degree) and their salary to that of peers in other professions without advanced degrees. All of these teachers either have second jobs or run afterschool clubs and activities to try to make ends meet. One participant, Larry, said, “If the compensation were increased, I think there would be some parity to different professions.” This situation lays a blanket of unfairness in a society where education used to be a sought after profession. As Nadine, a teacher, in her ninth year, explained her dissatisfaction with the entire compensation system that just seems to be unappreciative of teachers and devoid of reward:

I have a master's degree . . . with my regular pay, I did a bunch of home instruction for students; I worked all summer for the Board of Ed so that is still included in my gross

salary, and I run two clubs and just over \$60,000. I mean, that to me . . . I am a professional. I have friends that are making \$90,000 and they have time to catch up with each other and do all kinds of things; they can work from home, and then I think, ‘What is the reward for us?’ You know, it used to be that at least you were appreciated, and I am not so sure that is true anymore.

Another affecting factor in the mix of motivation for performance seems to influence how the teachers felt about the current pay. Teachers of the humanities (12 out of 14) felt that there is a tremendous amount of additional paperwork and testing standards they are burdened with, yet still are compensated exactly the same as teachers in every other department. For example, teachers of the humanities are required to assign and grade writing pieces and open-ended essay assignments, which demands a tremendous amount of time to provide appropriate feedback to students than, for example, driving instruction does. These teachers are also tied to student performance on standardized tests, such as the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) and now the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers (PARCC.) The teachers within this department understand that they chose to teach these subjects, but they feel unfairly remunerated due to the level of the specific requirements not universal to all teachers in the building, as a result affecting morale and motivation. One teacher, Lily, discussed how all those vested in education, including policy makers and administrators and teachers across disciplines, need to familiarize themselves with the multitude of different tasks required by teachers of the humanities, “just understanding that certain teachers have more responsibilities and therefore require greater compensation.” Another teacher, Melissa, very passionate about her work as an English teacher, described how she runs the theater club and

yearbook club for extra pay, though it is still not enough, and feeling pressured about the current policy environment, explains as follows:

English teachers teach writing and English teachers teach literacy, and we're the ones who are being held to that standard with the HSPA, the SAT, the ASK, whatever. I think that we should be compensated for that added pressure, for that added responsibility.

The excerpts above express that all in all, teachers voiced their dismay about their compensation not only as compared to other professions making the teaching salary uncompetitive but within the profession as well because of uneven responsibilities and workloads assigned to teachers in different departments.

Future of Health and Retirement Benefits

Over the past two years, the New Jersey governor has made several reforms to the pension and health benefit package that teachers receive as part of their compensation. Until this point, one of the enticing qualities of entering the teaching profession was the excellent health benefit package and the guarantee of a pension, to which teachers contribute a percentage of their salary and are eligible to retire at age 60, after 25 years of service, with a cost of living adjustment included. All of that has changed, making it even more difficult to plan for long-term financial stability for teachers and their families. The state is still in the midst of continued reform to the teacher compensation package; several changes have been made—detrimental, as teachers claim—to the teaching profession. These changes include an increase in the age at which teachers are eligible to retire from 62 to 65 and a penalty percentage each year for teachers who are younger than 65 but have at least 30 years of service; the elimination of the cost of living adjustment for retirees receiving a pension; and the increase of the employee contribution rate for health benefits which totals at least 7.5% of their annual salary, which triples the

contribution rate previous to this reform (NJLM, 2013). Teachers' unions and associations are currently in heated legislation trying to have the law repealed. However, the governor is steadfast in his plan and promises to reveal even more cuts before the end of this year. Teachers in this study expressed that either they consider leaving the profession themselves (3 out of 14) or know of others leaving (14 out of 14) because of financial demands that cannot be supported with the single salary guide and the radical changes to the pension and health benefit system.

As mentioned throughout this chapter, one of the interesting characteristics of the participants is that most (11 out of 14) chose teaching as a second career, in which the first was more lucrative financially yet devoid of the intrinsic value of working with others in hopes to make society better through education. Many of them also noted that they received the support of their spouses and family members to make the career change because, although the salary was low and even after 22 years of service they would still be making less than they had made in their first career, there were other benefits like the pension system and low cost of premium health benefits, serving as the toppings on the small slice actual earned yearly salary. Now, within the parameters of the radically increased contribution rate and decreased retirement benefit, teachers are reconsidering leaving the field. For example, Jennifer explained that she loves every moment of her job and that is was the best decision she made for her family because when she entered the field six years ago from an executive job in Manhattan, she had more time to spend with her family and because of the stability of healthcare and a retirement plan. However, given the new evaluation system with all of its added time requirements to fulfill the paperwork burden, she said that she would have not have the support of her husband if she were to make the switch in the midst of the current compensation reform:

My husband is pissed off about it . . . but I will say if it were 6 years ago or if I said now

that I wanted to make a career change, my husband would probably not support it because the benefits and pension, all of it. The pay cut that I would be taking does not really balance out with the benefits.

The majority of teachers (11 out of 14) were also discouraged by the collective bargaining negotiation strategy relative to the single salary schedule. Brenda described the rigidity of the salary scale and the controversial compensation practices:

I feel like it's turning so many of us off from education and that – and I'm stuck . . . I'm so turned off from being involved in the government and education policy that I don't want anything to do with it. Like to me, it's just frustrating.

Similarly, another participant, Yvonne, talked about the connection between compensation and being valued and respected as a teacher. The current controversial policies and practices related to compensation and teacher performance and evaluation across the country, even more so in the state, puts teachers in an even more precarious situation, their unheard voices being affected by legislators and constituents with no concept of the realities of the teaching profession itself.

I think it has a bad reputation. 'Oh, you aren't going to have money, you don't have respect.' I mean, people are shocked because they think that, oh, they feel sorry for me.

Like my peers, my colleagues outside of teaching, my friends, some of them who have no connection to teaching think that it is sad.

As in most school districts, it takes more than 22 years of service to reach the top of the salary scale, which equates to under \$100,000. In the school district studied, as in most similar school districts, the union negotiating team consists mostly of members that are veteran teachers and toward the very top of the salary guide. This greatly affects the majority of the teaching staff in the school, those with eight to fifteen years of service, as noted by most of the participants in this

study, who are stagnant with little pay increase in their steps. The large portion of the salary increments are awarded to those at the very top of the guide, and used to increase the starting salary of first year teachers. Table 7 shows the current step and lock salary guide for the participants in this study (PERC, 2013). The teachers at the “top” of the salary scale, years 18-22, increase each step at a significantly higher dollar amount than the teachers in the “middle” of the guide, years 8-12. For example, a teacher with 18 years of service making \$76,800 earns an increase of \$7,740 dollars by step 20 to make \$84,540; then from years 20-22, a teacher earns an increase of \$8,010 to make \$92,550. On the other hand, a teacher with eight years of service making \$56,200 earns an increase of only \$2,400 by step 10 to make \$58,600; then from years 10-12, a teacher earns an increase of the same \$2,400 to make \$61,000. This practice seems hardly fair to the teachers who express frustration at the financial hardship for the majority of the staff, which also creates a sense of resentment to those at the top of the guide ending their career. For example, Donald noted the following:

When we negotiate contracts, they're usually negotiated by more experienced teachers, who then get contracts that benefit the higher end on the scale than the people who are stuck in the middle. The majority of our faculty are in the middle of the step back, and our last negotiated contract if you're in the middle of the step back is like the worst place to be So that's one of the frustrations.

Table 7

Teacher Salary Guide for the 2014-15 School Year

1	51,000
2	51,500
3	52,000
4	52,660
5	53,800
6	54,500
7	55,600
8	56,800
9	58,100
10	59,500
11	60,700
12	62,300
13	64,200
14	66,300
15	68,500
16	71,300
17	74,350
18	77,700
19	81,100
20	84,900
21	88,800
22	92,950

Another participant, Nadine, described her unhappiness with the current reform to the benefits systems as well as her stagnation within the salary guide, “stuck” on step nine. Again, although she adamantly expressed how much she loves teaching and working with students, her motivation to continue is diminishing rapidly. She is planning to leave teaching because she cannot continue to support her family due to the cost of living and especially because her prior career was much more lucrative financially, given the added performance incentives awarded:

I know, statistically they say that your excitement about a profession will only remain like 6 months at the rate that you are paid at. So, for example, if you got paid, you are

raised that joy will only last for an average of about 6 months. So I don't I mean, I don't know, I think it would help absolutely because there would be a justification, there would be, you know, the people I worked on Wall Street are morally bankrupt, but they do it every day because they know that there is, you know, there could very well be a good payday and that's why people can, you know, considering continuing to do that work but I mean yeah I think so. I think people would, I think I would, I wouldn't think about leaving as much as I do if I got paid more than \$60,000, which is square math right now.

As supported by the excerpts above, teachers are gravely concerned with the future of the teaching profession. Unfortunately, they feel that because of the financial burdens of the antiquated single salary guide and the dim forecast of financial instability during retirement, teachers are leaving the profession.

Don't Become a Teacher

The reality of the economic crisis our country faces truly hits home for teachers. An increase in the demands of the new teacher evaluation legislation and the increase in the Common Core State Standards requirement in instruction and standardized testing just keep adding to the mountain of stress for teachers. Add that to the unfairly matched wages for their workload and a need for second jobs to support their families, it is no wonder why many teachers in this study discourage prospective candidates from entering the field of teaching, "I [Brenda] would discourage them [laughs]. It is a confession; I'd discourage them."

All of the participants in this study expressed their concern for the future of the teaching profession. They shared similar sentiments on the burdens of new teachers entering the field because the veteran teachers can hardly keep up after years of experience, such as "I [Larry] can't even imagine being a new teacher now and embracing this." All of them expressed that

with the recent policy changes and the continuous hits to their financial well being, such as the pension and healthcare cuts, teaching is not what it once was. Lily summarized the point in the following way:

It doesn't look fun, it doesn't look fun for a person who is trying to just get tenure, who is trying to enjoy what they do and be a young person . . . I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't recommend anyone else to do it.

Another teacher, Rebecca, talked about discouraging her friends looking to make the career change into teaching as she did:

I have friends that are going back to school, I am 30, that want to be teachers and I'm like, "You are making a bad mistake right now," and I truly feel that way, and that is unfortunate; but I do think if I could give advice to those people, I would say don't do it, not now, because I don't think what you think you will be doing and what you'll be doing are the same thing.

These participants have indirectly discouraged their own students from choosing teaching as a career path. They discussed that although they are working tirelessly and even longer hours into exhaustion to continue to perform at the highest levels, it is becoming increasingly difficult and the students are noticing. This plays a huge factor in appearing as "exhausted" role models to their students with little benefit. Nadine addressed this issue:

I remember personally two former students of mine . . . in college now, discouraging them because I felt personally *they were better than that*. I thought they would have a hard time seeing above all of this because I think they were really smart, and not that I mean all teachers are not smart, and that's a great profession for anybody, certainly people who are intelligent, but I'm just saying like I feel that I don't think they would be

happy with that because I think they would just rise with so much more, you know, after the first two years, and you are not really seeing a whole lot of well, what's being reaped. So yeah, I would personally discourage these two students that told me they wanted to be history teachers.

Another participant, Geoffrey, reiterated the same feeling, taking responsibility for sharing his feelings with many of his student about the hardships of being a teacher. He also discussed that in many conversations he has had with parents of his students. He found that they are also "turning them [children] off" from choosing teaching as a career path and encouraging them to enter different occupations.

Yeah, I'm partly the point because I joke with my students. I'm like, 'Don't get married, don't have kids, and don't be a teacher if you want a life.' That's what I tell them. I don't say it all the time, but every now and then when they see me and I'm like stressing, and if they come and ask me a question at 3:15 or at 4 o'clock, and I'm like, 'Ugh, guys, I've got to go home.'

This theme has two sides. One is the element of discouragement and the other is encouragement. The majority of participants (n =12) in this study agreed that money can be an important factor in encouraging teachers to enter the occupation. Teachers feel that a different compensation model would definitely provide the positive motivating factor for qualified and driven candidates to enter the field. As Larry, put it, "I think it would invite people into the profession who see, they see teaching as an opportunity to make money." Another teacher, Geoffrey, said, "I definitely think salary would be a huge incentive to, you know, maybe there are people out there that want to make the career change but don't because of the financials." While most teachers in the study seemed in favor of an increased salary, they expressed concerns

over how a fair and equitable system would work. Most of them are aware of certain pay-for-performance systems that are being used as experiments in some school districts, including the state's largest school district. These compensation systems tie teachers' salaries and bonuses to student achievement (standardized test scores). All of the participants in this study were opposed to incentivizing teachers monetarily using student test scores. However, they shared that some sort of performance incentive would be largely beneficial in improving the quality of teaching professionals overall. Sam spoke of this point:

I think that, yes, a compensation model, an incentivized compensation model is a nice idea for teaching, but it seems that the model that's in, the model that seems to be being picked around is one that's dependent on results. Which, by and large, teachers can't really control how students are going to perform on a test on a given day.

Lily commented on the mysterious design of a fair performance-based compensation plan: "That is the million dollar question!"

It is evident from the interviews that teachers feel that more pay will attract interesting and qualified candidates to the field and continue to elevate the profession. Unfortunately, they feel that if modifications are not made to the single salary schedule, they will continue to discourage others from entering the field. On the other hand, teachers are hopeful as to increased motivation and productivity with monetary incentives; they just are very unsure of how a system of reward would work fairly.

Summary

The findings of this study suggest that exploring teachers' perceptions of their current place within the educational environment (new teacher evaluations, single salary schedule, pension and benefit cuts, etc.), is particularly important as related to the tie between what

motivates them and how they are rewarded for performance. It is evident from this study that teachers chose a teaching career because of their desire to have a fulfilling occupation complete with altruistic rewards for helping others. More importantly, although the intrinsic desire for fulfillment is important to teachers, this study points to teachers' concerns over financial struggle and the desire to be compensated more competitively for their continued motivation, which in turn can lead to more productive performance. In the end, teachers want to be rewarded financially for their intrinsic motivation to be better teachers.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter begins with an overview of the purpose of the study, theoretical framework, and methodology. The chapter then summarizes findings from the study and discusses implications for practice and policy. Recommendations for future research are offered as well.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of the dissertation research was to explore the link between teacher motivation and performance-based compensation. This topic has been a controversial issue over the last decade across the country. There is a critical need for more research on teacher pay-for-performance systems, especially as it relates to motivation, student achievement, and the profession of teaching. Policy makers and educational practitioners will find it crucial to continue this line of research, as it directly relates to their teacher preparation programs and training teachers to enter the twenty- first century educational workforce of standards-based performance of inputs and outcomes.

First, a common language is needed to describe teacher compensation systems, its characteristics and components. Second, more converging reports are needed on the theoretically based research on motivation theory and its connection to teacher performance to make marked and clear understanding of how monetary and intrinsic incentives may motivate teachers to perform. Third, qualitative and ethnographic research is needed to truly understand what, how, and if financial incentives motivate teacher performance. Therefore, this study contributes by adding to the body of knowledge of teachers' perceptions in a comprehensive and descriptive manner.

Research Approach and Design

I approached this research from a constructivist perspective. Brunner (1973) explains that people learn actively by constructing knowledge resulting from their own experiences. Along the same lines, many qualitative researchers recognize the significance of constructed knowledge by learners (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Consistent with motivational theory, as discussed in Chapter II, constructivism supports the theory that teachers are motivated to improve their performance if presented with incentives, albeit, financial. Constructivist theory guided data analysis in this study as I worked with the participants to understand their perceptions and to interpret the meanings which the participants attributed to their experiences. As a school administrator at a neighboring school district to the research site, I was both subjectively and objectively involved in the research process, and this provided a unique insider's and outsider's view (Clark, 1997). The similar working relationship between the researcher and teacher participants provided an advantage to me and the participants to strengthen co-constructed meanings throughout the study. More specifically, during the interview process, member checking promoted mutual conversations between the teacher participants and me as the data were interpreted. Follow-up conversations provided opportunities for me to clarify meaning.

I approached this study from an educator's perspective. As a veteran teacher with over ten years of classroom teaching experience and as a current school administrator, I recognized the ongoing challenge of acknowledging teacher motivation and performance not only in my own school district, but also in the districts of my peers. Having interacted with teachers at other schools, it became evident to me that teacher motivation and performance and the current systems of compensation were a common problem teachers face. It appeared that the perceptions of pay-for-performance systems were a complex issue influenced by motivations and relations to

performance and student achievement. Personal experience and peer observations over the years indicated to me that some teachers seemed to be highly motivated to perform and had the ability to increase student achievement but many were not and were settled in a state of complacency and mediocrity at best because of the security of tenure. With these in mind, this study aimed to explore whether teachers are motivated to perform and how compensation plays a role.

As an advocate for informed and educated policy decision making, I realized that although much research on performance-based compensation exists, the information is neither qualitative nor substantial enough to effect positive future change. Literature indicates that even though teachers are motivated intrinsically, many feel they should be incentivized financially to continue their altruistic motivation (Eberts et al., 2002; Johnson & Papay, 2009; Liang, 2011; Murnane & Cohen, 1986; Rockoff, 2004). Also, given that teachers are often left out of policy discussions that directly impact their day-to-day practice, there is a growing need for qualitative research, allowing the voices of teachers to be heard so that policy can effectively be formed.

Researcher bias is an inherent part of qualitative research, as the researcher is considered to be the instrument of data collection (Creswell, 1994) and it is virtually impossible to separate the researcher's view completely from that of the participants. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain, a constructivist approach to research necessitates interactions between the researcher and the participants. Efforts to understand and interpret data are influenced by the researcher's ideas and background as well as those of the participants. As a former classroom teacher and school administrator who supervised teacher performance, I brought unique insight into the study of the link between teacher motivation and performance-based compensation and was immersed fully in the situation, personally experiencing the challenge of the current step and lock pay scale. This insider perspective and the established rapport between and the participants and me

made this study stronger by creating opportunities for discourse that included sharing, explanation, interpretation, and evaluations (Clements & Battista, 1990). The fact that I was a school administrator in a similar setting to the research site allowed me to collaborate and reflect on what might not have otherwise been possible. As a subjective researcher, the data and interpretations might be stronger due to a mutually understood and constructed perspective of a commonly shared experience.

Theoretical Framework

The majority of public school districts across the country have a teacher compensation plan which discourages a productivity output (student achievement) from the given input of teacher performance. These compensation plans are based on the antiquated and rigid pay scales developed nearly a century ago. These plans provide little to no incentive and motivation for teachers to perform effectively in serving the needs of students and promoting student achievement. These step and lock pay scales also vary from state to state and from school district to school district, indicating considerable gaps in teacher salary between districts. For example, the average teacher salary in two New Jersey school districts differs greatly: Paramus at \$70,000 versus Milltown at \$45,000 (PERC, 2013).

Much of the literature supports teacher compensation reform such as incentives for superior performance, suggesting that school districts design pay-for-performance plans to recruit and retain high quality professionals to enter the field (Ballou, 2001; Podgursky & Springer, 2010). The research on pay-for-performance programs has been extensive, employing predominantly quantitative survey methods examining salary incentive bonuses awarded for test scores and large-scale statistical data (Goldhaber et al., 2010). For example, Figlio and Kenney (2007) used a combination of data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS:88)

and their own survey examining the impact of teacher incentives and its link to teacher performance and student achievement. In their study, the authors found a positive relationship between motivating teachers with monetary incentives and student achievement. However, they argue that the research on pay for performance is mostly “micro education data sets” with “little information about schools’ personnel practices” (p. 902). Quantitative-oriented studies using pre-selected variables have failed to adequately address teachers’ perceptions regarding motivation.

Given the current policy initiatives that emphasize the quantitative improvement of student achievement (e.g., cash for test scores), this study focused on exploring the motivations of the current teaching force. Little is known as to how the input from teachers themselves on their own performance and productivity motivates them to work harder to influence student achievement. This study aimed to fill the void in the literature by understanding the perceptions of teachers about the influence of performance-based incentives on their own teaching practices.

In order to better understand the experiences of teachers themselves and the link between compensation and motivation, the theoretical framework used in this study drew upon expectancy theory (Lawler, 1981; Vroom, 1964). This theory posits that a person is motivated to behave in a certain manner because he or she expects a desired result. Therefore, one may assume that a pay-for-performance system for teachers is a viable option to improve schools and student achievement, as well as encourage more professional and capable candidates to become teachers. This also may motivate teachers to be more productive. Johnson and Papay (2009) link the incentive of performance pay with teacher performance by explaining that “teachers must reasonably expect that they will achieve the reward if they put forth the additional effort” (p. 15). Thus, investigating the motivational values teachers place on performance and the earned

awards, whether monetary or otherwise, has provided some valuable insight into the problem of the existing teacher compensation plans.

Other researchers (e.g., Hanushek, 2010) claim that the stress of the Common Core State Standards, making students college and career ready, and conformity to imposed federal initiatives has shifted the teaching and learning paradigm from educating an informed electorate and creating contributing members of a democratic society to preparing students for a globally competitive workforce, therefore changing the ways in which teacher performance is measured and subsequently compensated.

In light of the current teacher compensation problem, past studies have suggested that economic and motivational theories drive the teacher compensation system design, and that researchers should be cognizant of the impact of monetary incentives on productivity (e.g., cash for test scores, student achievement, etc.) (Lazear, 2001). However, interest groups, like teacher unions, are opposed to this seemingly logical, research-based approach and are vehemently against linking compensation to teacher performance to student achievement in schools. They believe teachers are motivated by many factors (for example, making a difference in a child's life), and the craft of teacher practice and performance cannot be quantified by a mathematical equation (higher test scores = more pay) (Eberts et al., 2002; Johnson & Papay, 2009; Liang, 2011; Murnane & Cohen, 1986; Rockoff, 2004).

This study was approached in a similar vein to Dan Lortie's *Schoolteacher* (1975). His study provides a perception of the "nature of teaching as an occupation," and an understanding of what drives teachers within the profession. Lortie recognized that in order for teachers to express themselves truthfully and in their own "language," field work and extensive open-ended interviews were necessary; therefore, this study intended to provide teachers with the opportunity

to describe their lived experiences which in turn can shed light on educational reform policy that policy makers and other stakeholders consider for quality improvement.

The intent of this research study was to make meaning of teachers' perceptions about the influence of performance-based compensation on the profession and practice of teaching. This study extends the current understanding and adds to the discussion of compensation policy as linked to teacher practice and performance.

Research Method

In this study, connecting the voices of teachers concerning their teaching experiences in relation to teacher pay, to the formation of effective policy that enhances motivation, performance, and achievement is of utmost importance. This study can provide a deeper understanding of the relationships and connections of teacher motivations directly from the words, sentiments, perceptions, and insights of teachers.

The main source of data for this study was personal interviews with 14 teacher participants at Northeastern High School. This interview process delved into how and why the participants (teachers) perceive the pay-for-performance phenomenon within their given environment and context. The interview process gave a human face to the research question and problem. Furthermore, the interviews allowed me as the researcher to understand how teachers explain behaviors, thoughts, processes, and emotions related to their own motivation relative to performance. The interviews were conducted at the research site, Northeastern High School, in classrooms, conference rooms, or faculty break rooms. Additionally, interviews were conducted on the telephone. Each interview lasted from a minimum of one hour to some lasting nearly three hours. I used semi-structured, open-ended interview questions, covering topics such as personal experience as a teacher, perspectives on educational or instructional effectiveness and

philosophy, quality of teacher licensing as compared to other professions, collegial relationships as related to performance, teacher evaluation, etc.

After the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed verbatim. Throughout the interviews, I took field notes, listening attentively to interviewees' responses and accounts. Later in the analysis process, I listened to the transcripts for reflections to patterns and themes and recorded them in my researcher's journal. I then analyzed the data with Saldana's (2009) two-step coding process in order to organize the data and "bring meaning to the information" (Creswell, 2009). This coding process was primarily focused on identifying what Moustakas (1994) classifies as an "essence description" to analyze significant statements and interpret the emergent thematic responses.

Summary of Findings and Discussion

The results of this study have provided a platform for discussions on a performance-based compensation plan to improve teacher productivity and student achievement.

This study suggests that a value be placed on the perceptions of teachers in terms of their perceived motivators to be used in discussions of designing performance-based compensation systems. The findings from this research suggest that in order for a performance-based compensation system to be successfully implemented, teachers' perspectives must be taken into account as a part of the decision making process.

The findings from this research underscore that given the current educational policy environment, teachers' feelings of being increasingly motivated to continue performing their job duties at an optimal level are on a downward curve. Teachers feel that the newly implemented teacher evaluation system, although in its intent designed to improve teacher quality and thereby student achievement, is an arduous waste of time and filled with erroneous data reporting.

Teachers express that throughout this new policy implementation they have not been a part of any of the planning and decision making process, thus causing a decline in their daily performance, morale, and motivation overall.

This study suggests that teachers, given the current legislation, are concerned about the fairness and objectiveness of performance-based compensation. The participants in this study are aware that the next phase in the new teacher evaluation system may be in fact designed to reward or punish teachers monetarily for student achievement. As compensation systems develop and evolve, teachers must continue to remain part of the process to ensure that the plan remains fair.

The present study reveals that teachers vehemently value effort and the time put into preparing for their daily job duties over years of service and additional earned graduate degrees, which is how they are currently being compensated. Participants in this study exhibited self-perceptions of excellence due to the amount of effort they put into their work. Much of this effort is attributed to their intrinsic desire to help students. However, that intrinsic desire needs to be fostered with financial satisfaction. All teacher participants recognize the value of rewarding performance and yet understand that most performance-based compensation systems incentivize teachers based on student achievement rather than performance. Therefore, in order for a compensation system rewarding teachers on performance and demonstrated motivation to be successful, it is necessary for policy makers, teachers, and administrators to work together to define goals and objectives synonymous with effort and motivating performance factors, rather than solely student achievement.

Other findings from this study suggest that the future of the teaching workforce faces a decline because of the current compensation practices. Teachers feel that collective bargaining negotiation strategy relative to the single salary schedule is not as effective as it was decades

ago. Participants expressed how discouraged and disappointed they are by the poor representation of the majority of the teaching staff on the union negotiating teams. Usually, the negotiating team is comprised of the most senior members of the staff, providing themselves with the most generous pay increases. Teachers feel that this continues to contain them in the rigid single salary guide, forcing them to obtain additional means of employment to support their families or to leave the teaching profession for a more lucrative career altogether. Findings from this study also suggest that due to this single salary schedule rigidity and the radical changes to pension funds and health benefits, they heavily consider retiring early, leaving teaching, and even discouraging others from entering the field.

Implications for Higher Education Policy and Practice

Based on the findings of the present study, the following are recommendations for higher education policy and practice worth considering:

1. Avoid pay-for-performance plans aligned strictly with student test scores. Financial incentives should be based on teacher performance rather than student achievement on select standardized tests. All stakeholders need to work together to define goals synonymous with effort and motivating performance rather than student test scores.
2. Design pay for performance plans centered on creating an environment in which human capital can be fostered. This should include intrinsic factors of motivation, yet still provide financial rewards for performance. A value should be placed on the perceptions of teachers in terms of their perceived motivators. In order for a performance-based compensation system to be successful, teachers' perspectives must be part of the decision-making process. This development of human capital

- should begin within higher education, through teacher training programs, professional development creation, and administrator training and development programs.
3. Remove the antiquated single salary schedule which increases teachers' pay based on gaining academic credentials and years of service. Use evidence-based performance indicators such as student learning outcomes and professional growth plans to reward teachers financially. Teachers value effort in daily job duties versus years of service and graduate degrees.
 4. Continuously provide for an open dialogue for teachers about evolving motivators for productivity. Motivators may change over time, and even frequently. With the current controversial educational policy environment, including the new teacher evaluation system, teachers may feel that their motivation is decreasing; therefore, transparent communication between teachers, administrators, higher education, and policy makers is critical to improving the performance evaluation system.
 5. Reassess current policies and practices regarding performance evaluation of teachers for productivity. Reevaluate professional growth programs in place based on expectancy motivational theory. Include teachers in the process of reassessment. Teachers expect a desired result because they behave/perform in a certain manner. They must reasonably expect that they will achieve rewards if they put forth the additional effort.
 6. Create practical and relevant performance-based compensation programs to include motivational elements as described in expectancy theory. The future of the teaching profession is in danger because of the rigidity of the current compensation practices. The single salary schedule, poor negotiations by collective bargaining units and cuts

- to pension and health benefits all contribute to high turnover, retiring early, and discouraging future candidates from entering the profession. Performance-based compensation plans designed with the voice of the teacher included may have a significant impact on recruiting, educating, and retaining quality teachers.
7. Be transparent. All stakeholders should have a clear vision on who is going to determine how performance should be measured and how it will be linked to compensation. It is critical that the funding and its sources be disclosed. In the past, lack of transparency of expectations and sourcing has contributed to the failure of performance-based compensation plans. Most importantly, teachers who are the ones impacted by the decision need be a part of the decision making process to gain “buy-in” and a vested interest in a better system.

Suggestion for Future Research

This study has potentially added to the existing body of literature on the relationship between teacher motivation and performance-based compensation systems. Much of the previous literature has focused on using quantitative data to evaluate teacher motivation. This study, an in-depth, qualitative approach, focuses on the value of teachers’ perceptions of motivations. Those charged with creating compensation plans, legislators and political interests far removed from the daily tasks that define the lifeblood of schools (teachers) need to involve teachers to represent an effective and fair system of motivating teachers to perform to improve student achievement. Unfortunately, those who are experiencing these issues, teachers, are not implementing the policies. The unions have a voice; the State has a voice; the rank and file do not have a voice. Without their voices in this process, teachers will continue to struggle in an uphill battle with policy makers about their present and future. Here does lie the importance of the study, which is

not apparent in the current literature: In this Race to the Top era and new teacher evaluation period, there is a lack of research on teacher perceptions, offering unique perspectives of teachers for this current controversial time period.

Teachers are concerned about compensation practices. However, although teachers are in favor of being awarded increased financial incentives, they cannot conceptualize how a fair system can be implemented based on performance and not student achievement. Further research could be conducted to explore how teachers and policy makers could work together to define fair and motivational compensation plans based on effort.

Another possibility for future research could be comparing the perceptions of administrators about teacher motivation and performance-based compensation systems. This would provide an interesting appraisal of how those evaluating teachers' performance actually perceive it versus the perception of teachers evaluating their own performance. Such research would be helpful in the discussion about creating an environment that is motivating, fair, and supportive in fostering high levels of teacher performance and student achievement.

Additionally, the hardships and financial struggles that teachers face due to the rigidity of the single salary guide compensation system could be explored further. An historical assessment of teacher wages compared with other professions (law, medicine, finance, etc.) through a linear historical review would provide comparative evidence of the uncompetitive nature of compensation amongst professions. Such research would be helpful in redesigning an equitable system of compensation for teachers and increasing the quality and retention of teaching professionals.

A final recommendation for future research concerns gender differences. Would gender differences carry over in teacher pay-for-performance plans? Future research may open the door

to more discussion about equalizing the gender gap as it relates to pay in teaching. Because women mostly dominate the teaching profession and historically jobs dominated by women pay less than those with an increased proportion of professional men, will establishing an incentivized structure for compensation attract more men to the field? If so, will male teachers be more likely to receive performance incentives than women? Such research would be helpful in the discussion about increasing the quality of the potential teachers to the field, male or female, and furthermore increasing the possibility of gender-equated pay.

Conclusion

Using expectancy theory (Lawler, 1981; Vroom, 1964) as a theoretical underpinning, this study explored the perceptions of teachers in the current K-12 public education system on the influence of monetary performance incentives on teaching. Using this theory, this study postulates that if a person is motivated to behave in a certain manner because he or she expects a desired result, then the pay-for-performance systems for teachers is a viable option to improve overall student achievement as well as entice more professional and capable candidates to become teachers. This study aimed to describe and understand teachers' experiences, relationships, and interactions within their current environment as defined by how they are being compensated. My intent was to deepen an understanding of teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding the pay-for-performance phenomenon and raise their voices in order to improve the profession of education from the teachers' point of view.

It is up to current public educational policy makers to step up to the plate and take informed and decisive action on their promises to improve the public education system, and more specifically the idea of improving teacher quality through increased student achievement. This can only be done by involving the shareholders in the decision making of the institution of

public education. Researchers must present issues like performance pay within the context of our evolving twenty-first century education system as an investment and not an expense to our growing nation.

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Appendix A
Interview Guide

Open-Ended, Semi-Structured Interview Question Guide

How do you feel that you take educational and professional risks as a teacher?

Can you describe whether or not you feel that you are an effective teacher?

How do you feel a sense of competition and/or inequity among your colleagues?

How do you feel you've grown as a teacher? Explain.

How do you feel that the school that you work in has helped you to enhance your craft?

How do you feel about the actions of your peers/colleagues on your performance as a teacher? Does it impact you to do more or less?

How would you define an incompetent teacher? Do you see incompetent teachers at your school? Please give examples.

What made you enter the profession of teaching as opposed to other professions such as medicine, banking, law, etc.?

How has the inception of the Highly Qualified Teacher requirements increased the effectiveness of teachers?

Think about the time you spent preparing for the Praxis exam. Have you realized the results of sitting for that exam? Was the exam useful?

How do you feel the evaluation system has affected your performance and exceeded your average expectations of work up to this point as a professional?