INVESTIGATING THE PERCEPTIONS OF PREPARATION, PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT, AND THE WELLBEING OF TEACHERS SERVING ENGLISH LEARNERS (ELs)

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

Recent growth in the population of English Learners (ELs) in the United States has created an exponential need for teachers who can serve the complex needs of these students. Academically, ELs continue to underperform when compared to their non-EL counterparts. Researchers, however, have found that in order for ELs to reach better academic outcomes, they must have access to well-prepared teachers. Regrettably, many teachers feel unprepared to teach ELs, and little is known about the professional support that teachers of ELs are receiving. In addition, little research has been conducted related to the factors that contribute to teachers of ELs wellbeing (i.e., attitudes, climate and working conditions), which may contribute to their longevity in the profession.

This dissertation consists of three studies that address first-year teachers' perceptions of their preparation, middle school teachers reported professional development opportunities targeting the instruction of ELs, and teachers' perception of their wellbeing. Data sources for these studies included the Schools and Staffing Survey 2011-2012 and the Teaching and Learning International Survey, 2013.

Results for Study 1 indicated that first-year teachers perceive that they received few professional development opportunities related to teaching ELs. In addition, results showed that as the number of ELs increase in the classroom, the less preparation teachers' report receiving. Overall, findings revealed that first-year teachers serving ELs do not perceive receiving adequate preparation during their beginning years of teaching.

Results for Study 2 indicated that middle school teachers perceived receiving few professional development opportunities geared towards serving ELs. In addition,

teachers felt that the professional development that they received had a moderate impact on their instruction.

Study 3 investigated teachers' wellbeing. Results from this study showed that all teachers are experiencing heavy workloads, and almost half of these teachers teach ELs.

In summary, results support previous research that teachers are not receiving sufficient professional development training related to ELs, particularly first-year and middle school teachers. In addition, further research should be conducted to examine teachers' wellbeing, since factors related to teacher wellbeing may be contributing to attrition in a field where few teachers are available.

DEDICATION

To you…

Thank you for the love, unconditional support, and encouragement throughout this journey. As a result, I was able to plant my own Daffodil Garden: 50,000+/- words, one word a time, and much perseverance. A journey that began fifteen years ago, one step at a time, by one Hispanic woman.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For many students in the United States of America, there is a disappointing reality of student achievement in public schools. This issue has preceded the nation for many years (Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011; Rotherham, Mikuta, & Freeland, 2008). There are multiple references discussing the well-known "Achievement Gap". In addition, others have written about the Global Achievement Gap (Wagner, 2014), the Racial and Ethnic Achievement Gap (Lee, 2002), the Minority Achievement Gap (Cohen et. al, 2009), the Discipline Gap (Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010), the Rich and the Poor Achievement Gap (Reardon, 2011). Every term considered, the greatest concern has a common denominator: the lack of student achievement of many minority students attending public schools in the United States. For example, results from the Programme International Student Assessment (PISA) from the years 2012 and 2015 indicated that the United States of America scored beyond average in mathematics when compared with the participating 72 countries. The report also indicates that 1 in 5 US students performed below the basic proficiency level in reading and science.

Scholars have convincingly argued that teachers are a primary determining factor in students' achievement (Curtis, 2011, Darling-Hammong & Young, 2002; Rice, 2003; Wayne & Young, 2003; Wilson & Flodden, 2003). Similarly, stakeholders in education have corroborated the importance of developing, maintaining and retaining great teachers in public schools in order to improve students' academic achievement. Most

importantly, well-prepared teachers able to meet the needs of students in underrepresented groups such as Hispanic and African American Students. For example, The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics released a plan of action in 2013 to ensure that Hispanic students and their families have the necessary tools to succeed in the 21st century. One of the key aspects of the plan is to recruit, develop and retain quality teachers capable of teaching shortage areas such as bilingual education. The report indicates that even though Hispanics are the biggest minority group in the United States, only an about 7% of their teachers are Hispanic (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Therefore, it makes sense to examine and investigate factors that affect teacher quality in efforts to close the achievement gap.

English Learners (ELs) in the United States

In 2013, the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics (WHIEEH) in collaboration with the Office of Language Acquisition (OELA), released the results from the American Community Survey (ACS) revealing the status of English Learners (ELs) in the United States. According to the survey data, the heaviest concentration of ELs, is found in Arizona, Delaware, Kansas, New Mexico and Texas accounting for approximately 81% of the total student population. Linguistically, the top 20 languages other than English spoken in the United States accounted for 3,992,158 students in total. As expected per immigration trends in the country, out of the top 20 languages spoken by ELs, Spanish is the language spoken by the majority of ELs students in the United States. Thus, the vast majority of ELs are Hispanics. A total of 3,562,860 ELs reported Spanish as their home language. Socioeconomically,

approximately 74% of ELs who are Hispanic live at, or below poverty level. Additionally, the survey reported that approximately 16% of ELs who are Hispanic are first generation immigrants which maximizes the number of challenges these students will encounter (US Department of Education: Office of English Language Acquisition, 2015). Academically, ELs continue to score lower in reading and math. For example, data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), for the year 2015, showed that ELs in grades four and eight scored lower in reading and math when compared to other groups of non-ELs. In reading, only an alarming one percent of ELs scored in the advanced category and seven percent of all ELs scored in the proficient (average) category. That leaves 68% of all ELs reading below grade level expectations 24% reading at a basic proficiency level. In mathematics, 43% of ELs were reported to be below grade level expectations and 43% of ELs demonstrated only basic proficiency skills. In math, only one percent of all ELs demonstrated advanced proficiency skills. In terms of graduation rates, ELs share the lowest graduation rates in the nation. The national average of graduation is approximately 82.3%. Graduation rates for ELs are comparable to graduation rates of students placed under the special education umbrella. The current national graduation rate for ELs is approximately 62.6% and the national graduation rate for students with disabilities is approximately 63.1 %. According to the Department of Education, in the year 2014-2015, approximately 13% of all students in public schools were placed in Special Education. Out of this 13% of students placed in special education, Hispanic students accounted for 12%. (US Department of Education, 2017).

Teachers Serving ELs in the United States

The rapid increase of English Learners (ELs) in the United States, especially in Texas, has created an exponentially-increasing need for bilingual teachers (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2015), and an array of challenges for Latino education (Darling-Hammond,1985; Gándara, P., & Mordechay, 2017). Meeting this demand, however, has proven to be a difficult task. A recent report from The Learning Policy Institute (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Thomas, 2016) found that the teacher deficit in general, could increase to as much 112,000 by 2018; in the 2014-2015 academic year, 31 states reported a shortage of bilingual education teachers. In October of 2015, Texas Education Commissioner Michael Williams publicly stated that the teacher shortage was the "biggest threat" to Texas schools (Texas Tribune, 2015). There are many factors contributing to this matter. For instance, many teachers in the United States who join the field of education encounter a wide array of challenges (Brunsting, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014; Maslach, 2003). Teachers must, on a daily basis, face many issues at their schools and with the students they serve. A vast number of American students are at risk of low achievement or dropping out of school because they lack the support at home or the adequate tools to achieve success in school. Many students experience conditions such as learning disabilities, language barriers, and emotional disturbances. Additionally, they may lack parental involvement and live in poverty. In many cases, teachers must be caregivers as well as educators (Fore, Martin, & Bender, 2002; Jones & Youngs, 2012; Kaufhold, Alverez, & Arnold, 2006; Morgan & Reinhart, 1985; Conroy & Sutherland, 2012;

Calabrese, Goodvin, & Nilesref, 2005; Clayton, 2011; Abella, Urrutia, & Shneyderman, 2005; Bohon, Macpherson, & Atiles, 2005; Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010). Moreover, other factors such as disconnections between policy and practice, the implementation of high standards, standardized testing, school climate, poor teacher evaluation systems, and deficiencies in teacher preparation can make the teaching profession more challenging to prospective candidates (Berliner, 2009; Crampton, 2001; Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012; Davis, 2014; De Luca, Takano, Hinshaw, & Raisch, 2009; Dietel, 2012; Driscoll, 2004; Rubin, 2011).

Teacher preparation is an issue heavily connected with the current performance of English Learners. According to the U.S. Department of Education, lack of teacher preparation is an area of vast concern for our nation. Results from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), years 2011- 2012, indicated that many school principals and administrators felt that teachers do not acquire the necessary skills to adequately teach during their preparation programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). This reality becomes a bigger issue for teachers serving English Learners. In Texas, for example, the expectations of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the State Board of Certification (SBEC) are for bilingual teachers to demonstrate proficiency in all areas of the target language (reading, writing, speaking and listening). Unfortunately, state data indicates that pre-service bilingual teachers find themselves struggling to pass the Texas Examination of Education Standards. In effect, in the year 2014, only 58% of prospective bilingual teachers passed the Bilingual Target Language Proficiency Test (BTLPT) required to obtain bilingual certification status. Even worse was the outcome

for Bilingual Generalist EC-6 prospective teachers, only 46% of teachers attained a passing score. Regrettably, these figures only worsen in the following year. With a 52% passing rate in the BTLPT exam and 34% passing rate for the Bilingual Generalist EC-6 exam (Arroyo-Romano, 2016; State Board of Education, 2015). At the national level, the differences in course requirements from different programs do not assert adequate preparation of teachers serving ELs. For example, The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) measuring teacher preparation programs, issued a report measuring teacher preparation programs in 2014. The NCTQ reported that out of 685 elementary preparation programs revised for curriculum content addressing needs of ELs, only 24 % of the programs met the qualifying bar (NCTQ, 2014). Another report by the Education Commission of the States (ECS), found that over 30 states do not require course work geared towards the instruction of ELs beyond federal requirements (ECS, 2014). As stated herewith, teacher preparation is heavily connected with student outcome. Therefore, this is of significant concern when we know that in order for ELs to attain academic success, they must have access to quality teachers.

Likewise, teacher perceptions about preparation are not far from those of principals and administrators. A recent study explored the perceptions of 179 teachers serving ELs in rural areas and found that teachers needed training in the following areas: teaching content area academic vocabulary, identifying best strategies to use at different linguistic levels, and assessing fluency levels of non-native speakers (Hansen-Thomas, Grosso Richins, Kakkar & Okeyo; 2016). In a large-scale study of over 5,000 teachers in California, Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll (2005) found that teachers had fewer

professional development opportunities targeted to help them work effectively with ELs. Franco-Fuenmayor, Padrón, and Waxman (2015) found that approximately 50% of the teachers reported that the professional development training that they had received did not help them in teaching ELs. Accordingly, the U.S. Department of Education reported that professional development activities in teaching ELs was the least prevalent topic among professional development that teachers received between the years 2011-2012. Only 27% of teachers reported participation in professional development activities specific to ELs. (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Teacher preparation is a key component that can dictate teachers' future experiences, sense of self-efficacy, and resilience in the classroom (Christian, 2017). All in all, the need for professional development that meets the specific needs of ELs is prevalent (Reeves & Lowenhaupt, 2016; Harper & de Jong, 2009).

Additionally, teachers' beliefs in connection with support (induction, mentoring, and professional development) are added factors that contribute to the many challenges and opportunities facing teachers of ELs today. Having this kind of support during the beginning years of teaching has been linked to teacher professional outcomes such as attrition, retention and school climate (Darling-Hammond, Furger, Shields, and Sutcher, 2016). Having mentorship opportunities via induction programs, coaching and/or feedback are important aspects for beginning teachers specifically because beginning teachers will experience "real life" in the classrooms they enter. Some of these experiences cannot be taught through preparation programs or textbooks (O'Donoghue, Lenz Kothe, Berard, Smith, & Ryoo,2016). Unfortunately, much of the mentoring

teachers receive today addresses more procedural and curricular expectations at their schools instead of the professional growth and pedagogical practices they need to build resilience, thus longevity in the classroom (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). First-year teachers can benefit from mentors that can assist them in making sense of the theory learned in preparation programs which can in turn guide them to transfer these concepts into practice. Indisputably, there is a need to connect teacher preparation with support programs in schools during the beginning years of teachers' practice (Bastian & Marks, 2017).

School climate is another aspect that affects teachers today. Whether or not teachers find their place of work pleasing is an important factor that can determine their professional school related- life, and this may result in positive student outcomes. Regrettably, research concerning how the school climate affects the school related-life of bilingual teachers is almost non-existent (Amos, 2016; Padrón & Waxman, 2016). When teachers feel valued and supported, they are more inclined to continue their careers at the same school (Fusco, 2017). There is something to say about attaining longevity at a school. Teachers who stay at the same school for many years help build the school family. Indeed, teachers help initiate and maintain school traditions as they act like a magnet for the school. In reality, these teachers become the stable solvent in the school family. However, this may not be possible for many teachers who serve predominantly ELs. According to the Learning Policy Institute, during the 2014-2015 academic year, 31 states announced a shortage of bilingual teachers (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Thomas, 2016). When schools experience teacher shortages, this generally results in

increased class sizes, expanded job related- responsibilities and regular teacher reassignments to enable school districts to cover their pressing needs. Thus, this may inhibit bilingual teachers from forming lasting relationships with their colleagues and their students, directly affecting their experiences and feelings towards their careers. Therefore, it is important to investigate the school climate of teachers who serve predominantly ELs, and how it affects their lives and the lives of the students they serve.

Teachers play an important role in student achievement hence they can positively impact a number of factors on students' lives. However, there are multiple factors that impact teachers' ability to appropriately serve English Learners. Heretofore, very little is known about these factors and how they affect the quality of school- related life of teachers serving English Learners. In order to expand the teacher workforce qualified to appropriately teach the increasing English Learner population, it is important to investigate the quality of school- related life of their profession, and how it affects teachers' attitudes, experiences and preparation. Doing so could help decrease attrition rates and increase the longevity and retention in public schools in the United States.

The present study investigates (a) the perceptions about preparation from first-year teachers serving ELs, (b) the professional development opportunities available for teachers serving English Learners, and (c) the attitudes, working conditions, and school climate of teachers serving English Learners.

CHAPTER II

INVESTIGATING FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS SERVING ENGLISH LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PREPARATION

Current immigration patterns have created an influx of language diversity in public education. Therefore, this rapid increase of English Learners (ELs) in the United States, especially in Texas, has created an exponentially-increasing need for teachers able to meet the complex needs of ELs (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005; Texas Education Agency, 2016; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017). According to the Migration Policy Institute, the population of individuals speaking a language other than English in the United States has nearly tripled since 1980 with an increase of 29.2 million people in 2015 (Batalova & Jie, 2016). According to the U.S. Department of Education, the heaviest concentration of ELs is found in Arizona, Delaware, Kansas, New Mexico and Texas, accounting for approximately 81% percent of the total student population. The vast majority of ELs are Hispanics with a total of 3,562,860 ELs reporting Spanish as their home language (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Even though Hispanics in the United States are the biggest minority group, only about seven percent of their teachers are Hispanic (US. Department of Education, 2012).

Teacher Shortages

Meeting the current increase of demand of teachers due to the rapid demographic changes in the United States, has proven to be a difficult task. In the United States, the teaching workforce has changed very little in the past few years. For example, between the years 2004 and 2014, the percentage of teachers accrued barely changed from 51% to 50 % (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Since bilingual education is such a specialized field, not many education preparation programs are equipped with the faculty and/or the curriculum components required to staff such programs. The reality is merely that preparation programs throughout the country have not been able to staff their programs fast enough. A recent report from The Learning Policy Institute (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Thomas, 2016) found that the teacher deficit in general, could increase to as much 112,000 by 2018. In addition, the report stated that in the 2014-2015 academic year, 31 states reported a shortage of bilingual education teachers. In October of 2015, Texas Education Commissioner Michael Williams publicly stated that the teacher shortage was the "biggest threat" to Texas schools (Texas Tribune, 2015).

Factors Contributing to Teacher Shortages

Currently, many teachers in the United States who join the field of education encounter a wide array of challenges (Brunsting, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014; Maslach, 2003). Teachers are faced with having to address, on a daily basis, many issues. A vast number of students in U.S. public schools, for example, are living in poverty, have low levels of achievement, are at risk of dropping-out of school, have learning disabilities and/or experience language barriers, lack parental involvement, and experience

emotional disturbances, amongst others. These conditions, in many cases, often lead to teachers becoming the caregivers of their own classrooms (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atiles, 2005; Conroy & Sutherland, 2012; Fore, Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010; Jones & Youngs, 2012).

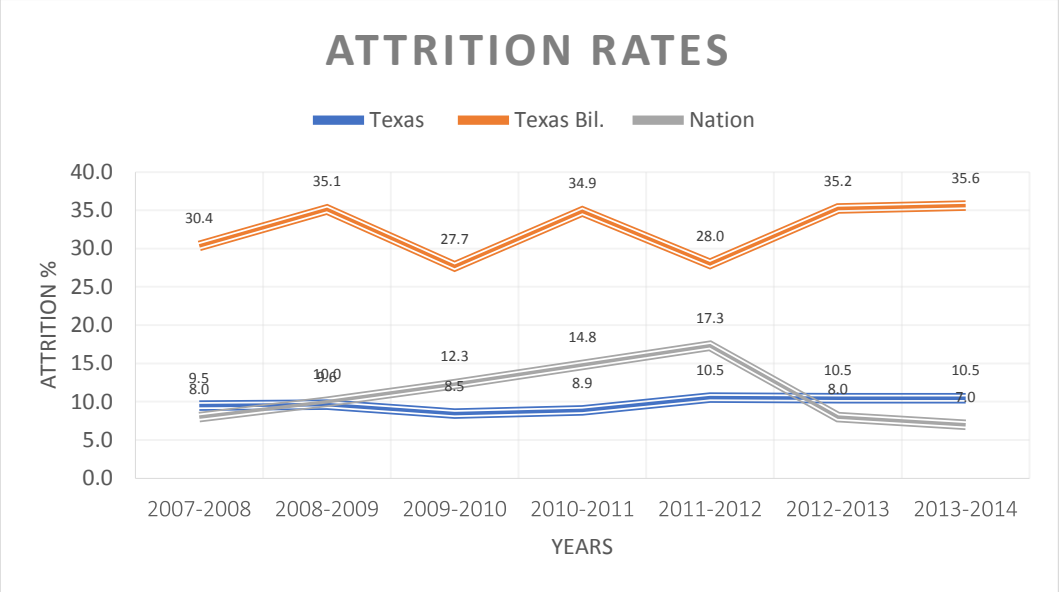
In addition to factors that affect the students there, other factors such as policy and practice disconnects, the implementation of evolving standards, standardized testing, school climate, poor teacher evaluation systems and deficiency in teacher preparation can make the teaching profession less attractive to prospective candidates (Nichols, Glass, & Berliner, 2006; Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012; Davis, 2014; Dietel, 2012; Rubin, 2011). In fact, recent data from the American College Testing (ACT) and the Department of Education indicate that enrollment in teacher preparation programs declined significantly from 2008 to 2014. Similarly, fewer high school graduates are expressing interest in the teaching profession (Aragon, 2016). Subsequently, these conditions may very well explain current teacher shortages in the United States (Harfitt, 2015).

Factors Contributing to Teacher Shortages of First-Year Teachers Serving ELs

Many factors threaten the longevity of teachers in the classroom during the beginning years of their careers (i.e. lack of adequate preparation, exhaustive implications of service for teachers serving predominantly ELs, minimal professional support and poor school climate). It is found that approximately 20% of all classroom teachers leave the profession during their first five years of teaching (Guha, Hyler, & Darling-Hammond, 2016). A recent report from the Learning Policy Institute indicated

that teachers of English Learners experienced the highest turnover rates among general elementary education, humanities, math/science and special education teaching assignments. (Sutcher, Darling-Hamond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). In the field of bilingual education, for example, attrition rates are alarming. In Texas, between the years 2007 and 2014, attrition rates among bilingual teachers (Figure 2.1), more than doubled the state and national attrition rates of general education teachers (Texas Education Agency, 2017).

Figure 2.1
Texas Attrition Rates of Bilingual Teachers (2007-2014)



Source: Texas Education Agency, 2017

This attrition could be the result of many factors. First, many teachers primarily serving ELs feel unprepared to meet the daily demands of teaching (Bormann & Dowling, 2008; Hansen-Thomas, Richins, Kakkar, & Okeyo, 2016). State of Texas data indicates that pre-service bilingual teachers are struggling to pass the Texas Examination of Education Standards. In effect, in the year 2014, only 58% of prospective bilingual teachers passed the Bilingual Target Language Proficiency Test (BTLPT) required to obtain bilingual certification status. Even worse was the outcome for Bilingual Generalist EC-6 prospective teachers, only 46% of teachers attained a passing score. Regrettably, these figures worsen in the following year. BTLPT candidates obtained a 52% passing rate in the BTLPT exam and 34% passing rate for the Bilingual Generalist EC-6 exam (Arroyo-Romano, 2016; State Board of Education, 2015).

Moreover, teachers serving ELs experience increased workloads due to the complexity of instruction, monitoring and reporting procedures involving ELs. For instance, instructional materials and alignment specifically geared to meet the needs of ELs are often scarce; therefore, curriculum development requires a great deal of differentiation and alignment. For example, it might be necessary to develop instructional materials that are specific to biliteracy, such as the development of academic vocabulary. Thus, this also significantly increases the workload for teachers serving ELs (Athanases & De Oliveira, 2008). Likewise, many of these teachers are tasked with extra responsibilities such as the translation of documents and interpretation of legal procedures for parents during special education meetings, such as Admission, Referral, and Dismissal (ARDs) and 504 plan placements (Ortiz, et al., 2011). The

pressures of standardized assessment for students testing in languages other than English also demands that teachers allocate more time to differentiating their classroom instruction (Bailey & Carroll, 2015).

Other added factors that threaten the longevity of teachers serving ELs during the beginning years of teaching includes the availability of adequate professional support (i.e., induction, mentorship and professional development). Having these types of support during the beginning years of teaching has been linked to teacher professional outcomes such as attrition, retention and school climate (Darling-Hammond, Furger, Shields, & Sutcher, 2016). Having mentorship opportunities via induction programs, coaching and/or feedback are important aspects for beginning teachers specifically because beginning teachers will experience "real life" in the classrooms they enter. Some of these experiences cannot be taught through preparation programs or textbooks (O'Donoghue, Lenz Kothe, Berard, Smith, & Ryoo, 2016). Unfortunately, much of the mentoring teachers receive today addresses more procedural and curricular expectations at their schools instead of the professional growth and pedagogical practices they need to build resilience, thus longevity in the classroom (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). First-year teachers can benefit from mentors that can assist them in making sense of the theory learned in preparation programs which can in turn guide them to transfer these concepts into practice. Indisputably, there is a need to connect teacher preparation with support programs in schools during the beginning years of teachers' practice (Bastian & Marks, 2017).

Lastly, school climate is another aspect that threaten the longevity of teachers serving ELs during the beginning years of teaching. Many teachers serving ELs regularly deal with school administrators who lack understanding of specific programs (i.e., bilingual, bilingual special education, dual and gifted programs) designed to serve the needs of ELs and the variety of requirements (Padrón, & Waxman, 2016). This lack of knowledge of bilingual education/second language programs from administrators can cause negative attitudes, prejudices and misinformation leading to inappropriate practices and inhibiting teachers to appropriately serve the ELs in their classrooms (Alanis & Rodríguez, 2008; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Padrón & Waxman, 2016; Rodriguez, 2009). Thus, this lack of understanding can also affect the school climate. School climate is critical because it influences academic outcomes, as well as social, cultural, physical and health factors of teachers and students (Anderson, 1982; Cohen, McCabe, Michelli & Pickeral; 2009; Ramsey, 2016). In the case of teachers serving predominantly ELs, when they feel unsupported, the school climate becomes compromised, leaving many teachers feeling discouraged with their profession (Brown, 2015; Restuccia, 2013; Amos, 2016).

Teacher Quality

In regards to ELs, lack of student achievement is one of the greatest concern troubling public schools in the United States. Academically, ELs continue to underperform when compared with their non-ELs counterparts. For instance, in the year 2015, 68% of ELs in grades four and eight scored below grade level in reading and only one percent of ELs demonstrated advanced proficiency skills in mathematics. In

addition, ELs share the lowest graduation rates in the nation (US Department of Education, 2017). Researchers, have found that in order for ELs to reach better academic outcomes, and to attain the necessary college and career readiness preparation, they must have access to quality teachers (Franco-Fuenmayor, Padrón, &Waxman, 2015).

Subsequently, many researchers have focused their efforts on teacher quality as it affects student achievement (Calderón, Slavin & Sanchez, 2011; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Goe, 2007; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010; Okpala & Ellis, 2005; Rice, 2003; Wayne & Youngs, 2003; Wilson & Floden, 2003). The research examining instruction for ELs has found that a key factor in providing adequate instruction for ELs, which subsequently contributes to student achievement is having access to highly qualified teachers (Aguerrebere, 2011; Akiba & LeTendre, 2009; Bright, 2011; Hassel & Hassel, 2010; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011). Furthermore, several scholars have also argued that teachers are a primary determining factor in students' achievement as it affects educational outcomes such as comprehension, attendance, and graduation rates (Aquino-Sterling, 2016A; Curtis, 201; Klusmann, Richter & Lüdtke, 2016). In 2012, for example, Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff (2011), published a longitudinal study that followed 2.5 million students over a span of 20 years with the purpose of understanding the impact teachers have on their pupils. They found that teachers affect student achievement on many levels, such as college attendance and their future financial stability. This study also found that having a quality teacher helped young learners elude certain youth problems, such as teen pregnancy (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff; 2011).

In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was enacted to allow states to provide academic support to students in public schools, with Section 1119 focusing on improving teacher quality at the local level. To achieve this goal of teacher quality, NCLB requires teachers teaching core subject areas to meet specific competency and educational requirements. These requirements include having a bachelor's degree, earning full state certification as defined by each state, and demonstrating competency of the subjects taught. Those teachers who meet these requirements are considered "highly qualified" (Texas Education Agency, 2012). Nonetheless, defining what constitutes a quality teacher has been difficult. For example, The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (NCCTQ) generated a report in 2007 which argued that finding a clear and useful definition for teacher quality is a difficult task, because indicators of excellence differ based on the context of the evaluation (Goe, 2007). To illustrate, positive qualities in new hires may differ from desirable qualities in experienced teachers. In regards to ELs, highly qualified teachers must possess specific language and cultural competencies in order to address their needs. Berliner (2009), used the word "ineffable" to indicate that trying to come up with a clear definition for teacher quality was nearly impossible. Despite this difficulty in finding a universal definition of teacher quality, the NCCTQ report (Goe, 2007) recognized certain characteristics that various scholars have found to be evident in most effective teachers: qualifications and experience, high expectations for all students, classrooms that model critical natural learning environments, a desire to help students succeed, the ability to motivate all

students, excellent mentoring skills, and a willingness to work with special education pupils.

Teacher Preparation

In recent years, much attention has been given to the appropriate instruction of English Learners (ELs) and the processes involved in acquiring the necessary linguistic skills needed to perform at grade level expectations (Bailey & Carroll, 2015; Baker, et al., 2014; Boyle, Bowman-Perrott, deMarín, Mahadevan, & Etchells, 2016; Cisco & Padrón, 2012; Fillmore, 2014; Llosa, Lee, Jiang, Haas, O'Connor, Van Booven, & Kieffer, 2016). When teaching ELs, field-specific preparation is required in order to meet the complex needs of ELs and to understand the advantages of bilingualism (Rodríguez, Carrasquillo & Lee, 2014). Unfortunately, the professional development teachers receive is limited in quality and quantity (Padrón & Waxman, 2016; Téllez & Waxman, 2006). According to Wei, Darling-Hammond, and Adamson (2010), approximately one-third of American educators receive less than eight hours of professional development on strategies for teaching ELs. There are many aspects when considering the preparation of teachers serving ELs. For instance, there are specific implications for teachers serving ELs when considering pedagogical instructional aspects (e.g., classroom management, use of instructional methods, subject matter knowledge, technology use, assessment, differentiation, data driven instructional decisions, and state content standards). Unlike general teacher preparation, teachers serving ELs must account for language development, academic content development, while maintaining cultural awareness simultaneously. In addition, other factors related

to the preparation of teachers serving ELs include activities related to state accountability as it relates to ELs, such as data collection requirements (Amos, 2016). Furthermore, the language acquisition components of this specialty, such as understanding language development stages and the responsibilities associated with the measurement and reporting of proficiency levels for accountability purposes, also requires significant training (Barrera & Liu, 2010; Haagher, 2007; Cheatham, Jimenez-Silva, Wodrich, & Kasai, 2014; Luft & Roehrig, 2005; Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera; 2002). Moreover, instructional materials and alignment specifically geared to meet the needs of ELs are often scarce. Therefore, it is often the case that existent curriculum requires a great deal of differentiation and alignment. For example, it might be necessary to develop instructional materials that are specific to biliteracy, such as the development of academic vocabulary. This also requires specific preparation (Athanases & De Oliveira, 2008).

Summarizing, the rapid increase in the population of ELs has created an exponentially-increasing need for teachers able to serve the complex needs of ELs. Consequently, teacher shortages still in effect (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Thomas, 2016). The current academic performance of ELs indicates that ELs continue to underperform when compared with their non-ELs counterparts. In order for ELs to reach academic potential, they must have access to highly qualified and copiously prepared teachers (Franco-Fuenmayor, Padrón, &Waxman, 2015). It is found that teacher preparation is a key component that can dictate teachers' future experiences, sense of self efficacy, and resilience in the classroom (Christian, 2017). Therefore, this becomes

crucially important during the beginning years of teaching. Subsequently, it is important to study the factors that may encourage the retention, longevity, and support of teachers serving ELs. There are multiple factors that threaten the longevity of teachers serving ELs during the first year of teaching. For instance, teachers serving primarily ELs might feel unprepared to meet their needs. Additionally, the professional support (induction, mentorship, and professional development) available to first-year teachers, and school climate are added factors that may also threaten the longevity of teachers serving ELs. Consequently, having knowledge of the current teacher shortages in the United States, and in view of the many factors that could impact the longevity of teachers serving ELs; it is important to investigate the perceptions of preparation and professional support available to first-year teachers serving ELs nationwide.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of first-year teachers serving ELs in relation to their preparation. In other words, this study investigates how prepared teachers serving ELs feel about teaching ELs. The study also examines factors such as professional support (i.e., induction, mentorship, and professional development) which may influence the retention and longevity in the profession. The following questions will be addressed:

1) Are there differences between first-year teachers and experienced teachers on their perceptions of preparation?
2) Are there any significant differences on teachers' perceptions of their preparation by the number of ELs they serve in their classrooms?

3) How often is professional support (i.e., induction, mentorship and professional development) available to first-year teachers?

Methods

Data Sources

Data sources were obtained utilizing the Teacher Questionnaire of the School and Staff Survey from the 2011-2012 School year. The SASS was analyzed to obtain the target population for the study. The survey was examined using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and STATA. Sections I and II of SASS include relevant background information such as experience, educational background and relevant information for narrowing the sample down to the targeted population of classroom teachers in grades Kindergarten through grade 12. To achieve this sample many filtering processes had to occur. Primary filtering included participants of the survey selecting option 1 for the first question of the survey, confirming their role as a full-time teacher (Regular full-time teacher in grades Kindergarten -12$^{th)}$. After this, teachers were grouped by their years of experience. Two categories were established: (a) Teachers whose first year of teaching was recorded as 2011-2012 were considered first-year teachers (survey question number 9) and (b) teachers whose first year or teaching differed from 2011-2012 were considered experienced. That is, teachers who had two or more years of experience. Subsequently, missing data was examined. Missing observations were removed from the data set. Additionally, a series of questions on the dataset that were directed only to a specific group of teachers. For instance, teachers whose first-year of teaching began prior to the 2007-2008 academic year, were not

required to answer the subset of questions specifically designed for first- year teaching experiences (Question 32) such as induction experiences. Therefore, the decision was made to analyze the group of teachers who answered all of the question in the data set. Statistical interpretation proceeded utilizing frequency tables and cross tabulations as part of descriptive statistics. Additionally, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was performed to examine teachers' perceptions by group (first-year teachers vs. experienced teachers) on preparedness to teach ELs. Chi Square tests of Independence were utilized to gain an understanding of the types of professional support (induction, mentoring and professional development) available to first year teachers serving ELs.

Participants

A unique sample of 37, 497 teachers were identified after filtering. The sample was then grouped into two categories: (a) first year teachers, (b) experienced teachers (two or more years of teaching experience). There were 5,277 first year teachers and 32,220 experienced teachers in the sample. Next, number of ELs in the classroom were divided into four categories: (a) teachers who did not have ELs in their classroom, (b) teachers who had between 1 – 10 % of ELs in their classroom, (c) teachers who had between 11-30% of ELs in their classroom, and (d) teachers who had more than 30% ELs in their classroom. There were 50.10 % of non – ELs in group 1, in group 2, 37.81 % of Els, 8.09 % of ELs in group 3, and 4.0 % in group 4. Although these groups are quite unbalanced, they do accurately represent the status of ELs in the U.S. when the

data was collected in 2011-2012.

Instrument

This study utilizes the Teacher Questionnaire Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) 2011-2012 for data analysis. The survey was conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) as an integrated study for public and private school districts, schools, principals, and teachers nationwide. The survey covers a number of topics including teacher and principal characteristics, school conditions, climate perceptions, teacher preparation, school problems and basic characteristics of the student population. The Teacher Questionnaire Schools and Staffing Survey 2011-2102 was analyzed to obtain the target population for the study. The survey was examined using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSSS) and (STATA). Section I included relevant background information such as education experience, education background and relevant information for narrowing the sample down to the targeted population of classroom teachers in grades Kindergarten – 12^{th} grade. To achieve this sample, many filtering processes had to occur. Primary filtering included participants of the survey selecting option 1 for the first question of the survey, confirming their role as a full-time teacher (Regular full-time teacher in grades Kindergarten -$12^{th)}$. After this, teachers were grouped by their years of experience. Two categories were established: (a) Teachers whose first year of teaching was recorded as 2011-2012 were considered first year teachers (survey question number 9) and (b) teachers whose first year or teaching differed from 2011-2012 were considered experienced. That is, teachers who had two or more years of experience. Subsequently, missing data was examined. The following

information was removed from the data set, for example, missing observations and a series of questions on the dataset that were directed to a specific group of teachers. For instance, teachers whose first-year of teaching began prior to the 2007-2008 academic year, were not required to answer the subset of questions specifically designed for first-year teaching experiences (Question 32). Therefore, the initial sample after filtering procedures contained 5,277 first-year teachers and 32,220 experienced teachers. However, after the filtering procedures and missing observations were taken into consideration, a final sample of teachers was originated comprising 2, 506 first year teachers and 6,139 experienced teachers.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics are reported. Data analysis included various steps. Frequency tables and cross tabulations were used as part of descriptive statistics. A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) test was utilized to compare the perceptions of preparation of teachers serving ELs in relationship to teachers' experience and its association with classroom factors. Additionally, the MANOVA served to analyze the association between the perceptions of preparation of teachers (first year teachers vs. experienced teachers) with the number of ELs they served in their classroom. In addition, Chi Square tests of independence were utilized to understand the types of professional support (induction, mentorship and professional development) available to first year teachers in grades Kindergarten to 12^{th}. A MANOVA test served to analyze the association between professional support (i.e., induction, mentorship, and

professional support) with teachers' experience (first-year teachers vs. experienced teachers), and the number of ELs present in the classroom.

Results

This study investigated the perceptions of preparation of teachers serving English Learners utilizing a national data set. The first question addressed the perceptions of preparation of first-year teachers. Preparation perceptions between two groups of teachers (first-year teachers, experienced teachers) were examined in regards to several classroom topics (classroom management, use of instructional methods, subject matter knowledge, technology use, student assessment, differentiation, data driven instructional decisions, and state content standards). First year-teachers, shared more concerns related to their preparation for all measures. The highest rated concerns were: (a) Data driven instructional decisions, (b) student assessment, (c) use of instructional methods, and (d) differentiated instruction. The lowest concerns were: (classroom management, (b) meeting state content standards, (c) the use of computers during instruction, and (d) subject matter knowledge. There was a significant difference on preparedness perceptions based on experience at the $p<.001$ level for four out of the eight classroom topics. First-year teachers were found to have significantly more concerns than experienced teachers on the following classroom topics: use of instructional methods, assessment, differentiated instruction, and data driven instructional decisions (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1
Teacher Preparation Perceptions According to Experience

	First Year Teachers		*Experienced Teachers*			
Classroom Topic	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***F***	
Classroom Management	2.70	0.82	2.64	0.81	8.84	
Use of Instructional Methods	2.93	0.76	2.87	0.78	13.61	***
Subject Matter Knowledge	3.25	0.76	3.21	0.76	3.82	
Use of Computers During Instruction	2.96	0.88	2.92	0.89	3.56	
Student Assessment	2.89	0.76	2.81	0.75	18.07	***
Differentiated Instruction	2.73	0.83	2.67	0.84	11.36	***
Data Driven Instructional Decisions	2.68	0.84	2.55	0.84	41.39	***
Meet State Content Standards	3.06	0.81	3.00	0.81	8.49	
	2.90	0.81	2.83	0.81		

Note: Perceptions of preparation are measured on a 4-point scale with "4" = very well prepared, "3" = well prepared, "2" =somewhat prepared, and "1" = not prepared at all.

** p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001* *N=8,645*

The second question examined whether there were significant differences between the preparation perceptions of teachers serving ELs in regards to the number of ELs they served in their classroom. First, the same classroom aspects (i.e., classroom management, use of instructional methods, subject matter knowledge, technology, assessment, differentiation, data driven instructional decisions, and state content standards) examined with teacher groups (first-year teachers and experienced teachers) were analyzed according to the groups of ELs identified during filtering (Group 1- teachers who did not have ELs in their classroom, Group 2- teachers who had between 1 – 10 % of ELs in their classroom, Group 3- teachers who had between 11-30% of ELs in their classroom, and Group 4 – teachers who had more than 30% ELs in their

classroom). A factorial MANOVA was conducted to determine the effect of number of ELs and experience on six dependent variables (i.e., classroom management, instructional methods, teaching subject area content, assessment, differentiation, using student data to inform instruction, and meeting state standards). Data were first transformed to eliminate missing cases. Number or ELs was transformed to group ELs into specific categories (i.e. none ELs, 1-10 ELs, 11-30 ELs, 21-30 and 30+ELs). Experience was transformed into two categories: first-year teachers and experienced teachers. The MANOVA results indicated that number of ELs (Table 2.2) [Pillai's Trace $\Lambda = F(3, 8640) = 2.23, p = 0.0005$] and experience (Table 2.3) [Pillai's Trace $\Lambda = F(1, 8633) = 5.36, p = 0.0001$], significantly affected the combined DV's. Univariate ANOVA and Scheffé post hoc tests were conducted as a follow-up tests. ANOVA results indicated that classroom management significantly differs for experience [$F(1,8.643) = 8.84, p = .0030$] (Table 2.4). In regards to use of student data to inform instruction, the Scheffé post hoc results revealed that the use of student data to inform instruction significantly differed for experience [$F(1, 8643) = 41.39, p = .0001$] (Table 2.5). Finally, meeting state content standards significantly differed for experience [$F(1, 8643) = 8.49, p = 0.0036$] (Table 2.6). Scheffé post hoc results for number of ELs and experience indicated that the following dependent variables: *classroom management, using student data to inform instruction,* and *meeting state content standards* significantly differed for years of experience. The more experience a teacher had, the more prepared a teacher perceived herself/himself to be. No significant differences were found in regards to number of ELs.

Table 2.2
Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) of Teachers' Perceptions of Preparation in Regards to Number of ELs

	None ELs		*1-10 ELs*		*11-30 ELs*		*30 + ELs*		
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	**F**
Classroom Management	2.67	0.80	2.67	0.82	2.65	0.81	2.58	0.83	1.31
Instructional Methods	2.90	0.76	2.90	0.79	2.87	0.80	2.83	0.79	0.84
Teaching Subject Area	3.23	0.76	3.23	0.76	3.21	0.76	3.29	0.78	0.81
Using Computers During Instruction	2.93	0.89	2.96	0.88	2.87	0.91	2.83	0.93	3.63
Assessment	2.85	0.84	2.85	0.76	2.80	0.75	2.74	0.76	3.57
Differentiation	2.71	0.84	2.68	0.84	2.66	0.82	2.59	0.82	3.17
Using Student Data	2.61	0.83	2.59	0.85	2.57	0.84	2.49	0.87	2.10
Meeting State Standards	3.00	0.81	3.04	0.82	3.02	0.80	3.07	0.76	2.26

Note: Perceptions of preparation are measured on a 4-point scale with "4" = very well prepared, "3" = well prepared, "2" =somewhat prepared, and "1" = not prepared at all.

*P<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001* *N=8,645*

Table 2.3
Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) of Teachers' Perceptions of Preparation in Regards to Experience

	First-Year Teachers		*Experienced Teachers*			
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	**F**	
Classroom Management	2.70	0.82	2.64	0.80	8.84	***
Instructional Methods	2.94	0.76	2.87	0.78	13.61	
Teaching Subject Area	3.25	0.76	3.22	0.76	3.82	
Using Computers During Instruction	2.96	0.88	2.92	0.89	3.56	
Assessment	2.90	0.76	2.82	0.75	18.07	
Differentiation	2.74	0.83	2.67	0.84	11.36	
Using Student Data	2.68	0.84	2.56	0.84	41.39	***
Meeting State Standards	3.06	0.81	3.00	0.81	8.49	***

Note: Perceptions of preparation are measured on a 4-point scale with "4" = very well prepared, "3" = well prepared, "2" =somewhat prepared, and "1" = not prepared at all.

*P<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001* *N=8,645*

Table 2.4
ANOVA SUMMARY – Classroom Management and Experience

Experience	***Mean***	***Std. Dev.***	***Freq.***
First Year Teachers	2.70	0.82	4,307
Experienced Teachers	2.64	0.80	3,254
Total	2.66	0.81	8,645

Source	***SS***	***df***	***MS***	***F***	***Prob > F***
Between Groups	5.82	1	5.82	8.84	0.0030
Within Groups	5688.49	8643	0.66		
Total	5694.30	8644	0.66		

Table 2.5
ANOVA SUMMARY – Using Student Data to Drive Instruction and Experience

Experience	*Mean*	*Std. Dev.*	*Freq.*
First Year Teachers	2.68	0.84	4,307
Experienced Teachers	2.56	0.84	3,254
Total	2.66	0.81	8,645

Source	*SS*	*Df*	*MS*	*F*	*Prob > F*
Between Groups	29.15	3	29.15	41.39	0.0000
Within Groups	6087.92	8641	0.70		
Total	5694.30	8644	0.71		

Table 2.6
ANOVA SUMMARY – Meeting State Standards and Experience

Experience	*Mean*	*Std. Dev.*	*Freq.*
First Year Teachers	3.06	0.81	4,307
Experienced Teachers	3.00	0.81	3,254
Total	3.02	0.811	8,645

Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*Prob > F*
Between Groups	4.46	3	5.58	8.49	0.0036
Within Groups	5686.92	8641	0.66		
Total	5691.38	8644	0.66		

The third question examined the types of professional support (i.e., induction, mentorship, and professional development) available for teachers serving ELs during their first-year of teaching. Teachers responded to various questions in regards to professional support received during their first year of teaching. Descriptive results revealed important differences. For example, 58.6% of first-year teachers participated in some kind of teacher induction program. However, when controlling for number of ELs present in their classroom (Table 2.7), the results indicated that teachers with more than 30 ELs in their classroom had the least exposure to induction programs (*chi-square* (3) = 39.52; $p < .001$).

Table 2.7
Professional Support Available to First-Year Teachers: Induction in regards to ELs

Number of ELs	***Yes***	***No***	***Total***
None	27.5%	22.2%	49..8%
1-10els	23.0%	14.5%	37.6%
11-30els	5.4%	3.1%	8.5%
30+els	2.5%	1.4%	3.9%
Total	58.6%	41.3%	100%

N=8,645

Pearson chi2(3) = 39.5174 *p*= 0.000

In addition to induction participation, other factors known to provide support during the induction period of first-year teachers were examined. A factorial MANOVA was conducted to determine the effect of number of ELs and experience on five dependent variables (*i.e., reduced teaching schedule, planning time with teachers, classes for beginner teachers, extra classroom assistance, and supportive*

communication with leadership). MANOVA results indicated that number of ELs (Table 2.8) [Pillai's Trace Λ= *F (*3, 8640*)* =4.36, *p=0.0001*] and experience (Table 2.9) [Pillai's Trace Λ= *F 1*, 8640*)* =2.99, *p=0.0001*], significantly affected the combined DV's. Univariate ANOVA and Scheffé post hoc tests were conducted as a follow-up tests. ANOVA results indicated that classes for beginner teachers (Table 2.10) [*F (*3,8.645*)* =13.23, *p*=.0001], and planning time with teachers (Table 2.11), significantly differed for number of ELs [*F (*3,8.645*)* =11.99, *p*=.0001]. In regards to experience, ANOVA results indicated that extra classroom assistance [*F (*3,8.644*)* =22.85, *p*=.0001] (Table 2.12), and planning time with teachers significantly differed from experience [*F (*3,8.645*)* =9.41, *p*=.0001] (Table 2.13).

Table 2.8
Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) of Induction Support Factors in Regards to Number of ELs

	None ELs		***1-10 ELs***		***11-30 ELs***		***30 + ELs***			
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	**F**	
Reduced Teaching Schedule	1.89	.303	1.89	.309	1.88	.321	1.90	.300	0.55	
Planning Time with Teachers	1.55	.496	1.50	.500	1.46	.498	1.50	.500	11.99	***
Classes for Beginner Teachers	1.44	.497	1.38	.487	1.36	.481	1.36	.480	13.23	***
Extra Classroom Assistance	.030	.462	.022	.403	.025	.420	.018	.361	0.93	
Supportive Communication	1.23	.422	1.23	.425	1.26	.439	1.28	.450	2.23	

Note: Induction Support is measured on a 2-point scale with "1" = Yes, and "2" = No

** p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001* *N=8,645*

Table 2.9
Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) of Induction Support Factors in Regards to Experience

	First-Year Teachers		*Experienced Teachers*			
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	**F**	
Reduced Teaching Schedule	1.88	.315	1.89	.303	1.45	
Planning Time with Teachers	1.50	.500	1.53	.498	9.41	***
Classes for Beginning Teachers	1.42	.494	1.40	.491	1.27	
Extra Classroom Assistance	1.71	.450	1.76	.425	22.85	***
Supportive Communication	1.23	.423	1.24	.428	0.73	

Note: Induction Support is measured on a 2-point scale with "1" = Yes, and "2" = No

** p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001* *N=8,645*

Table 2.10
Scheffé Post Hoc Test – Classes for Beginning Teachers and Number of ELS

Number of ELs	***Mean***	***Std. Dev.***	***Freq.***
None	1.44	.497	4,307
1-10 ELs	1.38	.487	3,254
11-30 ELs	1.36	.481	743
30+	1.36	.480	341
Total	2.66	0.81	8,645

Source	***SS***	***df***	***MS***	***F***	***Prob > F***
Between Groups	9.5	3	3.19	13.23	0.0000
Within Groups	2087.20	8641	.241		
Total	2096.78	8644	.242		

Table 2.11
Scheffé Post Hoc Test – Planning Time with Teachers and Number of ELS

Number of ELs	*Mean*	*Std. Dev.*	*Freq.*
None	1.55	.496	4,307
1-10 ELs	1.50	.500	3,254
11-30 ELs	1.46	.498	743
30+	1.50	.500	341
Total	2.66	0.81	8,645

Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*Prob > F*
Between Groups	8.9	3	2.97	11.99	0.0000
Within Groups	2145.4	8641	.248		
Total	2154.3	8644	.249		

Table 2.12
Scheffé Post Hoc Test – Planning Time with Teachers and Experience

Number of ELs	*Mean*	*Std. Dev.*	*Freq.*
First-Year Teachers	1.50	.500	2,506
Experienced Teachers	1.53	.98	6,139
Total	1.52	.499	8,645

Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*Prob > F*
Between Groups	2.34	1	2.34	9.41	0.0022
Within Groups	2152.04	8643	.248		
Total	2096.78	8644	.242		

Table 2.13
Scheffé Post Hoc Test – Extra Classroom Assistance and Experience

Number of ELs	*Mean*	*Std. Dev.*	*Freq.*
First-Year Teachers	1.71	.450	2,998
Experienced Teachers	1.7	.425	5,647
Total	1.74	.434	8,645

Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*Prob > F*
Between Groups	2.34	1	2.34	9.41	0.0000
Within Groups	2152.04	8643	.248		
Total	2096.78	8644	.242		

Another area of professional support examined was mentorship. In examining mentorship, descriptive statistics indicated that 71.4% of first-year teachers reported having mentors who taught the same subjects (Table 2.14). However, when controlling for the group distribution of ELs, results indicated that when the number of ELs increased in the classroom, the presence of mentors teaching the same subject areas decreased. Only 4.1% of teachers with more than 30 ELs in the classroom reported having mentors teaching the same subject area (Table 2.15).

Table 2.14
Teachers' Perception of Mentorship in Regards to Having Mentors Teaching the Same Content Area

Experience	*Yes*	*No*	*Total*
First-Year Teachers	71.4%	28.5%	100%
Experienced Teachers	72.9%	27.03%	100%
Pearson chi (1) = 5.7552 p = 0.0016			

N=8,645

Table 2.15
Teachers' Perception of Mentorship in Regards to ELs Distribution

Number of ELs	*Yes*	*No*	*Total*
None	48.8%	50.2%	49..2%
1-10els	38.5%	36.6%	38.0%
11-30els	8.4%	8.9%	8.5%
30+els	4.1%	4.2%	4.1%
Total	72.4%	27.5%	100%
Pearson chi (1) = 5.7552 p = 0.0016			

N=8,645

This study also examined whether they were perceived differences on teacher practices due to having been assigned to a mentor during the first-year of teaching with regards to the number of ELs present in their classroom and teachers' experience. Descriptive statistics revealed important differences (*Chi- Square* (9) =12.1373; p<.001) in regards to the number of ELs. Surprisingly, only 1.7% of teachers serving more than 30 ELs in their classroom perceived great improvement in their teaching practices due to having been assigned to a mentor during their first-year of teaching (Table 2.16). In addition, a Chi-Square test of Independence revealed a significant difference in improvement of teaching practices in regards to experience (*Chi-Square* (3) =12.1334; p<.001). Interestingly, first-year teachers expressed more improvement in their teaching practices than experienced teachers (Table 2.17).

Table 2.16
Perceptions of Teaching Practice Improvements Due to Mentor Assignment During First-Year of Teaching in Regards to ELs

Teaching Improvement Due to Mentor	*Number of ELs*				
	None ELs	*1-10 ELs*	*11-30 ELs*	*30+ ELs*	*Total*
Not at all	5.4%	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%	5.6%
To a Small Extent	25.4%	27.9%	27.0%	25.9%	26.2%
To a Moderate Extent	37.7%	35.2%	33.3%	42.5%	36.6%
To a Great Extent	31.5%	31.7%	33.5%	25.5%	31.5%
Total	49.2%	38.5%	8.5%	4.1%	100%

Note: Perceptions of teaching practice improvement due to having been assigned to a mentor during the first-year of teaching are measured on a 4-point scale with "4" = To a Great Extent, "3" = To a Moderate Extent, "2" =To a Small Extent, and "1" = Not at All.

Pearson chi2(9) = 12.1373 p = 0.206

N=8,645

Table 2.17
Perceptions of Teaching Practice Improvements Due to Mentor Assignment During First-Year of Teaching in Regards to Experience

Teaching Improvement Due to Mentor	*Experience*		
	First-Year Teachers	*Experienced Teachers*	*Total*
Not at all	4.5%	6.2%	5.6%
To a Small Extent	24.8%	26.9%	26.2%
To a Moderate Extent	38.5%	35.6%	36.6%
To a Great Extent	32.0%	31.2%	31.5%
Total	33.8%	66.1%	100%

Note: Perceptions of teaching practice improvement due to having been assigned to a mentor during the first-year of teaching are measured on a 4-point scale with "4" = To a Great Extent, "3" = To a Moderate Extent, "2" =To a Small Extent, and "1" = Not at All.

Pearson chi2(3) = 12.1334 p = 0.007

N=8,645

Lastly, this study examined the professional development opportunities available to first-year teachers; a Chi Square test of independence revealed significant differences (*chi-square* (1) = 21.95; p<.001). Interestingly, 76.6% of first year teachers did not engage in professional development activities directly addressing teaching ELs (Table

2.18). In addition, descriptive results indicated that 63% of first-year teachers received only eight hours or less of professional development geared towards meeting the needs of ELs (Table 2.19). For the usefulness of the professional development received, 37% of first-year teachers reporting that the professional development that they received was not useful or somewhat useful (Table 2.20).

Table 2.18
Professional Development Geared Towards Meeting the Needs of ELs (Whole Teacher Sample)

Experience	*Yes*	*No*	*Total*
First-Year	23.3%	76.6%	14.0%
Experienced	25.8%	79.4%	85.9%
Total	7,849	29,647	37,496

N=37,496

Pearson chi2(1) = 21.95804 p = 0.000

Table 2.19
Professional Support Available to First Year Teachers: Total Number of Professional Development Hours

Experience	*8 Hours or less*	*9-16 Hours*	*17-32 Hours*	*33 Hours or more*	*Total*
First-Year	63.0%	16.8%	11.1%	8.92%	15.7%
Experienced	67.8%	15.9%	8.7%	7.42%	84.2%
Total	67.1%	16.0%	9.14%	7.65%	100%

N=7,849

Pearson chi2(3) = 13.9300 p = 0.003

Table 2.20
Professional Development Available to First-Year Teachers: Usefulness

Experience	*Not Useful*	*Somewhat Useful*	*Useful*	*Very Useful*	*Total*
First-Year	6.16%	30.8%	43.2%	19.7%	15.7%
Experienced	7.19%	34.5%	40.2%	17.9%	84.2%
Total	7.03%	34.0%	40.7%	18.2%	100%

N=7,849

Pearson chi2(3) = 10.1294 p = 0.017

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that, first-year teachers serving ELs feel unprepared to teach ELs. The findings also provide evidence that, in regards to ELs, when the number of ELs increased in the classroom, the less preparation their teachers received. First-year teachers represented in the sample of this study expressed that they were unprepared in areas such as classroom management, using a variety of instructional methods, assessment, data usage to inform instruction, and meeting content standards. This is troublesome because mastery of these skills is essential to improve the academic outcome of ELs. For instance, it is particularly important for teachers of ELs to be able to use a variety of instructional methods with an emphasis in language development and academic content. Many of the ELs teachers serve experience different levels of language proficiency and academic achievement. Having a variety of instructional methods designed specifically to address the needs of ELs will help teachers better meet the needs of their students, and subsequently increase student achievement. Furthermore, teachers of ELs need specific preparation to be able to assess the linguistic and academic progress of their students. Knowing how to gather and analyze data is a

crucial component of teaching ELs. Teachers of Els need a clear understanding on how to interpret the data collected to guide their daily instruction in order to ensure the adequate progress of the ELs they teach. Furthermore, teachers of ELs should be equipped with the tools to be able to comply with the expectations of state academic standards. The rise of new academic standards such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have serious implications for teachers of ELs as they assimilate to new ways of teaching while carrying the expectations of academic excellence set for by new standards (Heritage, Walqui & Linquati; 2015).

This study also investigated the perceptions of professional support such as induction, mentoring, and professional development that was provided to first year teachers serving ELs. The findings revealed that first-year teachers serving ELs report that they do not receive adequate support during their first year of teaching. For instance, nearly 75% of first year teachers did not receive extra classroom assistance during their first year of teaching. Only 4% of teachers with 30 or more ELs present in their classroom reported having mentors who taught the same content area. One possible solution for the current lack of support for beginning teachers could be the establishment of required partnerships between school districts and university programs. This can be accomplished by supporting high-quality teacher residency programs. Residency programs that provide ongoing mentoring support for beginning teachers where co-teaching experiences with expert mentor teachers can be experienced (Guha, Hyler & Darling-Hammond; 2016).

In regards to professional development (PD) participation, results indicated that first-year teachers serving ELs lagged behind other teachers. Nearly 77% of first-year teachers, and nearly 80% of experienced teachers serving ELs, did not receive PD specific to meeting the needs of ELs. More than half (63%) of first-year teachers received eight hours or less of PD addressing the needs of ELs. In reality, eight hours or less of professional development seems very minimal when compared to other countries such as Singapore where teachers are offered 100 hours of professional development per year (OECD, 2011). Similarly, teachers' perceptions about the usefulness of professional development is cause for concern. Over a third (37%) of first-year teachers serving ELs reported the professional development received as not useful or somewhat useful. Teachers of ELs need rigorous professional development that builds capacity within, engages in dialogue, promotes collaboration, and asserts inquiry and growth mindsets (Heritage, Walqui & Linquati, 2015). Thus, ongoing collaboration and adequate professional development will help teachers grow as practitioners and in turn, will generate positive outcomes in student achievement.

Limitations of Study

A primary limitation of this study is the survey itself. Even though the data obtained from this survey is national, accurate, and reliable; the majority of the content addresses the needs of the general teacher corps. It was found that very few items addressed the specific needs of ELs. Therefore, assumptions should be made with caution. Another limitation of this study is attrition of the study sample. This study relies on data obtained from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) Survey 2011-2012,

US Department of Education. Even though filtering procedures were carefully selected, missing observations were excluded from the sample. For the reasons that, a series of questions on the dataset were only directed to a specific group of teachers. For example, teachers whose first-year of teaching began prior to 2007-2008 were not required to answer question 32 (which examines first-year teacher experiences). After filtering procedures were taken into account, the final study sample is significantly smaller than the population.

Another limitation of this study is that some data elements can be expected to vary over time. For example, the status of English Learners. Therefore, the identification of students considered ELs during the 2011-2012 academic year may vary as students exit their EL status and develop language proficiency skills. Consequently, interpretations should be taken with caution. Finally, the data, was primarily gathered with descriptive educational statistical purposes. Therefore, data analysis hereof performed may include the potential for inaccuracy and bias.

Conclusions

The existing literature on ELs reviewed hereof clearly addresses the importance of appropriate instruction for ELs. Unfortunately, ELs in the United States continue to underperform when compared with their non-ELs counterparts. Scholarly evidence corroborates the fact that ELs need copiously prepared teachers in order to increase their academic performance (Gándara & Santibañez, 2016). However, there are many in-school and out-of-school factors that impact teachers' ability to appropriately serve ELs (e.g. poverty, students at risk, policy and practice disconnects, standardized testing,

deficiency of teacher preparation and lack of professional support). Such factors posit an even bigger concern for first-year teachers because the experiences during the first-year of teaching can either make or break a teacher in the profession (Christian, 2017). The United States should continue to address the fact that the current attrition rates present in US public schools correlate in some way with these factors in which teachers must face daily. Furthermore, we (nation), also need to understand that these factors seriously threaten the longevity of quality teachers in the classroom.

Unenviably, many of the factors mentioned above are not going to disappear (Levenson, 2007). Therefore, making sure that teachers receive stellar preparation should be at the core of any educational reform, and it should be the priority in the agendas of all educational stakeholders. If ELs are to meet the current standards, teachers serving ELs have to be equipped with the necessary tools to make sure ELs students meet those standards. Teachers of ELs have their work cut out for them. Daily, they are tasked with addressing the complex needs of ELs. Therefore, investing in stellar preparation before they enter the classroom, and providing adequate support during their beginning years of teaching should be key components of any educational reform aiming to meet the globalization needs of twenty first century education (Franco-Fuenmayor, Padrón & Waxman, 2015; Heritage, Walqui & Linquati; 2015).

CHAPTER III

INVESTIGATING THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES OF TEACHERS SERVING ENGLISH LEARNERS IN MIDDLE GRADES (7TH, 8TH & 9TH) NATIONWIDE

The rapid increase of English Learners (ELs) in the United States, especially in Texas, has created an exponentially-increasing need for teachers able to meet their academic needs (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Researchers have found that in order for ELs to receive appropriate instruction and subsequently increase student achievement, it is necessary for ELs to have access to copiously well-prepared teachers (Aguerrebere, 2011; Akiba & LeTendre, 2009; Bright, 2011; Connie & Bottoms, 2003; Goe,2007; Hassel & Hassel, 2010; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011; Stronge, Ward, & Tucker, 2007). Teacher preparation is an issue heavily connected with the current performance of English learners (ELs). According to the U.S. Department of Education, lack of teacher preparation is an area of vast concern for our nation. Results from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), years 2011- 2012, indicated that many school principals and administrators felt that teachers do not acquire the necessary skills to adequately teach during their preparation programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). This reality becomes an even bigger concern for teachers serving ELs in middle school grades because generally middle school teachers receive generic preparation that is geared towards elementary or secondary education (Henson, 2016). This lack of preparation is of particular concern for first-year teachers. Much of the training teachers receive

addresses more procedural and curricular expectations at their schools instead of the professional growth, and pedagogical practices they need to successfully meet the needs of their students (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009).

Teachers serving ELs in middle grades require more than field-specific preparation in order to meet the complex needs of ELs. That is, they must not only provide quality instruction in content areas such as reading, mathematics, social studies, and other subjects that make up the general curriculum, but must also focus on developing proficiency skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing with regards to both basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) skills. (Cummins, 2003). Furthermore, there are many developmental changes that occur during the middle school years. These changes posit specific cognitive, physical, social, emotional, cultural and moral characteristics. Regardless of genetics, temperament, culture, gender, and ability; students in middle grades transition between two stages of cognitive development: Concrete operational and formal operational (Piaget, 1936). It is during the middle school years that logical reasoning begins to take place and students are able to comprehend abstract thoughts (Piaget, 1973). It is also found that the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development factors of middle school children intertwine with one another. That is, success in one factor may contribute to success in other factors and vice versa. Deficiencies in one of these factors may cause complications in development that can last up to an entire lifetime (Capuzzi & Stauffer, 2016). Accordingly, this developmental stage is considered a critical area of development in a person's life

(Cook, Howell & Faulkner, 2016). Unfortunately, the professional development training that most teachers receive often does not focus on issues related to ELs or the physiological or psychological, cognitive, and developmental needs of middle schoolers (Cervone, 2010; Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005). Likewise, professional development specific for middle school teachers is almost non-existent (Bustos-Flores, 2015). When considering the current academic achievement of ELs, the current affair of professional development for teachers serving students in middle grades becomes a serious matter. For example, data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), for the year 2015, showed that ELs in eighth grade scored lower in reading and math when compared to other groups of non-ELs. In reading, only an alarming one percent of ELs scored in the advanced category and only seven percent of all ELs scored in the proficient (average) category. That leaves 68 percent of all ELs reading below grade level expectations and 24 percent reading at a basic proficiency level. In mathematics, 43 percent of ELs were reported to be below grade level expectations and 43 percent of ELs demonstrated only basic proficiency skills. In math, only one percent of all ELs demonstrated advanced proficiency skills. In terms of graduation rates, ELs share the lowest graduation rates in the nation. The national average of graduation is approximately 82.3 percent. Graduation rates for ELs are comparable to graduation rates of students placed under the special education umbrella. The current national graduation rate for ELs is approximately 62.6 percent and the national graduation rate for students with disabilities is approximately 63.1 percent. According to the Department of Education, in the year 2014-2015, approximately 13 percent of all students in public

schools were placed in Special Education. Out of this 13 percent of students placed in special education, Hispanic students accounted for 12 percent. (US Department of Education, 2017). Clearly, there exist an urgency to help students in middle grades attain academic success. However, in order for improvements in the education of ELs to occur, the professional development of teachers who work with ELs in middle grades must be addressed to include high academic expectations while considering the crucial developmental needs of students during the middle school years(Franco-Fuenmayor, Padrón, & Waxman, 2015; Jiménez & Barrera, 2000; Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010; Téllez & Waxman, 2006). Having the knowledge of the rapid increase of the EL population, and their current academic performance, combined with knowledge that the developmental stage during the middle school years is a critical stage that can dictate may outcomes of a person's life (Cook, Howell & Faulkner, 2016); it becomes crucial to investigate the professional development activities that middle school teachers serving ELs in the United States receive.

Professional Development

Professional development has been offered as an essential component for improving teaching and learning in US classrooms, and reform initiatives have increased the attention given to developing and implementing effective, research-based professional development (Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson 2010). By and large, current professional development activities consist of short-term training that does not focus on the specific needs of teachers, and fails to include any component to support teachers' active participation in implementing training content and materials in their

classrooms (Avalos, 2013). Part of the problem with extant professional development efforts relates to the generic quality of the sessions offered to teachers. Generally, large groups of teachers receive the same professional development, irrespective of their specific content area knowledge and practice, students, and classroom contexts. This type of one-size-fits-all professional development falls short of addressing the instructional and contextual complexities that teachers face in the classroom (Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010). Research suggests that this type of disconnected, fragmented, and short-term professional development has limited influence on teachers' classroom practice and ultimately on student learning (López, McEneaney, & Nieswandt, 2015; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007).

Professional Development for Middle School Teachers Serving ELs

Professional development for teachers serving ELs has been historically limited both in quantity and quality (Téllez, & Waxman, 2006). Even more scarcer is the professional development geared specifically to meet the needs of middle school teachers. Furthermore, research studies identifying the professional development for teachers of middle school serving ELs is almost non-existent (Bustos-Flores, 2015). To illustrate, The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, presented a research synthesis study in efforts to identify areas of teacher quality (Goe, 2007). Their research compiled a comprehensive synthesis of over one hundred research studies. Surprisingly, the vast majority of the studies focused greatly on elementary and high school years. One of the studies included in their synthesis, addressed some of the middle school grades because the researchers studied specific grade bandwidths (3^{rd} – $8^{th)}$ in efforts to

gather state testing data (Harris & Sass, 2007). Another study included grades 8th and 9th, but their focus was math content specific certification in relation to teacher quality (Aaronson, Barrow, & Sanders; 2007). All in all, the report showed gaps in teacher education in many areas. However, it is also evident the lack of intentional research geared specifically towards the needs of middles school teachers (Goe, 2007). In a large-scale study of over 5,000 teachers in California, Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll (2005) found that teachers had few professional development opportunities targeted to help them work effectively with ELs. Once again, even though the research presents significant findings, the sample of this study was divided by elementary grades (K-6th) and High School years. No inclusion was made for middle grade years specifically. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) presented results from a three-year (2000, 2004, 2008) administration of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), in regards to professional development. Results indicate that only 27% of teachers reported receiving professional development geared towards meeting the needs of ELs (Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010).

Unfortunately, the professional development opportunities for teachers serving ELs continues to be equally troubling today. According to data from the US Department of Education in the Schools and Staffing Survey 2011-2012, professional development geared towards teaching ELs was the least prevalent type of PD among teachers in the United States. The survey also indicated that only 27% of teachers participated in professional development geared to meet the needs of ELs (US Department of Education, 2017). The disappointing reality is that, in regards to professional

development opportunities for teachers serving ELs in the United States, there have been few changes since the year 2000. Subsequently, there is still an urgent need for current research addressing professional development that specifically targets the needs of teachers serving ELs in middle school grades. More precisely, stakeholders in education need access to large-scale, longitudinal, empirical studies, addressing the needs of ELs in middle school grades (Mertens, Caskey, Micki, & Flowers, 2016).

In most cases, middle school teachers receive generic preparation geared towards secondary education majors. For instance, a recent exploratory case study of novice middle school teachers revealed that all middle school teachers in the sample defaulted to teaching middle school after receiving teaching certifications in elementary or secondary programs (Hesson, 2016). In the same strain, professional development activities designed for teachers who serve ELs in middle grades are almost non-existent (Bustos-Flores et al., 2015). The same holds true for PD activities addressing the needs of ELs in special populations (Artiles & Klingner, 2006; Castellano & Díaz, 2002; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). Teachers serving ELs in middle school need tools to effectively identify, assess, and complete the referral processes of ELs students in need of special education services (Artiles, & Klingner, 2006). Likewise, teachers of ELs in middle school need professional development concerning the implications and instructional strategies of ELs students under the umbrella of special education (Ford, 2012; Hart,2010; Wagner, Francis & Morris, 2005; Williams, Sando & Soles, 2014; Zacarian, 2011). Furthermore, teachers of ELs in middle school also need PD training in regards to the identification and nurturing of gifted ELs (Callahan, 2017; Callahan,

Moon, & Oh, 2017). Middle school teachers serving ELs need the necessary pedagogical tools to identify and cultivate the minds of gifted ELs. Withal, this is more crucial in middle school grades because the participation in gifted and talented/ enrichment programs may encourage college participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields, which is considered by some as a critical area of need (Litow, S; 2008), and where minority students are currently underrepresented (US Department of Education, 2015).

In addition to having the core skills to perform good teaching (Cook, Howell & Faulkner, 2016), teachers serving ELs in middle grades need the appropriate tools to implement individualized learning in their classrooms, effectively evaluate the language and content attainment of their ELs students, and facilitate cross-curricular skills regardless of their content area. In respects to individualized learning, for example, teachers serving ELs in middle grades should know how to design curriculum that meets the needs while providing ample opportunities for participation at grade level expectations. In many cases, some teachers might be under the assumption that in order for ELs to participate in activities of inquiry, they must acquire proficiency in the language. Thus, teachers serving ELs can underestimate the advantages of learning language and content simultaneously (Haley & Austin, 2014). Having a clear understanding of language proficiency levels as well as content area knowledge can assist teachers in having a better understanding on how to effectively assess the ELs they serve. This is crucially important when teaching ELs because assessments that embed language effectively can reduce the achievement gap between ELs and their non-ELs

counterparts (Clark et.al, 2012). Furthermore, teachers serving ELs in middle grades should concentrate a good portion of their efforts in implementing cross-curricular skills. It is found that students who have exposure to cross-curricular skills tend to demonstrate literacy improvement across the different content areas. Consequently, the implementation of cross-curricular skills during the middle school years is important because this group of students have an urgency to obtain college and career readiness. Thus, providing these opportunities is fundamental in order for ELs to improve their literacy skills, and subsequently, have access to college and career placements during high school and beyond (Spires, Hervey, Morris, & Stelpflug, 2012).

Effective Professional Development

Effective professional development for teachers should emphasize classroom instruction that develops higher-order thinking skills and performance (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). Over the last two decades, researchers have reached a general consensus about what constitutes "effective professional development." Effective professional development includes five key features: (a) content-focused, where subject matter content and student learning are the target of instruction; (b) provides active learning opportunities, where teachers are involved and engaged in observation opportunities, mentoring, and feedback; (c) intensive and sustained over time, meaning that teachers are presented with opportunities to participate in professional development activities throughout the year; (d) emphasizes collective participation, where teachers that share same content areas and grade levels meet together to build learning communities; (e) promotes coherence with their school and

their vision, is consistent, and conforms with academic standards set for by their respective governing educational agency (Desimone, 2011; Garet et al., 2001; Goe, 2007; Wei, et al., 2010).

Effective Professional Development for Middle School Teachers

In addition to providing effective professional development inclusive of the key features mentioned hereof, professional development in middle schools for teachers serving ELs should include specific features intended to address the developmental needs (physical and cognitive) particular to the middle school age group. Teachers in middle schools are tasked with educating young adolescents. The implications of the developmental stages of this group of students are critical because middle schoolers experience the most growth apart from gestation to five years of age (Ochanji, Chen, Daniels, Deringer, McDaniel, Stowell, & Cambra-Adamson; 2016). Therefore, teachers of middle school students need an understanding of the cognitive, physical, social, emotional, cultural and moral characteristics specific to that age group. Providing middle schoolers with an adequate developmental responsive education is essential for academic success (Cook, Howell & Faulkner, 2016). In regards to middle grades, practitioners and researchers have come to some consensus as to what is considered good teaching in middle school. Good teaching can be easily observed as it is a display of specific competencies that are present during classroom instruction (e.g. content knowledge, classroom management, curriculum planning, and assessment). However, there needs to be an understanding that good teaching does not look the same at the elementary, middle or high school years (Cook, Howell & Faulkner, 2016). In regards to middle school,

effective middle education encompasses eight key constructs: developmental spectrum (characteristics specific to middle school age, organizational structures (i.e. common planning time), teacher dispositions and professional behaviors, relationships, content knowledge, curriculum and instruction, assessment, and classroom management (Cook, Howell & Faulkner, 2016).

Effective professional development for Middle School Teachers Serving ELs

Currently, there is little evidence about adequate professional development for teachers serving ELs in middle school grades. Most of the current research deals with content area interventions for students in middle grades in general (Johnson, Bolshakova & Waldron, 2016; Kim, et al., 2011; Matuchniak, Olson & Scarcella, 2014). When considering professional development needs of teachers serving ELs in middle schools, there are many implications concerning mastery of academic concepts, language development, and cultural awareness. In addition to demonstrating competency in one's area of content, and understanding the transitional stages of students' development during the middle school years; teachers serving ELs in middle grades are faced with a multitude of challenges and opportunities. Teachers serving ELs need adequate training on how to evaluate ELs language proficiency skills in order to adequately plan for instruction. This is crucial for re-classification purposes because many ELs in middle school come from the elementary grades approaching mastery of language proficiency levels. However, if teachers are not adequately trained to observe, gather data, analyze, and monitor the linguistic growth of the ELs they serve; the risk stands for these students to become long term ELs. This is a consequence of not being timely re-classified, thus

these ELs will miss the opportunity of being mainstreamed. This is potentially detrimental because long term ELs have less opportunities to participate in challenging curriculum or activities geared towards college and career readiness (Estrada, 2014). Subsequently, teachers of ELs in middle school grades also need to know how to develop and implement mainstream plans for their students while maintaining high academic expectations (Linquanti & Cook, 2013). Correspondingly, some students may not meet reclassification criteria due to various circumstances. For example, students considered “late arrivals”. That is, students who arrived into the US public school system past the elementary grade levels and have yet to master the target language. In this case, it is important for teachers to develop plans for intensive interventions (Sanford & Brown, 2011).

Teachers of ELs in middle grades also need to know pedagogical techniques in order to help their students overcome learning and language barriers (Meyer & Land, 2006). Accordingly, teachers of ELs also need specific training on how to implement instructional strategies that address content and language across the curriculum simultaneously (Heritage, Walqui & Linquanti, 2015). This come with some urgency for teachers serving ELs in middle grades, because in order for ELs to have access to college and career opportunities later on in high school, teachers of ELs in middle grades have to purposefully implement academic interventions that aim to advance the language proficiency and academic skills of their students rapidly.

Summarizing, current professional development available to teachers in middle school falls short of addressing teachers needs during this crucial developmental time in students' lives.

Teachers serving ELs in middle grades need access to effective professional development that emphasizes classroom instruction, develops higher-order thinking skills, is sustained over time, consistent; PD that provides teachers with active learning opportunities, observation opportunities, provides mentoring and feedback, allows participation and collaboration, and conforms to academic standards (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Desimone, 2011; Garet et al., 2001; Goe, 2007; Wei, et al., 2010). In addition, specific to middle school teachers, PD opportunities should incorporate the cognitive, physical, social, emotional, cultural, and emotional needs of middle schoolers (Cook, Howell & Faulkner, 2016). Furthermore, there are other implications in regards to PD specific to teachers serving ELs in middle school grades. For instance, the assessment and monitoring of language proficiency skills, and the implementation of instructional strategies addressing content and language across the curriculum simultaneously (Heritage, Walqui & Linquanti, 2015). Unfortunately, current professional development available to teachers serving ELs in middle grades is almost non-existent (Bustos-Flores, 2015). There is a need for empirical based research addressing the needs of ELs in middle school grades that specifically targets the needs of ELs and the teachers who serves them (Mertens, Caskey, & Flowers; 2016). If ELs are to meet high academic standards, teachers need to know how to address their needs appropriately (Franco-Fuenmayor, Padrón & Waxman; 2015). In order for them to do so,

teachers of ELs in middle school need access to professional development geared to meet the complex (developmental, psychological, linguistic, academic, and cultural) needs of ELs in middle grades. Therefore, it is important to determine the type of professional development that middle school teachers of ELs are receiving in order to determine the type of professional development activities that would be most beneficial.

Purpose of the Study

Very few national studies have addressed the professional development opportunities that teachers of ELs have received, however, even fewer studies exist involving teachers of ELs in the middle grade levels. The purpose of this study was to use a national sample of teachers (grades 7, 8 & 9), who completed the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013 in the United States, in efforts to understand the extent of specific professional development training received, and whether there were perceived differences among teachers according to the number of ELs they serve in their classrooms. In so doing, the following questions were addressed:

1) What professional development opportunities addressing the needs of ELs, are available to middle school teachers?

2) Are there any differences on the amount of professional development that teachers receive specifically addressing the needs of ELs in regards to the number of ELs they serve in their classrooms?

3) What are the perceptions of middle school teachers in regards to the impact of the professional development received that is geared towards meeting the needs of ELs?

Methods

Data Sources

Data for this study originates form The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013. The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) studies teachers, teaching and learning environments internationally. TALIS was coordinated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The goal of TALIS is to provide comparable indicators in education to review and inform policy (National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), US Department of Education; 2014).

Participants

A unique sample of 1,926 teachers was identified after filtering. The sample was then grouped into five categories: (1) teachers who did not have ELs in their classroom, (2) teachers who had between 1% - 10% of ELs in their classroom, (3) teachers who had between 11% -30% of ELs in their classroom, (4) teachers who had between 31%-60% of ELs in their classroom and, (5) teachers who had more than 60% of ELs in their classroom. There were 4.44% of teachers in group 1, 40.15% in group 2, 32.57% in group 3, and 22.84% in group 4. Although these groups are quite unbalanced, they do accurately represent the status of ELs in the U.S. when the data was collected in 2013. Subsequently, missing data was examined. After careful consideration of the dataset, missing observations were excluded from the sample to avoid generalization problems during analysis. Some values were logically not applicable, not reached, not administered, omitted or invalid amongst participants. Therefore, the initial sample size after filtering procedures is composed of 1,926 participating teachers. However, after

missing observations were taken into consideration, the sample size depicts some variation.

Instrument

This study utilizes the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013. The survey covers a number of topics including teacher characteristics, teacher professional development, teacher feedback, personal beliefs in teaching and learning, teaching practices, school climate and job satisfaction (US. Department of Education, 2014). The survey was examined using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) and STATA, some syntax was written in order to achieve the desired teacher samples. Section I included relevant background information such as experience, education background and relevant information for narrowing the sample down to the targeted population of classroom teachers in grades 7^{th} ,8^{th}, and 9^{th}. To achieve this sample many filtering processes had to occur. Primary filtering included participants of the survey selecting option 1 for the third question of the survey, thus confirming their role as a full-time teacher. After this, teachers were grouped by their years of experience. Four categories were established: (1) Teachers in the zero (some states count teachers first year of experience as a zero year, i.e. Texas) or first year of teaching experience were labeled as “first year teachers”, (2) teachers between 2-10 years of experience were categorized as “novice”, (3) teachers between 11-20 years of experience were categorized as “experienced”, and (4) teachers between 21-50 years of experience were categorized as “seasoned”. There were 85 first year teachers, 768 novice teachers, 623 experienced teachers, and 437 seasoned teachers.

Additionally, categories were established according to the quantity of professional development teachers received in the last 12 months of service. Four categories were established: (1) teachers who received between 1-10 days of professional development were labeled “low”, (2) teachers who received between 11-20 days of professional development were labeled “average”, (3) teachers who received between 21-30 days of professional development were labeled “moderate”, and (4) teachers who received more than 31 days of professional development were labeled “proficient”.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis included several steps. Descriptive statistics are reported. Frequency tables and cross tabulations were used as part of descriptive statistics. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was performed to assess potential differences between the means in regards to the availability of PD training opportunities in various topics (teaching ELs, approaches to individualized learning, teaching students with special needs, student evaluation and assessment practices, and teaching cross-curricular skills) from the number of ELs present in teachers’ classrooms. A chi square test of independence served to assess differences in the amount of PD teachers received in regards to the number of ELs they served in their classrooms. PD was classified in four categories: (1) teachers who received between 1-10 days of professional development were labeled “low”, (2) teachers who received between 11-20 days of professional development were labeled “average”, (3) teachers who received between 21-30 days of professional development were labeled “moderate”, and (4) teachers who received more than 31 days of professional development were labeled “proficient”.

Finally, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also performed to gain an understanding of the perceptions of teachers serving ELs in middle grades in regards to the usefulness of the professional development received.

Results

The first question addressed the types of professional development opportunities concerning the needs of ELs available to middle grade teachers. Teachers responded to questions in regards to professional development opportunities in various topics (*i.e. Teaching ELs, approaches to individualized learning, teaching students with special needs, student assessment and evaluation practices, and teaching cross-curricular skills).* Descriptive results revealed important differences for all topics examined (Table 3.1). For instance, 74.4% of all teachers did not receive PD addressing the needs of ELs (chi-square (4) = 185.6; $p < .001$). Only 6.1% of teachers who served between 31%-60% of ELs in their classroom received PD addressing approaches to individualized learning (chi-square (4) = 5.45; $p < .001$). 59.9% percent of teachers did not receive PD addressing the needs of special education students (chi-square (4) = 9.82; $p < .001$). 69.5% of teachers who did not receive PD addressing student evaluation and assessment practices (chi-square (4) = 1.03; $p < .001$). In regards to teaching cross-curricular skills (i.e. problem solving, learning how-to-learn), results revealed that nearly half (48.8%) of all teachers did not receive PD on this topic (chi-square (4) = 8.78; $p < .001$). Surprisingly, for all topics examined, teachers who did not receive PD in these areas (*i.e. Teaching ELs, approaches to individualized learning, teaching students with special needs, student assessment and evaluation practices, and teaching cross-curricular skills,*

currently served ELs in their classrooms. For example, 67.5% of the teachers who did not participated in PD addressing the needs of ELs, currently served ELs in their classrooms (chi-square (4) = 85.60; $p < .001$). In regards to PD addressing approaches to individualized learning, 40.4% of teachers serving between 1 and 10 ELs in their classrooms did not receive this type of PD. Furthermore, well over half (63%) of teachers serving between 1-10 ELs in their classrooms did not receive PD addressing teaching special education students. In regards to student evaluation and assessment practices, 28.3% of teachers serving between 1 and 10 ELs did not receive this type of PD. Finally, almost half (48.6%) of teachers serving between 1 and 10 ELs did not receive PD addressing the teaching of cross-curricular skills (Table 3.1). A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine the effect of number of ELs on five dependent variables (*i.e. PD teaching ELs, PD approaches to individualized learning, PD teaching special education students, PD student evaluation and assessment practices, PD teaching cross-curricular skills*). ANOVA results (Table 3.2), indicated that number of ELs significantly affected the combined DV's [$F (4,1736) = 185.6$, $p = .001$]. Scheffé post hoc were conducted as a follow-up test. Results indicate that PD teaching ELs (Table 3.3), significantly differed for number of ELs [$F (4, 1.736) = 22.45$, *$p = .0001$*].

Table 3.1
Professional Development Available to Teachers Serving ELs in Middle Grades

PD Availability for Teachers in Middle Grades Descriptive Statistics Summary			
PD- Teaching ELs	***Yes***	***No***	***Total***
None ELs	13.7%	86.2%	31.3%
1-10 ELs	22.5%	66.0%	45.6%
11-30 ELs	40.9%	59.0%	12.0%
31-60 ELs	38.7%	61.2%	5.35%
More than 60 ELs	36.2%	63.7%	10.6%
Total	25.5%	74.4%	100%
Pearson Chi2 (4) = 185.6093 p = 0.000			
PD – Approaches to Individualized Learning	***Yes***	***No***	***Total***
None ELs	58.1%	41.8%	31.3%
1-10 ELs	59.5%	40.4%	40.4%
11-30 ELs	64.2%	35.7%	12.0%
31-60 ELs	68.8%	31.1%	5.35%
More than 60 ELs	59.4%	40.5%	10.6%
Total	60.1%	39.8%	100%
Pearson Chi2 (4) = 5.4538 p = 0.244			
PD – Teaching Special Education Students	***Yes***	***No***	***Total***
None ELs	40.5%	59.4%	31.3%
1-10 ELs	36.9%	63.0%	40.4%
11-30 ELs	44.2%	55.7%	12.0%
31-60 ELs	51.6%	48.3%	5.35%
More than 60 ELs	42.1%	57.8%	10.6%
Total	40.3%	59.6%	100%
Pearson Chi2 (4) = 9.8247 Pr = 0.043			
PD – Student Evaluation and Assessment Practices	***Yes***	***No***	***Total***
None ELs	73.0%	26.9%	31.3%
1-10 ELs	77.5%	28.3%	40.4%
11-30 ELs	70.4%	29.5%	12.0%
31-60 ELs	75.2%	24.7%	5.35%
More than 60 ELs	71.8%	28.1%	10.6%
Total	72.1%	27.8%	100%
Pearson Chi2 (4) = 1.0311 p = 0.905			
PD Teaching Cross-Curricular Skills	***Yes***	***No***	***Total***
None ELs	50.9%	49.9%	31.3%
1-10 ELs	51.3%	48.6%	40.4%
11-30 ELs	61.4%	38.5%	12.0%
31-60 ELs	51.6%	48.3%	5.35%
More than 60 ELs	49.7%	50.2%	10.6%
Total	52.0%	47.9%	100%
Pearson Chi2 (4) = 8.7807 p = 0.067			

N=1,736

Table 3.2
Professional Development Available to Teachers Serving ELs in Middle Grades
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

PD Available to Teachers in Middle Grades Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Summary				
PD- Teaching ELs	***M***	***SD***	***F***	
None ELs	1.86	.344		
1-10 ELs	1.74	.435		
11-30 ELs	1.59	.492	22.45	***
31-60 ELs	1.61	.489		
More than 60 ELs	1.63	.481		
PD – Approaches to Individualized Learning	***M***	***SD***		
None ELs	1.41	.493		
1-10 ELs	1.40	.491		
11-30 ELs	1.35	.480	1.36	
31-60 ELs	1.31	.465		
More than 60 ELs	1.40	.492		
PD – Teaching Special Education Students	***M***	***SD***		
None ELs	1.59	.491		
1-10 ELs	1.63	.483		
11-30 ELs	1.55	.497	2.46	
31-60 ELs	1.48	.502		
More than 60 ELs	1.57	.495		
PD – Student Evaluation and Assessment Practices	***M***	***SD***		
None ELs	1.26	.444		
1-10 ELs	1.28	.450		
11-30 ELs	1.29	.457	0.26	
31-60 ELs	1.24	.433		
More than 60 ELs	1.28	.450		
PD Teaching Cross-Curricular Skills	***M***	***SD***		
None ELs	1.49	.500		
1-10 ELs	1.48	.500		
11-30 ELs	1.38	.487	2.20	
31-60 ELs	1.48	.502		
More than 60 ELs	1.50	.501		
Note: Professional Development (PD) attainment is measured in a 2-point scale with "1"=yes and "2"=No.				

** p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001* *N=1,736*

Table 3.3
Scheffé Post Hoc Test- PD Teaching ELs by Number of ELs

Number of ELs	*Mean*	*Std. Dev.*	*Freq.*
None	1.86	.344	545
1-10 ELs	1.74	.435	703
11-30 ELs	1.59	.492	210
31-60	1.61	.489	93
More than 60ELs	1.63	.481	185
Total	1.74	.436	1,736

Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*Prob > F*
Between Groups	16.2	4	4.06	22.45	0.0000
Within Groups	313.6	1731	.181		
Total	329.95	1735	.242		

The second question investigated whether or not there were differences on the amount of PD teachers received in regards to the number of ELs they served in their classrooms. PD was classified in four categories: (1) teachers who received between 1-10 days of professional development were labeled “low”, (2) teachers who received between 11-20 days of professional development were labeled “average”, (3) teachers who received between 21-30 days of professional development were labeled “moderate”, and (4) teachers who received more than 31 days of professional development were labeled “proficient”. The descriptive results reported in Table 3.4, revealed significant differences (*chi-square* (12) = 19.72; $p < 0.10$) between the groups of teachers and the

amount of professional development these groups of teachers received in the form of courses and/or workshops. Surprisingly, teachers who had between 31%-60% of ELs in their classroom (Group 4), received the least amount of professional development as supposed to teachers who did not have ELs in their classroom (group 1). Figure 3.1 Depicts professional development attainment in the form of courses and workshops representative of ELs present in the classroom. There were noticeable differences on the amount of PD received for all existing groups.

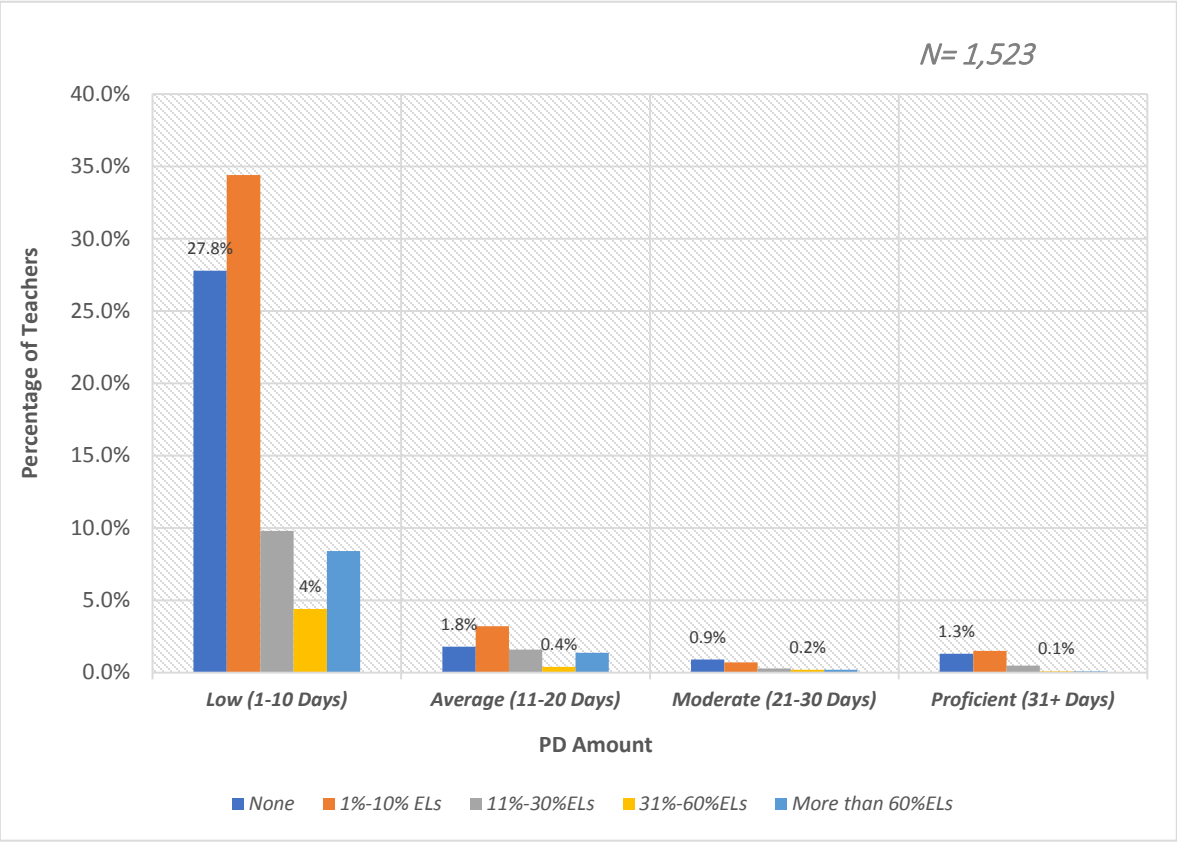
Table 3.4
Professional Development Attainment by Teachers Serving ELs in Middle Grades

	Amount of Professional Development				
Number of ELs	***Low***	***Average***	***Moderate***	***Proficient***	***Total***
None	87.6%	5.7%	3.0%	4.1%	31.9%
1-10 ELs	86.2%	8.0%	1.9%	3.7%	39.9%
11-30 ELs	79.7%	13.2%	2.6%	4.2%	12.3%
31- 60 ELs	82.9%	8.5%	4.8%	3.6%	5.3%
60+ ELs	82.1%	13.3%	2.5%	1.91%	10.3%
Total	85.0%	8.5%	2.6%	3.7%	100%

Note: PD was measured in four categories: (1) teachers who received between 1-10 days of professional development were labeled "low", (2) teachers who received between 11-20 days of professional development were labeled "average", (3) teachers who received between 21-30 days of professional development were labeled "moderate", and (4) teachers who received more than 31 days of professional development were labeled "proficient".

Pearson Chi2(12) = 19.7227 p = 0.073

Figure 3.1
Professional Development Attainment According to Number of ELs Served in the Classroom – Whole Teacher Sample



In addition to examining the amount of PD each group of teachers received, the third question investigated the perceptions of teachers in regards to the impact of the professional development received specifically addressing needs of ELs (*Approaches to individualized learning, teaching special education students, student evaluation and assessment practices, and teaching cross-curricular skills).* Teachers in the sample who received professional development reported impact selecting the following answer choices: no impact (answer choice 1), small impact (answer choice 2), moderate impact

(answer choice 3) and large impact (answer choice 4). For all the topics of professional development studied, teachers who had more ELs in the classroom (groups 2-4), reported the least amount of impact in professional development when compared to teachers who did not have ELs in the classroom (group1). For the purpose of this analysis, the researcher opted to exemplify PD answer choices under the moderate impact category. The rationale for this selection was based on the assumption that, effective PD opportunities for teachers serving ELs should yield a moderate impact in order to positively affect student outcome (Franco-Fuenmayor, Padrón, & Waxman, 2015).

Descriptive results (Table 3.5), indicated that only 6.5% of teachers who participated in professional development addressing approaches to individualized learning, in group 4 (teachers who had between 31%-60% of ELs in their classroom), reported a moderate effect on PD received in this area. Whereas, 32.0% of teachers who did not have ELs in the classroom (group 1) reported a moderate effect on PD addressing approaches to individualized learning (*chi-square* (12) = 6.41; $p < .001$). In regards to impact of PD in teaching special education students, 7.5% of teachers in group 4 (who had between 31%-60% of ELs in their classroom), reported a moderate effect on PD received in this area. Whereas, 33.4% of teachers who did not have ELs in the classroom (group 1) reported a moderate effect on PD addressing approaches to individualized learning (*chi-square* (12) = 18.92; $p < 0.10$). 6.02% of teachers who participated in professional development addressing student evaluation and assessment practices, in group 4 (teachers who had between 31%-60% of ELs in their classroom), reported a

moderate impact on this PD. However, when compared to teachers who did not have ELs in the classroom (group 1), 28.5% of teachers who participated in PD addressing student evaluation and assessment practices reported a moderate effect (*chi-square* (12) = 8.43; $p < .001$). Finally, in regards to teaching cross-curricular skills (i.e. problem solving, learning-to-learn), only 5.8% of teachers who participated in professional development addressing teaching of cross-curricular skills, in group 4 (teachers who had between 31%-60% of ELs in their classroom), reported a moderate impact on this PD. Similarly, when compared to teachers who did not have ELs in the classroom (group 1), 29.9% of teachers who participated in PD addressing teaching cross-curricular skills, reported the same moderate effect (*chi-square* (12) = 10.19; $p < .001$). An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to examine potential differences between teachers' perceptions of PD impact and number of ELs present in their classrooms. Impact was measured in specific PD topics (*Approaches to individualized learning, teaching special education students, student evaluation and assessment practices, and teaching cross-curricular skills*). ANOVA results (Table 3.6), showed no significant difference in regards among the groups of ELs. However, it is important to note that as the number of ELs increased in the classroom, the PD participation decreased.

Table 3.5
Teachers' Perceptions in Regards to Professional Development Impact
Summary of Descriptive Statistics

PD Impact – Teachers' Perceptions Descriptive Statistics Summary					
PD – Approaches to Individualized Learning	***No***	***Small***	***Moderate***	***Large***	***Total***
None ELs	1.89%	26.1%	53.6%	18.2%	30.6%
1-10 ELs	2.66%	31.9%	49.6%	15.7%	39.9%
11-30 ELs	2.23%	29.8%	50.0%	17.9%	12.9%
31-60 ELs	1.5%	32.3%	53.8%	12.3%	6.2%
More than 60 ELs	1.8%	26.4%	50.9%	20.7%	10.2%
Total	2.2%	29.3%	51.3%	17.1%	100%
Pearson Chi2(12) = 6.4159 p = 0.894					
PD – Teaching Special Education Students	***No***	***Small***	***Moderate***	***Large***	***Total***
None ELs	3.1%	23.7%	48.4%	24.6%	31.7%
1-10 ELs	2.3%	34.5%	43.9%	19.2%	36.9%
11-30 ELs	4.3%	35.8%	36.9%	22.8%	13.3%
31-60 ELs	1.0%	18.4%	26.0%	6.5%	6.9%
More than 60 ELs	0%	17.3%	44.5%	20.6%	11.01%
Total	2.60%	29.8%	45.9%	21.5%	100%
Pearson Chi2(12) = 18.9232 p = 0.090					
PD – Student Evaluation and Assessment Practices	***No***	***Small***	***Moderate***	***Large***	***Total***
None ELs	2.27%	28.6%	47.8%	21.2%	31.9%
1-10 ELs	1.6%	24.2%	54.5%	19.6%	40.3%
11-30 ELs	2.75%	28.9%	48.2%	20.0%	11.7%
31-60 ELs	2.8%	24.2%	54.2%	18.5%	5.6%
More than 60 ELs	1.57%	23.6%	48.8%	25.9%	10.2%
Total	2.02%	26.1%	51.05%	20.7%	100%
Pearson Chi2(12) = 8.4304 p = 0.751					
PD Teaching Cross-Curricular Skills	***No***	***Small***	***Moderate***	***Large***	***Total***
None ELs	1.85%	32.7%	45.7%	19.7%	30.1%
1-10 ELs	3.08%	34.4%	47.6%	14.8%	40.0%
11-30 ELs	3.1%	28.9%	53.1%	15.6%	14.3%
31-60 ELs	4.0%	26.5%	51.0%	18.3%	5.4%
More than 60 ELs	2.2%	28.0%	50.5%	21.3%	9.9%
Total	2.3%	32.0%	48.3%	17.2%	100%
Pearson Chi2(12) = 10.1927 p = 0.599					
Note: Professional Development (PD) impact is measured on a 4-point scale with "4" = Large Impact,"3" = Moderate impact, "2" = small impact, and "1" = No impact.					

** p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001* *N=1,236*

Table 3.6
Teachers' Perceptions in Regards to Professional Development Impact
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

PD Impact for Teachers in Middle Grades Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Summary				
PD Impact – Approaches to Individualized Learning	***M***	***SD***	***F***	
None ELs	2.88	.713		
1-10 ELs	2.78	.733		
11-30 ELs	2.83	.737	1.24	
31-60 ELs	2.76	.679		
More than 60 ELs	2.90	.737		
PD Impact – Teaching Special Education Students	***M***	***SD***		
None ELs	2.94	.782		
1-10 ELs	2.89	.770		
11-30 ELs	2.78	.849	2.65	**
31-60 ELs	2.72	.706		
More than 60 ELs	3.03	.681		
PD Impact – Student Evaluation and Assessment Practices	***M***	***SD***		
None ELs	2.88	.759		
1-10 ELs	2.92	.705		
11-30 ELs	2.85	.763	2.65	
31-60 ELs	2.88	.733		
More than 60 ELs	2.99	.750		
PD Impact – Teaching Cross-Curricular Skills	***M***	***SD***		
None ELs	2.83	.756		
1-10 ELs	2.74	.742		
11-30 ELs	2.82	.744	1.43	
31-60 ELs	2.83	.773		
More than 60 ELs	2.93	.703		

Note: Professional Development (PD) impact is measured on a 4-point scale with "4" = Large Impact,"3" = Moderate impact, "2" = small impact, and "1" = No impact.

** p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001* *N=1,236*

Discussion

This study investigated the professional development opportunities available for teachers of ELs in middle grades. The results of this study support the result of previous studies and reports (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Goe, 2007; US Department of Education, 2017; Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010) that professional development for teachers serving ELs is very limited. Nearly 75% of teachers did not received professional development addressing the needs of ELs, more alarming is the fact that almost 68% of these teachers served between 31-60 ELs in their classrooms. Furthermore, only 6% of teachers who had between 31-60% of ELs in their classroom received professional development addressing approaches to individualized learning (essential skill when teaching ELs). Low percentages of participation were consistent across the board in regards to professional development addressing various important issues of EL instruction *(i.e. students with special needs, evaluation practices, and the teaching of cross-curricular skills)*. In fact, the results demonstrated that the majority of teachers serving ELs received few (between 1-10 days) opportunities of professional development. As a corollary, results also indicate that, there were significant differences in the perceptions of professional development impact amongst teachers of ELs as opposed to teachers who did not serve ELs in their classrooms. For example, only 3.38% of teachers serving between 31%-60% of ELs reported a moderate effect on PD addressing approaches to individualized learning. This percentage was much higher (16.4%) for teachers who did not serve ELs in their classrooms. The same was the case for PD addressing the teaching of special education students (3.4% for teachers serving ELs,

15.3% for teachers who did not served ELs), student evaluation and assessment practices (3.7% for teachers serving ELs, 15.2% for teachers who did not served ELs), and the teaching of cross-curricular skills (2.8% for teachers serving ELs, 13.7% for teachers who did not served ELs).

The results of this study clearly indicate a need in providing professional development that targets the specific needs of teachers serving ELs in middle grades. Currently, much of the work focusing on ELs in middle grades has centered on reading comprehension in order to assist students in attaining linguistic abilities. (Kandel Cisco & Padrón, 2012). However, Teachers serving ELs in middle grades need professional development that besides including specific features intended to address the developmental needs (physical and cognitive) particular to the middle school age group, includes aspects unique to ELs. For instance, professional development that teaches how to implement instructional strategies that guarantee the instruction of content and language across the curriculum simultaneously (Heritage, Walqui & Linquanti, 2015). In addition, teachers serving ELs in middle school need to learn how to implement various instructional methods in order to help their students overcome learning and language barriers (Meyer & Land, 2006). Teachers that master these skills, create opportunities for participation of ELs in challenging curriculum (Estrada, 2014). Likewise, teachers of ELs in middle grades need to know how to develop mainstream plans while maintaining high academic expectations (Linquanti & Cook, 2013) in order to help their ELs achieve academic success.

Furthermore, there needs to be a clear understanding that not all ELs in middle school experience the same needs. Middle school ELs may be at different stages of academic, linguistic and emotional development depending on various circumstances. For example, some ELs in middle school may have recently arrived into the United States without prior experiences in the US school system. The implications for their placement and curricular needs may be very different from that of a long term EL student. That is, an EL that has been in the system for consecutive years but has yet to master the necessary linguistic and academic skills to perform at grade level expectations. Analogously, other ELs in middle school may need special education services. It is important to note that, concerning ELs, there is a fine line between limited English proficiency and learning disabilities, not having the adequate training to identify, and monitor ELs could lead to risks of overrepresentation, underrepresentation and misidentification of ELs in special education (Hakansson, 2010; Hardin, Roach-Scott, & Peisner-Feinberg, 2007). Thankfully, we have passed the era where bilingualism was considered to have detrimental effects for children with special needs (Bird, Cleave, Trudeau, Thordardottir, Sutton, & Thorpe, 2005). Nevertheless, concerns of under-representation and over-representation among language learners in special education are still prevailing (Nguyen, 2012). Teachers of ELs need professional development that addresses the identification, assessment implications and instructional strategies for ELs students under the umbrella of special education (Ford, 2012; Hart,2010; Wagner, Francis & Morris, 2005; Williams, Sando & Soles, 2014).

Unfortunately, due to lack of teacher training in this area, many ELs in middle schools may be confronting stereotypes that may lead to restricted opportunities and lack of participation in STEM programs (Pantoya & Aguirre-Muñoz, 2017; Vaughn et. al., 2017). Additionally, when gifted ELs do not acquire the necessary academic skills to withstand the rigor of STEM fields during their elementary, middle and high-school years, this may cause them to withdraw from their declared STEM majors later on in college (Eagan, Stolzenberg, Zimmerman, Aragon, Whang Sayson, & Rios-Aguilar; 2017).

Limitations of Study

This study relies on the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013, a primary limitation of this study is the survey itself. Even though the data obtained from the survey is rich and reliable, items specific to the instruction of English Learners were very limited. Therefore, interpretation should be taken with caution. Another limitation of this study is that that some data elements can be expected to vary over time. For example, the status of English Learner. Therefore, the identification of students considered ELs during the 2013 academic year may vary as students exit their EL status and develop language proficiency skills. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Finally, the data, was primarily gathered with descriptive educational statistical purposes. Therefore, data analysis hereof performed may include the potential for inaccuracy and bias.

Conclusions

Currently, there is little empirical evidence about best practices for English learners, bilingual special education, and gifted students in middle school grades (Castellano & Díaz, 2002; López, McEneaney, & Nieswandt, 2015; Wagner, Francis, & Morris, 2005). Conjointly, there is a gap between professional development that meets the needs of teachers serving ELs and implementation practices that are proven to yield positive student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner; 2017).

Considering the rapid changes of ELs demographics, and the current state of their academic achievement; the literature examined hereof reflects a pressing need for the adequate preparation of teachers serving ELs (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Reeves & Lowenhaupt, 2016; Harper & de Jong, 2009). For the most part, the Professional development that teachers receive is not aligned with the complex needs of ELs or the expectations of current academic standards. For example, professional development that addresses issues such as teaching academic vocabulary, learning various instructional strategies for specific linguistic levels, creating and delivering appropriate assessments is almost non-existent (Hansen-Thomas, Grosso Richins, Kakkar & Okeyo; 2016). Teachers' perceptions of preparation also indicate that the professional development they receive is out of context in regards to the complex needs of ELs (Franco-Fuenmayor, Padrón & Waxman; 2015, Téllez & Waxman; 2006). Generally, large groups of teachers receive the same professional development irrespective of their content area and the makeup of their classrooms (Garret et.al, 2001). This situation becomes more critical in middle grades because professional development activities

designed for teachers who serve ELs during those critical years of development are even scarcer (Bustos-Flores et. al., 2015).

If ELs are expected to meet high academic standards, teachers need to know how to address their needs appropriately (Franco-Fuenmayor, Padrón & Waxman; 2015). In order for them to do so, teachers of ELs in middle school need access to professional development that specifically targets the complex needs of ELs in middle school grades.

CHAPTER IV

INVESTIGATING THE ATTITUDES, WORKING CONDITIONS, AND SCHOOL CLIMATE OF TEACHERS SERVING ENGLISH LEARNERS

The rapidly changing and complex world has challenged traditional education in all of its aspects (New London Group, 1996). In the United States, for example, changes in demographic patterns, policy and practice interactions, state accountability measures, and curriculum realignments make up just a portion of the challenges and opportunities facing the U.S. educational system today (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). At present, the highest concentrations of English Learners (ELs) are continuing to be found in Arizona, Delaware, Kansas, New Mexico, and Texas, accounting for approximately 81%of the total student population in those states (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). There has been, from 2009 to 2010 and 2014 to 2015, an exponential increase in the EL population in the states of Louisiana, Wyoming, Rhode Island, Mississippi, and West Virginia (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Currently, ELs comprise approximately 10% of the total student population in the United States (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). The vast majority of ELs are Hispanic. A total of 3,562,860 ELs reported Spanish as their home language (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The Migration Policy Institute indicated that the population of individuals speaking a language other than English in the United States has nearly tripled since 1980, to a total of 29.2 million people in 2015 (Batalova & Jie, 2016). With these numbers on the rise, states are being pressured to produce more teachers qualified to

serve the needs of ELs. Likewise, policy stakeholders have also recognized the need to assemble the type of teaching force needed to meet the educational demands of ELs (Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development,2010; US Department of Education, 2017). Examples of these efforts are reflected in Every Student Succeed Act of 2015 (ESSA) (US Department of Education, 2017) which includes provisions for all students, especially the disadvantaged and high need students, in order to ensure high academic standards which in turn will enable students to attain college and career preparation. In response, states are diligently beginning to work towards plans that can ultimately ensure measures for student success. For example, the state released their strategic plan on July 31, 2017 with the number one priority being teacher and principal attainment and retention (Texas Education Agency, 2017). Although stakeholders in education have made efforts to increase the teaching workforce to meet the growing demand, teacher shortages still exist. According to the Learning Policy Institute, during the 2014-2015 academic year, 31 states announced a shortage of bilingual teachers. The report indicated that the deficit of teachers could increase to as much 112,000 teachers by the year 2018 (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Thomas, 2016). In Texas, Commissioner of Education, Michael Williams, stated that the teacher shortage was "the biggest threat" to Texas schools (Texas Tribune, 2015). To add to this educational dilemma, the current academic performance of ELs is also a cause of concern to our nation (Gándara & Santibañez, 2016). National data shows that ELs continue to underperform academically when compared with their non-EL counterparts (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). For example, between the years 2005 and 2015, only 1

% of ELs attained an advanced proficiency rating in reading and mathematics in the fourth grade (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). In order to improve the academic performance of ELs, they need access to highly qualified teachers able to serve their needs while at the same time bringing their strengths to fruition (Casey, Dunlap, Brister, Davidson & Starrett, 2015; Gándara & Santibañez, 2016).

Teacher preparation is an issue heavily connected with the current performance of English Learners. Researchers have found that quality teachers are an essential component in determining student outcomes (Aguerrebere, 2011; Akiba & LeTendre, 2009; Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner, 2017; Goe, 2007; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011). This is not different in the field of bilingual education. In fact, teachers serving ELs, need more preparation than the general teacher corps because in addition to content knowledge, pedagogical and professional responsibilities teachers of ELs have to address language development, content instruction and curriculum alignment. At the same time, teachers of ELs have to exercise sensibility to cultural and linguistic diversity (Gándara, et al., 2005; Menken & Antúnez, 2001). Nonetheless, bilingual teacher preparation is also an area of concern for our nation. For example, The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) issued a report gauging teacher preparation programs in the United States in 2014. The NCTQ reported that out 685 elementary preparation programs revised for curriculum content addressing the needs of ELs, only 24% of the programs met the qualifying bar which had a minimum standards criterion for passing (NCTQ, 2014). According to the US Department of Education, lack of preparation of teachers serving ELs is an area where we as a nation need to do better. Results from the

Schools and Staffing Survey (2011-201SASS), indicated that many school principals and administrators felt that teachers do not acquire the necessary skills to adequately teach during their preparation programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Thus far, two major factors affecting teachers serving ELs are identified. First, the shortage of teachers in bilingual education and second, the current lack of adequate preparation of bilingual teachers. As one ponders about these factors, it is important to note that when schools experience teacher shortages in critical areas such as bilingual education, this generally results in increased class sizes, expanded job-related responsibilities, and the reassignment of teachers to cover the school's specific needs. Moreover, having a shortage of bilingual teachers can also affect the services ELs receive as they may not have access to quality teachers able to meet their specific needs which in turn can detract ELs from attaining academic success (Arroyo-Romano, 2016). Subsequently, these factors can create further problems in the field of bilingual education. Some teachers may agree to acknowledge that these factors combined could lead to teacher burnout and professional stress. Thus, and so, these factors may provide a feasible explanation to the current significantly higher attrition rates in the field of bilingual education nationwide. In Texas, for example, between the years 2007 – 2014 attrition rates of bilingual teachers more than doubled the state and national attrition rates (Texas Education Agency, 2017).

Regrettably, little is known about how these teacher shortages triggered by the abrupt changes in demographics, and the lack of adequate teacher preparation, affects the attitudes, the working conditions, and the school climate of teachers serving ELs.

Having the knowledge that teachers are inarguably an essential piece in student achievement, concurrently with the consideration of the shortage of teachers serving ELs, and in view of the current academic performance of ELs; it becomes crucial to investigate the attitudes, school climate and working conditions of teachers serving ELs to minimize shortages of teachers serving ELs.

Factors Affecting the Attitudes of Teachers Serving ELs

In the United States, the teaching workforce has changed very little in the past few years. For example, between the years 2004 and 2014, the percentage of teachers accrued barely changed from 51% to 50% (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Since bilingual education is such a specialized field, not many education preparation programs are equipped with the faculty and/or the curriculum components required to staff such programs. The reality is merely that preparation programs throughout the country have not been able to staff their programs fast enough. Kennedy(2017), for example, argues that there exists a lack of clear programmatic guidelines for provision of effective dual language teacher preparation across the nation. Her research on teacher preparation programs nationwide yielded only a handful of programs that addressed the key competencies and skills required of an effective bilingual teacher (Kennedy, 2017). However, due to varying certification requirements across states, little research has been done concerning specific teacher education courses and their effectiveness (Gándara & Santibañez, 2016). This is a critical topic of investigation, though, because teacher preparation is a key component that can dictate teachers' future experiences, sense of self-efficacy, and resilience in the classroom (Christian, 2017). Consequently, the

experiences of teachers serving ELs nationwide (i.e., the rapid increased of the EL population, current teacher shortages that create expanded job-related responsibilities, current academic performance of ELs, and the lack of adequate teacher preparation) can affect the attitudes of teachers and their perspectives about the teaching profession.

Factors Affecting the Working Conditions of Teachers Serving ELs

In retrospect, teacher shortages affect schools in general because when schools experience teacher shortages, this results in increased class sizes, expanded job-related responsibilities, and the reassignment of teachers (might be against their preferences) to cover the school's specific needs. As it happens, teachers have more responsibilities; in many cases, they have to build classrooms, lesson plans and curriculum all over again, significantly increasing their workloads. Therefore, these changes may very well lead to teacher burnout and professional stress discouraging some teachers from their career choice. Recent statistics from the U.S. Department of Education corroborates the prior statement. From 2012 to 2013, 51 % of the teachers who left the teaching profession reported better workloads in their new careers. Likewise, 53% of the teachers who left teaching reported better working conditions in their new workspaces. About 23%of the teachers who left the profession, reported school factors as the reason for leaving. Surprisingly, salary and benefits were listed *last* as factors that contributed for them leaving the teaching profession (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Other factors that can affect the working conditions of teachers serving ELs include the addressing of various needs of ELs such as students' poverty, lack of parental involvement, truancy, poor academic performance and students with special

needs. Data obtained from the 2013 American Community Survey (ACS) indicated that approximately 74 % of ELs live at or below the poverty line (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Language Acquisition, 2015). Parental involvement among parents of ELs has been notable minimal when compared to non- ELs parents. However, the reasons are opposite from lack of concern or devaluing their child's education. Parents of ELs do care about education and they do want the best academic outcomes for their children; but they feel cultural constrains due to language barriers and other insecurities (Antony-Newman, 2018). They may feel unsafe about their immigration status and/or are unable to participate in school activities due to work related schedule conflicts (Alexander et.al, 2017; Johnson, Arevalo, Cates, Weisleder, Dreyer & Mendelsohn, 2016; Zhang, Hsu, Kwok, Benz, & Bowman-Perrott, 2011). In addition, ELs lack of school attendance (truancy) is of significant concern at the high school level. A recent report from the U.S. Department of Education indicated that from 2013 to 2014, one out of five EL students in high school were absent more than 15 days during the academic year. Lack of attendance generally means that ELs students are at risk of dropping out of school entirely because the more absences they accrued the harder it is to achieve grade level performance. Subsequently, many ELs feel no motivation to stay in school and many of these students end up working with their parents in hard labor jobs. The implications of truancy concerning teachers' responsibilities is that much of school funding is based on attendance rates (Texas Education Agency, 2017). Therefore, teachers and administrators make great efforts to encourage attendance from their pupils (Texas Education Agency, 2017). This can lead to extra hours of work as they may have

to attend home visits, and implement attendance plans such as afterschool attendance recovery programs. Thus, this may increase a weight of responsibility on teachers' shoulders.

When addressing students with disabilities at the national level, the gap between ELs and non-ELs is significant. ELs comprised 50.2% of the total student population identified with disabilities, whereas the percentage of non-ELs comprised 38.2 % (U.S. Department of Education – Office of language Acquisition, 2017). This is a massive concern for teachers of ELs. First of all, the referral and identification process for ELs placed under the radar of special education is cumbersome. A fine line between what constitutes a language "barrier" as supposed to a learning disability is extant (Hakansson, 2010; Hardin, Roach-Scott, & Peisner-Feinberg, 2007). These processes often require extensive observations, data gathering and afterschool meetings for qualification purposes which also increases the workloads of teachers. In addition, this could also result in a risk of overrepresentation, underrepresentation and misidentification of ELs in special education (Liu, Ortiz, Wilkinson, Robertson & Kushner, 2008; Orosco, & Klingner, 2010; Ortiz, Robertson, Wilkinson, Liu, McGhee, & Kushner,2011; Rueda &Windmueller, 2006). The complexity of the referral, assessment, identification, and intervention processes may be contributing factors to the fact that many schools struggle to attain professionals specialized in bilingual special education. Subsequently, when a school hires someone with bilingual education skills and special education skills they may not be able to provide adequate support for these specialized teachers as they may lack the understanding of the specific needs for such

program. Furthermore, teachers of ELs that have special education students in their classrooms, may lack the adequate training and the available resources needed to provide the specific interventions their bilingual special ELs require (Delgado,2010; Paneque, & Barbetta, 2006).

The present academic performance gaps seen between EL students and their non-ELs counterparts, are of great concern for teachers serving ELs as they may feel that this is a reflection of their overall performance (Turkan & Buzick, 2016). National data shows that ELs continue to underperform academically when compared with their non-EL counterparts. For example, between the years 2005 and 2015, only 1% of ELs attained an advanced proficiency rating in reading and mathematics in the fourth grade (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). In reading, 7% of all ELs scored in the proficient (average) category. That leaves 68% of all ELs reading below grade level and 24% reading at a basic proficiency level. In mathematics, 43% of ELs were reported to be below grade level expectations, and 43 % of ELs demonstrated only basic proficiency skills. Graduation rates for ELs are also very different from the national average. The lack of achievement for ELs is also reflected in the national graduation rate which is approximately 82.3%, whereas the national average for ELs is approximately 62.6 %. This percentage is even lower than the national graduation rate for students with disabilities, which is 63.1% at the national level (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). These factors combined, can most definitely affect the attitudes of teachers serving ELs because the quality of school-related life can be overburdening.

Factors Affecting the School Climate of Teachers Serving ELs

A plethora of research findings have attested to the importance of properly teaching ELs (Gándara & Santibañez, 2016; Padrón & Waxman, 2016; Téllez & Waxman, 2006). However, little research has been done (Montgomery & Rupp, 2017) concerning the emotional, cultural, intellectual, and physical wellbeing of teachers (Klusmann, Richter, & Lüdtke, 2016; Robinette, 2016). Furthermore, research specific to the wellbeing of teachers serving ELs is even scarcer. One recent study funded by the National Institute for Health Research – School for Public Health Research (NIHR SPHR) in the UK studied school factors associated with teachers' wellbeing and rates of depression. The study found that workplace stress levels were associated with teachers' poor wellbeing (Kidger et al., 2016). Teachers serving ELs require field-specific preparation in order to meet their students' needs. For instance, activities related to state accountability as it relates to ELs (such as data collection requirements) can amount to many extra hours of work, directly affecting teachers' lives (Amos, 2016). Additionally, the language acquisition components of this specialty (Guerrero,1998), such as understanding language development and the responsibilities associated with measuring and reporting proficiency levels for accountability purposes, also require significant training (Barrera & Liu, 2010; Haagher, 2007; Cheatham, Jimenez-Silva, Wodrich, & Kasai, 2014; Luft & Roehrig, 2005; Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera; 2002). Likewise, the additive stress of teachers of ELs who also attend the needs of bilingual special education students (Fore III, Martin, & Bender, 2002; Gutierrez-Clellen, Simon-

Cereijido, & Wagner, 2008; Hopewell & Escamilla; 2014)). These factors amount to workplace stress levels for teachers serving ELs.

Moreover, in many schools, instructional materials in bilingual education are scarce (Athanases & De Oliveira, 2008); this means that curriculum development for bilingual education requires a great deal of differentiation and alignment. For example, it is necessary to develop instructional materials that are specific to biliteracy, such as the expansion of academic vocabulary. This also significantly increases the workload for bilingual teachers (Athanases & De Oliveira, 2008). Likewise, many bilingual teachers are tasked with extra responsibilities such as the translation of documents and interpretation of legal procedures for parents during special education meetings such as the Admission, Referral, and Dismissal (ARDs) process and 504 plan placements (Ortiz, et al., 2011). The pressures of standardized assessment for students testing in languages other than English also demand that teachers allocate more time to differentiating their classroom instruction (Bailey & Carroll, 2015). Undoubtedly, heavier workloads and added responsibilities can increase teachers' stress levels, ultimately affecting their overall wellbeing. This in turn, may translate to negative effects in student achievement (Klusmann, Richter, & Lüdtke, 2016).

In relation to school climate, many teachers who serve ELs regularly work with school administrators who lack an understanding of bilingual programs and their variety of requirements (Padrón & Waxman, 2016). This lack of understanding affects the school climate. A positive school atmosphere is critical because it influences academic outcomes and the social, cultural, physical, and health factors of teachers and students

alike (Anderson, 1982; Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Ramsey, 2016). When teachers feel unsupported, the school climate becomes compromised, leaving many bilingual teachers feeling discouraged (Brown, 2015; Restuccia, 2013; Amos, 2016). Additionally, the lack of knowledge of bilingual education/second language programs from administrators can cause negative attitudes, prejudices, and misinformation, leading to inappropriate practices and teachers unable to appropriately serve the ELs in their classrooms (Alanís & Rodriguez, 2008; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Padron & Waxman, 2016; Rodriguez, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

Teacher preparation programs preparing our future teachers are tasked with reshaping the teaching profession to fit a globalized environment. Programs are needed that enable quality, retention, and resilience in prospective teachers within the pedagogical context of the 21st century (New London Group, 1996). Even though much attention has been given to the appropriate instruction of ELs and the process of language acquisition (August, Tabaku, & Cole, 2015; Bailey & Carroll, 2015; Baker et al., 2014; Boyle, Bowman-Perrott, deMarín, Mahadevan, & Etchells, 2016; Castellón et al., 2015; Cisco & Padrón, 2012; Fillmore, 2014; Llosa et al., 2016; Mahn & Reierson, 2012; O'Day, 2009; Protacio, 2012), we still know very little about the wellbeing of the teachers tasked with serving ELs and its effects in retention, attrition and longevity of the profession.

There have been very few national studies addressing this topic, especially with a focus on the attitudes, school climate and working conditions of teachers serving ELs.

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of teachers serving ELs concerning their attitudes, school climate, and working conditions utilizing a national sample of U.S. teachers who completed the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) during the 2011-2012 school year teaching grades, kindergarten – 12th. The following questions will be addressed:

1) What factors affect the wellbeing of teachers serving ELs?
2) Are there differential effects by teacher experience on the factors that impact teachers serving ELs?

Methods

Data Sources

Data sources were obtained utilizing the Teacher Questionnaire of the Schools and Staffing Survey from the 2011-2012 School year. The survey was conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) as an integrated study for public and private school districts, schools, principals, and teachers nationwide. The SASS was analyzed to obtain the target population for the study. The survey was examined using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and STATA.

Participants

A unique sample of 37, 497 teachers were identified after filtering. The sample was then grouped into two categories: (1) first year teachers, (2) experienced teachers (two or more years of teaching experience). There were 5,277 first year teachers and 32,220 experienced teachers in the sample. Next, number of ELs in the classroom were divided into four categories: (1) teachers who did not have ELs in their classroom, (2) teachers who had between 1 – 10 % of ELs in their classroom, (3) teachers who had

between 11-30% of ELs in their classroom, and (4) teachers who had more than 30% ELs in their classroom. There were 50.10 % of ELs in group 1, in group 2, 37.81 % of Els, 8.09 % of Els, and 4.0 % in group 4. Although these groups are quite unbalanced, they do accurately represent the status of ELs in the U.S. when the data was collected in 2011-2012.

Instrument

This study utilizes the Teacher Questionnaire Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) 2011-2012 for data analysis. The survey was conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) as an integrated study for public and private school districts, schools, principals, and teachers nationwide. The survey covers a number of topics including teacher and principal characteristics, school conditions, climate perceptions, teacher preparation, school problems and basic characteristics of the student population. The Teacher Questionnaire Schools and Staffing Survey 2011-2102 was analyzed to obtain the target population for the study. The survey was examined using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSSS) and (STATA). Some syntax was written in order to achieve the desired teacher samples. Section I included relevant background information such as experience, education background and relevant information for narrowing the sample down to the targeted population of classroom teachers in grades Kindergarten – 12^{th} grade. To achieve this sample, many filtering processes had to occur. Primary filtering included participants of the survey selecting option 1 for the first question of the survey, confirming their role as a full-time teacher (Regular full-time teacher in grades Kindergarten-$12^{th)}$. After this, teachers were grouped

by their years of experience. Two categories were established: (a) Teachers whose first year of teaching was recorded as 2011-2012 were considered first year teachers (survey question number 9). (b) teachers whose first year or teaching differed from 2011-2012 were considered experienced. That is, teachers who had two or more years of experience. Subsequently, missing data was examined. After careful consideration of the dataset, missing observations were excluded from the sample. Therefore, the initial sample after filtering procedures contains 5,277 first-year teachers and 32,220 experienced teachers.

Data analysis

Descriptive Statistics are reported. Data analysis included various steps. Frequency tables and cross tabulations were used as part of descriptive statistics. Factor analysis and linear regression were utilized to examine job satisfaction and school climate factors affecting the working conditions of teachers serving ELs.

Ten job satisfaction and school climate variables were examined:

1). The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren't really worth it.

2). The teachers at this school like being here; I would describe us as a satisfied group.

3). I like the way things are run at this school.

4). If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave teaching as soon as possible.

5). I think about transferring to another school.

6). The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.

7). I am satisfied with my teaching salary.

8). Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching

9). State or district content standards have had a positive influence on my satisfaction with teaching.

10). I am given the support I need to teach students with special needs.

Other factors known to impact the working conditions of teachers were examined in relation to working conditions and school climate. Ten factors (*student tardiness, student absenteeism, class cutting, teacher absenteeism, students dropping out, student apathy, lack of parental involvement, students unprepared to learn, and poverty*) were examined.

Results

This study investigated the wellbeing (attitudes, working conditions, and school climate) of teachers serving English Learners. Descriptive results of the data set indicated that more than 50% of first-year teachers, and 49.8% of experienced teachers served ELs in their classrooms (*chi-square* (3) = 1.37; $p < .001$) (Table 4.1). Results also indicated important information in regards to the number of hours teachers dedicated towards their jobs in regards to experience. The number of hours worked per week was divided into four groups: Group 1 (1-20 hours worked per week), group 2 (21-40 hours worked per week), group 3 (41-60 hours worked per week), and group 4 (61-80 hours per week). The descriptive reported results in Table 4.2 revealed that the majority of teachers worked between 41-60 hours per week (Group 3). 74.6% of first-year teachers worked between 41-60 hours per week and 76.9% of experienced teachers worked the same number of hours per week (*chi-square* (3) = 38.5; $p < .001$). In addition, results

indicate that 12.7% of first-year teachers worked more than 60 hours per week. (Table 4.2).

Table 4.1
Percentage of Teachers Serving ELs – Whole Teacher Sample

Experience	*None*	*1-10 ELs*	*11-30 ELs*	*30+ ELs*	*Total*
First Year	49.5%	37.9%	8.3%	4.1%	5,277
Experienced	50.1	37.8%	8.0%	3.9%	32,219
Total	50.1%	37.4%	8.0%	3.9%	37,496

Pearson chi2(3) = 1.3788 p = 0.710

Table 4.2
Number of Hours Worked Per Week – Whole Teacher Sample

Experience	*1-20 Hrs.*	*21-40 Hr.*	*41-60 Hrs.*	*61-80Hrs.*	*Total*
First Year	1.7%	11.7%	74.6%	12.9%	5,277
Experienced	1.0%	11.7%	76.9%	10.2%	32,219
Total	1.10%	11.7%	76.5%	10.5%	37,496

Pearson chi2(3) = 38.5433 p = 0.000

The first question examined the working conditions of teachers serving ELs. Teachers' working conditions were measured using ten Likert-type scale items from SASS targeted at participants perceptions about job satisfaction and school climate. All items were measured on a 4-point Likert-type scale, with 1=Strongly agree to 4=strongly disagree. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the ten items targeted at measuring respondents' interpretation of working conditions based on job satisfaction and school climate. The factors loadings resulted in one factor with an eigenvalue greater than one, which accounted for 83.6% of the variance. The factor loadings of the

items ranged from 0.889 to 0.947, and each item had its highest loading fall on the factor. The generated factor (Factor 1) was interpreted as wellbeing. Table 4.3 displays the items for each factor and corresponding factors loadings of the scale.

Table 4.3
Job Satisfaction and School Climate Items and Factors Loadings

	Factor Loadings
Variable	Working Conditions
The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren't really worth it.	.917
The teachers at this school like being here; I would describe us as a satisfied group.	.906
I like the way things are run at this school.	.934
If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave teaching as soon as possible.	.893
I think about transferring to another school.	.889
The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.	.892
I am satisfied with my teaching salary.	.947
Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching	.916
State or district content standards have had a positive influence on my satisfaction with teaching.	.930
I am given the support I need to teach students with special needs.	.919
Eigenvalue	8.36
Total Variance Explained	83.6

Reprinted from National Center for Education Statistics. *Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). Teacher Questionnaire (2011-2012).*

In addition to factor loadings, scale reliabilities and correlation coefficients were calculated. The reliability of the factor for working conditions was .978. Interscale correlation coefficient was calculated and the scale had a large positive significant correlation. This finding attest to the literature findings (Amos, 2016) suggesting a correlation between teachers' perceptions of job satisfaction and school climate as factors affecting the working conditions of teachers serving ELs.

The second question addressed whether there were differential effects by teacher experience on the factors that impact teachers serving ELs. A linear regression was run to predict job satisfaction and school climate factors affecting the working conditions of teachers serving ELs. First, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted on 10 items (Table 4.4), targeted at measuring respondents' interpretation of working conditions based on job satisfaction and school climate.

Table 4.4
Working Conditions Items for Job Satisfaction and School Climate

1) The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren't really worth it.
2) The teachers at this school like being here; I would describe us as a satisfied group.
3) I like the way things are run at this school.
4) If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave teaching as soon as possible.
5) I think about transferring to another school.
6) The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.
7) I am satisfied with my teaching salary.
8) Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching
9) State or district content standards have had a positive influence on my satisfaction with teaching.
10) I am given the support I need to teach students with special needs.

Reprinted from National Center for Education Statistics. *Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). Teacher Questionnaire (2011-2012).*

The factors loadings resulted in one factor with an eigenvalue greater than one, which accounted for 83.6% of the variance. The factors loadings of the items ranged from 0.889 to 0.947, and each item had its highest loading fall on the factor. The generated factor (Factor 1) was interpreted as the variable *Wellbeing*.

Regression Results

A linear regression was performed to examine what factors affected the wellbeing of teachers (Table 4.5). Ten items that described teachers' working conditions in their school were included in the regression equation along with their experience and the number of ELs in their classes. Experience was operationalized as the following two categories: first-year teachers and experienced teachers. All of the ten independent variables of working conditions were found to have a significant effect on (*wellbeing*). Experience and number of ELs were not found to have an effect on teachers' wellbeing.

Table 4.5
Results of Ordinary Least Squares Regression Predicting Experience and Number of ELs on Factors that Impact the Wellbeing of Teachers

Variable	***b***	*SE*	*t*	*p=*
1). Student Tardiness	.2566232	.0066745	37.54	0.000
2). Student Absenteeism	.0766971	.0053295	13.67	0.000
3). Class Cutting	.0569613	.0043568	12.13	0.000
4). Teacher Absenteeism	.0881862	.0043475	18.81	0.000
5). Students Dropping Out	.0483661	.0036909	11.70	0.000
6). Student Apathy	.0467444	.0031239	12.90	0.000
7). Lack of Parental Involvement	.1410368	.0050266	26.63	0.000
8). Poverty	.0651946	.00364	16.12	0.000
9). Students Unprepared to Learn	.1474117	.0058962	24.09	0.000
10). Poor Student Health	.0603326	.0041355	13.30	0.000
11). Experience	-.0034489	.0048236	-1.88	0.059
12). Number of ELs	-.000939	.0021197	-0.51	0.608

Limitations of Study

A primary limitation of this study is attrition of the study sample. This study relies on the SASS Survey 2011-2012. Even though filtering procedures were carefully selected, missing observations were excluded from the sample. For the reasons that, a series of questions on the dataset were only directed to a specific group of teachers. For example, teachers whose first year of teaching began prior to 2007-2008 were not required to answer question 32 (which examines first year teacher experiences). After filtering procedures were taken into account, the final study sample is significantly smaller than the population.

Another limitation of this study is that some data elements can be expected to vary over time. For example, the status of English Learner. Therefore, the identification of students considered ELs during the 2011-2012 academic year may vary as students exit their EL status d develop language proficiency skills. Consequently, the interpretations should be interpreted with caution. Finally, the data, was primarily gathered with descriptive educational statistical purposes. Therefore, data analysis hereof performed may include the potential for inaccuracy and bias.

Discussion

Concurrent with the literature findings, many factors were found to affect the wellbeing of teachers serving ELs. Over half (50.4%) of first-year teachers, and almost half (49.8%) of experienced teachers served ELs in their classrooms. Surprisingly, the results of this study indicated that years of experience and the number of ELs did not significantly predicted teachers' wellbeing. This may be because such factors (i.e.,

poverty, climate, support from administration, and stress) affect teacher corps in general, and little is known about how these factors affect the overall performance of teachers serving ELs specifically. Furthermore, this is an area that has been minimally explored and research concerning the wellbeing of teachers serving ELs is almost non-existent. In addition, the results of this study also indicated that all teachers are experiencing heavy workloads. Clearly, there is an urgency to understand the needs of teachers serving ELs in regards to their wellbeing (attitudes, working conditions, and school climate). For the reason that, addressing the factors that have an impact on the wellbeing of teachers serving ELs is important because in knowing the type of support that teachers need could help in retaining teachers that are critical to the education of ELs.

Conclusions

There are many challenges and opportunities facing teachers serving English Learners (ELs) in the United States today. (e.g., rapid changes in demographic patterns, policy and practice interactions, state accountability measures, and curriculum realignments). It is known that there has been an exponential increase in the English Learner (EL) population across the nation. According to the US Department of Education, the vast majority of ELs are Hispanic (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Withal, states are being pressured to produce more qualified teachers able to meet the educational needs of ELs. Although stakeholders in education have made efforts to meet the growing demand, teacher shortages still in effect (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Thomas, 2016). In addition to teacher shortages, the current academic performance of ELs is cause of national concern (Gándara & Santibañez, 2017). In order to improve the

academic performance of ELs, teachers need stellar preparation to appropriately serve the complex and various needs of ELs (Franco-Fuenmayor, Padrón & Waxman, 2015). However, when addressing the needs of ELs, there are many factors that can affect the wellbeing (attitudes, working conditions, and school climate) of the teachers serving ELs. Some of these factors include poverty, lack of parental involvement, extra responsibilities due to teacher shortages, present academic performance gaps, students with special education needs, curriculum development, lack of field-specific preparation, professional support, and school climate. Undoubtedly, these factors can increase teachers' stress levels which in turn may lead to professional burnout; ultimately affecting the overall wellbeing of teachers serving ELs and threatening the longevity of teachers in the classroom (Cross, & Thomas, 2017). Therefore, in order to meet the current growing demand of teachers, and to improve the current academic achievement of ELs; it is important to take a closer look at the perceptions of teachers serving ELs and their overall wellbeing (attitudes, working conditions and school climate).

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Rapid changes in demographics have created an influx of English Learners in US schools. It is found that Spanish is the language spoken by the majority of ELs (US Department of Education, 2015). Subsequently, there is an exponential need for teachers able to serve the complex needs of ELs. In order to serve ELs well, teachers of ELs require field-specific preparation. For instance, teachers of ELs need to know how to develop, implement and monitor classroom activities geared towards language acquisition and development. In addition, teachers of ELs require extensive training in order to meet state accountability measures, while maintaining high academic expectations present in the current academic standards (Heritage, Walqui & Linquanti, 2015). Unfortunately, due to the rapid increase in the EL population, school districts throughout the country have found it difficult to staff their programs at the rate of increase. Thus, teacher shortages are still in effect (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Thomas, 2016).

Academically, ELs continue to underperform when compared with their non-ELs counterparts. For example, according to national data, in the year 2015, 68% of ELS scored below grade level expectations in reading. In math, only 1% percent of ELs demonstrated advanced proficiency skills, and 43% were reported to be below grade level expectations. In addition, graduation rates for ELs were almost 20 percent lower than the national average. (US Department of Education, 2017). Teachers serving ELs

face many issues daily directly affecting the students they serve. For example, poverty, lack of parental involvement, students at risk of dropping out, students with disabilities, amongst others. In addition to factors that affect the lives and academic performance of ELs, teachers of Els face other factors that can impact their own professional life and their longevity in the classroom. For instance, disconnections between policy and practice, standardized testing, and deficiencies in teacher preparation. Additionally, teachers' beliefs in connection with the support they receive, working conditions, and school climate, are added factors that contribute to the many challenges and opportunities facing teachers of ELs today.

Researchers have found that in order for ELs to receive appropriate instruction and subsequently increase student achievement, it is necessary for ELs to have access to highly qualified teachers. A plethora of research has been found addressing the appropriate instruction of ELs. (August, Tabaku, & Cole, 2015; Bailey & Carroll, 2015; Boyle, Bowman-Perrott, deMarín, Mahadevan, & Etchells, 2016; Castellón, Cheuk, Greene, Mercado-García, Santos, Skarin, & Zerkel, 2015; Cisco & Padrón, 2012; Llosa, Lee, Jiang, Haas, O'Connor, Van Booven, & Kieffer, 2016; Protacio, 2012;). Notwithstanding, there are multiple factors impacting teachers' lives (teacher preparation, working conditions and school climate) yet we know little about how these factors impact teachers' ability to provide quality instruction.

Knowing about these factors and how they impact teachers' lives is crucially important during the beginning years of teaching. For the reason that, the experiences during the first-year of teaching can dictate the longevity and resilience of teachers in the

classroom (Christian, 2017). For instance, it is found that concerns regarding teacher preparation in middle grade levels, substantially increases as resources for teachers serving ELs become scarcer. Thus, this can negatively impact teachers' experiences and the provision of services for their ELs students (Bustos-Flores, 2015). Therefore, this dissertation study set out to investigate a). the perceptions about preparation from first year teachers serving ELs nationwide, b). the professional development opportunities available for teachers serving ELs in middle grades nationwide, and c). the wellbeing (attitudes, climate and working conditions) of teachers serving ELs nationwide.

The findings of the studies hereof reveal several contributing insights. In study 1, with regards to teachers' perception of their preparation, first-year teachers serving ELs felt unprepared to accomplish the tasks required of them. The findings also provided evidence that, in regards to EL's, when the number of ELs increased in the classroom, the less preparation their teachers received. First-year teachers expressed unpreparedness in many areas (i.e. classroom management, using a variety of instructional methods, assessment, data usage to inform instruction, meeting content standards and technology). In addition to preparation perceptions from first-year teachers, this dissertation study investigated the perceptions of professional support (induction, mentoring, and professional development) provided to first-year teachers serving ELs. The findings reveal that first-year teachers serving ELs do not perceive adequate support during their first-year of teaching. Additionally, in regards to professional development participation, results reveal that first-year teachers serving ELs lagged behind other teachers. Nearly 77% of first year teachers serving ELs did not receive PD specific to meeting the needs

of ELs, and 63% of first year teachers received eight hours of less of PD addressing the needs of ELs. In reality, eight hours or less of professional development seems very minimal when compared to other countries such as Singapore where teachers are offered 100 hours of professional development per year (OECD, 2011). Teachers of ELs need rigorous professional development that builds capacity within, engages in dialogue, promotes collaboration, asserts inquiry and growth mindsets (Heritage, Walqui & Linquati; 2015).

Furthermore, this dissertation study found that as the grade level increases, teacher preparation regarding the needs of ELs decreases. Veritably, professional development (PD) for teachers serving ELs in middle grades is almost non-existent (Bustos-Flores, 2015). According to data from the US Department of Education in the Schools and Staffing Survey 2011-2012, professional development geared towards teaching ELs was the least prevalent type of PD among teachers in the United States. Only 27% of teachers participated in this type of PD (US Department of Education, 2017). The results of this dissertation study are concurrent with the literature findings. Nearly 75% of teachers did not received professional development addressing the needs of ELs, more alarming is the fact that almost 68% of the teachers who did not received PD, served between 31-60 ELs in their classrooms. Furthermore, Low percentages of participation were consistent across the board in regards to professional development addressing various important issues of EL instruction (i.e. students with special needs, evaluation practices, and the teaching of cross-curricular skills). Results also demonstrate that the majority of teachers serving ELs received low (between 1-10 days)

amounts of professional development. Likewise, results also demonstrate significant differences in the perceptions of professional development usefulness amongst teachers of ELs as opposed to teachers who did not serve ELs in their classrooms.

Findings in study 2, accompanied with the literature review clearly indicate a call to action in professional development that targets the specific needs of teachers serving ELs in middle grades because middle grade students experience more developmental transitional periods which have specific cognitive implications unique to the middle school student (Piaget, 1936). In addition, teachers of ELs in middle grades need professional development that addresses the identification, assessment implications and instructional strategies for ELs students under the umbrella of special education (Ford, 2012; Hart,2010; Wagner, Francis & Morris, 2005; Williams, Sando & Soles, 2014), and understanding of implications for participation in gifted and talented programs (Callahan, 2017; Callahan, Moon, & Oh, 2017).

Study 3 addresses the attitudes, working conditions, and school climate of teachers serving ELs nationwide, teachers of ELs perceived heavy working loads and other factors that interfered with teaching. Findings revealed several factors (i.e. student tardiness, absenteeism, students dropping out of school, apathy, lack of parental involvement, poverty, student unpreparedness, and poor student health) affecting the working conditions of teachers serving ELs. Interestingly, poverty was amongst the biggest concern for teachers serving ELs. 80% of teachers who served more than 30 ELs in their classroom perceived poverty as a serious problem at their schools. More than half of the teachers serving more than 30 ELs in their classrooms, expressed being

dissatisfied with their teaching salary. According to the 2011 OECD report, teachers' pay in the United States is placed at the bottom four of the participating countries (OECD, 2011). In regards to job satisfaction and school climate, a vast majority of teachers serving ELs felt that the stress and disappointments involved in teaching at their schools were not worth it, and reported feeling dissatisfied at their schools. Only a small portion of teachers serving more than 30 ELs in their classroom agreed with receiving support with special education students.

In knowing that scholars have found that teachers are a primary factor in determining students' achievement (Aquino-Sterling, 2016A; Curtis, 2011; Darling-Hammong & Young, 2002; Klusmann, Richter & Lüdtke, 2016), and in lieu of the results presented in this dissertation study; it is important to take a holistic look into teacher preparation practices, the professional support, and the overall wellbeing of teachers serving ELs nationwide.

Conclusions

The three studies in this dissertation began with an interest to investigate how to increase the academic achievement of ELs in the United States. Two factors were identified that would contribute to improving the education of ELs: school and out-of school challenges surrounding the lives of teachers of ELs and their lack of adequate teacher preparation in meeting the complex needs of ELs.

Teacher preparation programs throughout the country are struggling to meet the rapid demand for teachers with the required qualifications needed to meet the complex

needs of ELs. Consequently, teacher shortages continue to exist throughout the country. It is estimated that the number of teachers needed could increase by 112,000 by 2018 (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Thomas, 2016). Academically, ELs continue to underperform when compared to their non-ELs counterparts (US Department of Education, 2017) indicating the need for highly qualified teachers.

The results of the three studies in this dissertation showed that there is a lack of professional development being provided to teachers of ELs. The results indicated that first-year teachers feel that they are not prepared in meeting the needs of ELs.

Not only is it important to examine first year teachers' experiences, since their experiences may impact whether they will continue in the teaching profession but examining experiences of middle school teachers is also important. Little research has been conducted which addresses the specific needs of middle school teachers, particularly as they related to ELs. Results for the study related to middle school teachers found that middle school teachers serving between 31-60% of ELs in their classroom did not receive training addressing the needs of ELs. Overall, it was found that as the number of ELs present in the classroom increased, the less preparation teachers received. These findings indicate that there is an urgency to increase the participation of ELs in gifted programs, and teachers serving ELs should be equipped to identify and promote the gifted and talented EL.

Another issue related to EL teachers investigated in one of the dissertation studies was the quality of school related-life of teachers serving ELs. There are many factors affecting the wellbeing of teachers (i.e., attitudes, working conditions and school

climate of teachers) serving ELs. Teachers of ELs are tasked with many extra responsibilities. First, aside from having to address content, teachers serving ELs address language development needs, and exercise sensibility to cultural and linguistic diversity (Gándara, et al., 2005).

The current teacher shortages in the United States can result in increased class sizes, expanded job-related responsibilities and lack of access to special programs, or the qualified workforce needed to meet the various needs of ELs (e.g. special education services for ELs, translation of documents for legal procedures). These factors can significantly increase the workloads of teachers serving ELs. Moreover, teachers of ELs are faced with having to address the various factors afflicting ELs in the United States currently (i.e. poverty and lack of student achievement). Heavier workloads, added responsibilities, and concerns for the needs of their EL students can increase the stress levels of teachers ultimately affecting their overall wellbeing. Thus, these factors combined can create negative effects in student achievement (Klusmann, Richter, & Lüdtke, 2016). In regards to school climate, it was found that many teachers may feel unsupported as they work with administrators who lack an understanding of programs servicing ELs and their variety of requirements (Padrón & Waxman, 2016). This is concerning because this lack of understanding affects the school climate. Researchers have linked school climate to academic, social, cultural, physical and health factors of teachers and students alike (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Ramsey, 2016).

In closing, it is important to note that while it is true that teachers may not be able to overturn many of the factors impacting the academic achievement of ELs (e.g. poverty, teacher shortages due to rapid demographic changes) (Levenson, 2007), the findings of this dissertation provide some practical implications to the field of education in regards to teachers serving ELs. First, the findings hereof indicate a need to better prepare teachers and provide continued support during their first-year of teaching (Kang, & Berliner, 2012). This is crucial because the experiences during the firs-year of teaching can dictate the longevity and resilience of teachers in the classroom (Christian, 2017). Second, Considering the current academic performance of ELs, and having knowledge that quality teachers are an important aspect of student achievement, teacher preparation becomes a key component in the pursue of academic excellence of ELs (Gándara & Santibañez, 2016). However, there are many in-school and out-of-school factors that impact teachers' ability to appropriately serve ELs (e.g. poverty, students at risk, policy and practice disconnects, standardized testing, deficiency of teacher preparation and lack of professional support).

Currently, there is a gap between professional development that meets the needs of teachers serving ELs, and implementation practices proven to yield positive results in student achievement (Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner, 2017). Further research is needed to establish criteria in regards to what encompasses a quality EL teacher. Also, there is little empirical evidence addressing best practices in regards to bilingual special education, and bilingual gifted students, especially in upper grade-levels (Castellano & Díaz, 2002; López, McEneaney, & Nieswandt, 2015; Wagner, Francis, & Morris, 2005).

This dissertation study is the first of its kind in addressing the attitudes, working conditions, and school climate of teachers serving ELs. Further research is much needed addressing the needs and the overall wellbeing of teachers serving ELs. To gain knowledge about the attitudes, school climate and working conditions of teachers serving ELs, is to enable stakeholders in education the understanding of factors teachers perceive affect or impact their service as educators. Consequently, in addressing these factors, we(nation) can potentially increase the longevity of teachers in the classroom, reduce attrition and improve school climate which in turn, will generate better academic outcomes for ELs.

Making sure that teachers receive the appropriate preparation for their assigned grade level (teacher preparation has different implications at the elementary, middle, and high school grade levels), should be at the core of any professional development initiative geared towards meeting the needs of ELs. If ELs are to meet the current academic standards, teachers of ELs have to be equipped with the necessary skills to that will assist EL students to meet the current academic standards. Therefore, it is important to provide professional development training that is particularly focused on the needs of ELs. The results of the studies presented here indicate that it is important to provide professional development training that is focused on the specific needs to effectively teach ELs. Tis important for first-year teachers, middle school teachers and teachers with large number of ELs in their classrooms.

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