ABSTRACT

SMITH, PAMELA THAYER. A School Principal’s Perceptions Regarding Personal Qualities and Pedagogical Qualifications Affecting Teacher Candidate Selection. (Under the direction of Dr. Paul Bitting).

This study examined the procedures used and the perceptions of a principal as to the personal qualities and pedagogical qualifications affecting the selection of teacher candidates. The approach examined one principal’s procedures used to choose which candidates to interview, the process she used to conduct the interviews, the professional attributes that she felt exemplified effective teachers, the personal attributes she felt exemplified effective teachers, and the key factors in the choosing which candidate to recommend.

In summary, the findings of this study follow:

1) The principal studied was not formally trained in hiring practices; she aligned her process with the principal at the school where she worked as an assistant principal. More training needs to be offered either by universities or school systems to principals in the hiring process.

2) A principal needs to be vigilant in looking for perspective teachers that are “highly-qualified” and fit well in his/her school.

3) Perspective teachers applying for teaching positions need to complete their degree, take and pass the tests required to become “highly-qualified” and develop a relationship with principals and teachers at the school and school system where they are applying.

4) Superintendents and school boards need to hire principals who can carefully screen teachers and hire the best candidates for their schools.
5) Teachers need to be vigilant in looking for excellent teachers to recommend to the principal for hire. Teachers can make an impact on the quality of the teachers being hired at their school by making favorable references to their building principal.
A School Principal’s Perceptions Regarding Personal Qualities and Pedagogical Qualifications Affecting Teacher Candidate Selection

by

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my dear husband, Tom, for without you I would have not had the motivation and persistence to complete this study.
BIOGRAPHY

Pamela Thayer Smith lives in Raleigh, North Carolina. She was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1956, and attended the University of Pittsburgh where in 1978, she obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education. After teaching for eighteen years, she enrolled and completed a Master of Education in School Administration at North Carolina State University. She then became an assistant principal at Wake Forest-Rolesville High School and remained in that role for five years. During that time, she enrolled in a doctoral cohort offered by Wake County School System and North Carolina State University and went on to become a Senior Administrator for Elementary Staffing in Human Resources for Wake County Public Schools.

The staffing of elementary schools has become her focus as Pam works with principals and other administrators to fill openings across the county. Pam currently works to staff 40 elementary schools in Wake County. She spends much of her time reviewing and rating candidates’ applications, which principals have recommended for hire. Principals depend upon her to review and approve the teachers they recommend for hire. She works to help assure the principal that he or she has made the right choice. Her interest in how principals choose the teachers for their schools results from her job. She believes that the statement by Rosse and Levin (2003) is true, that hiring mistakes are inevitable due to inherent limitations in measuring and predicting human behavior. Pam’s job is to help decrease the number of mistakes made by Wake County School principals.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

Public school administrators face the annual task of putting in place a staff of effective teachers. Whether it is the initial hiring to fill vacancies at the start of a new school year or the replacement of teachers because of turnover during the year, the principal must recruit and recommend for hire the best teachers for their schools. Hiring a qualified teacher is one of the most important tasks a principal performs (Frase, 1999). Very few tasks that a principal undertakes become more important than hiring the right teachers (Hoerr, 2006) because it is the teachers who improve the quality of instruction at their school and the learning process for their students. Ferrandino (2002) supports this when he states that “studies suggest that teacher quality is the single best predictor of student success;” he further says, “We cannot overemphasize a principal’s responsibility for finding and retaining good teachers” (p.80).

Over the next ten years, approximately two million teachers in the United States will need to be replaced, and the need to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers will be a major national priority (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). Hess, Rotherham, and Walsh (2005) made clear the significance of this shortfall of teachers when they affirmed that there is a sense of urgency when recruiting, preparing, and mentoring new teachers because of teacher retirements and the widespread teacher shortages in poverty-stricken schools. School systems and building-level principals must emphasize finding and retaining highly-qualified teachers.
Schools can greatly improve student achievement by coming to an agreement on what constitutes an effective teacher and then pursue those individuals who demonstrate those desired qualities and behaviors (Stronge & Hindman, 2003). They concluded that the common factor in improving schools and improving student achievement is the teacher. Kaplan and Owings (2001) conducted a study that found teachers are the strongest link between public ambition for high quality schooling and student achievement, and the principal must assure that all classrooms have quality teachers. According to Danielson (1996), teaching is a complex act divided into four domains: planning and preparation; classroom environment; instruction; and professional responsibilities. The search for an effective teacher starts by the process of seeking candidates who possess the abilities in domains such as the ones identified by Danielson.

Principal hiring decisions may have an impact on a school for many years (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Haycock, 1998; Sanders and Rivers, 1998). In light of this, a principal uses various strategies to narrow a large pool of applicants to a small pool of applicants from which to choose the best candidate. The principal must be confident that s/he has chosen the best candidate for the position. Fundamental education reform challenges facing our schools presently are hiring and developing outstanding teachers. The teachers we choose today will influence the achievement of the students tomorrow. This fact leads to the following questions: What procedure does a principal feel is most important when selecting teachers? What attributes does a principal believe exemplifies an effective teacher to hire? Through research and interviews with a school principal, this study will seek to answer these
questions.

The hiring process begins with the posting of a position and concludes with the recommendation of a candidate to hire. The middle steps allow the administrator to screen the candidate from the initial group of applicants to a small number of final candidates from which to interview and choose the teacher to recommend.

**Statement of the Problem**

Choosing and recommending highly qualified, effective teachers is a paramount task undertaken by a principal routinely. Teachers actually fulfill the mission of the school, so hiring is the most important thing that an administrator does (Slosson, 1999). The principal must insist that only the most effective teachers are hired. Hiring effective teachers makes the school fun and effective for students. This enhances the entire teaching profession. A bad hire is a black mark on the school and makes it difficult for students to learn and thrive, and will turn students off school altogether (Slosson, 1999).

The best possible candidates need to be hired (Slosson, 1999). According to Goldhaber (2002):

Only about 3 percent of the contributions teachers make to student learning is associated with teacher experience, degree attained, and other readily observable characteristics. The remaining 97 percent of a teacher’s contribution is associated with qualities or behaviors that have not been isolated and identified. Hence, there exists a growing need to research and address the intangible aspects of teacher quality such as enthusiasm and skill in the act of teaching, and how the principal perceives
these qualities when recommending teachers to hire. This study fills the gap by presenting a principal’s perceptions of candidates recommended for hire.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this case study is to determine the procedures used and the perceptions of a principal as to the personal qualities and pedagogical qualifications affecting the selection of teacher candidates. The processes a principal uses in selecting teachers define the hiring practices.

In many districts, principals are the ones making the hiring decisions; thus, the information from this study can assist potential teacher candidates in understanding which qualities principals are looking. In addition, this study may force principals to rethink their perceptions about the selection criteria and expectations of teacher candidates. The results of this study can also be helpful to institutions that are preparing future teachers.

**Research Questions**

The overarching research question is: What are the personal qualities and pedagogical qualifications, which affect the perceptions of principals when hiring teachers. Sub-questions include the following:

1. What procedure does the principal use to choose which teacher candidates to interview?
2. What procedure does the principal use to conduct interviews of teacher candidates?
3. According to the principal, what professional attributes exemplify effective teachers?
4. According to the principal, what personal attributes exemplify effective teachers?

5. According to the principal, what is the key factor when deciding which candidate to hire?

**Significance of the Study**

Since hiring is one of the singular most important things that an administrator does, it is vital that only “highly-qualified,” effective teachers be hired. By hiring these teachers, principals can improve the quality of instruction and increase student learning. Experts agree that the one most crucial decision a principal makes is which teacher to hire (Rothman, 2004; Peterson, 2002). The hiring process is the basis for the success or failure of a school. The principal must make difficult choices to recommend the best candidates to teach in their school. The principal needs to spend sufficient time to ensure that the right candidate is hired. Peterson (2002) found that one of the most common mistakes in the teacher hiring process was allotting insufficient time for all the steps required.

Hiring the best candidate for the position is the goal of the principal. A principal must make hiring choices that affect students and the school. Cruickshank (1986), in an article entitled “Profile of an Effective Teacher” wrote, “Short of the search for the Holy Grail, there hardly has been a human quest more persistently and doggedly pursued than the hunt for the ‘good’ teacher” (p.81).

**Overview of Approach**

This study utilizes the qualitative approach and is an exploratory case study from a phenomenological stance. Place sets a boundary for the study; one principal from one school
is studied. The school is from a large county in the piedmont of North Carolina, the principal was at the school for at least two years, and the school has met Average Yearly Progress during the 2008-2009 academic school year. I conducted the study to uncover the principal’s perceptions of candidates in the hiring process.

As a Human Resources administrator, I have an interest in researching a principal’s perceptions when recommending a candidate for hire. I conducted this study in order to understand what a principal sees in certain candidates that they do not see in others, exploring why they choose one candidate over another.

**Limitations, Delimitations and Assumptions**

The following factors may have limited the results of the study:

1) The study is limited to one principal in a large school system in the piedmont of North Carolina; therefore, the results may not be generalized beyond that population.

2) In order to assure manageability of the collected data, there was a limit to the number of questions asked and the respondent may have had additional information that I did not share/divulge.

3) The school chosen for the research qualified because of the availability to the researcher and was not a sampling of the district.

4) The qualifications and education of the principal were not a consideration for this study. The assumption was made that the principal being studied has the credentials necessary to be hired by the state and local school system for the role of principal.

Assumptions that apply to this study include the following:
1. Principal involved was sufficiently representative of principals in general.

2. Principal involved in this study had anonymity and responded candidly and honestly to the questions asked.

3. The researcher conducting this study is currently employed as a staffing administrator in the department of Human Resources for a neighboring county and may have unrealized biases.

**Definition of Terms**

*Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP):* It represents the annual academic proficiency targets in reading and math that the state, school district, and schools must reach to be on track with the federally mandated goal of 100% proficiency by school year 2013.

*AYP growth standard:* This standard outlines predetermined incremental progress that students must demonstrate in order to be counted as “on track” and, therefore, proficient. If the percentage of non-proficient students on the growth pathway and percentage of proficient students combine to meet the proficiency target goal, the group has met its target goal.

*Effectiveness:* It is the measure of the ability to produce a desired effect. In teacher terms, it is the ability to cause students to achieve a defined set of goals and objectives.

*Effective Principal:* A strong educator who anchors their work on learning and teaching. The principal who leads his or her school through goal-setting in which student achievement is analyzed, improvement areas are identified and actions for change are initiated (Schmoker).

*Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA):* This title may be cited as the No Child

*Highly Qualified Teacher:* The federal definition of a "highly qualified teacher" (HQT) in a core academic subject is one who holds at least a bachelor’s degree, has an appropriate license for the assignment, and demonstrates subject matter competence (i.e., content knowledge) in the core academic subject(s) she/he teaches.

*Highly Qualified Teacher in North Carolina:* In North Carolina a highly qualified teacher is a teacher who obtained full state teacher certification or passed the state teacher licensing examination and holds a license to teach in the state. The teacher must hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree; and has demonstrated subject area competence in each of the core academic subjects in which the teacher teaches.

*No Child Left Behind (NCLB):* A federal law passed under the George W. Bush administration. NCLB represents legislation that attempts to accomplish standards-based education reform. The law reauthorized federal programs meant to hold primary and secondary schools measurably accountable to higher standards.

*Personal Attributes:* Refers to attributes such as work ethic, the desire to perform effectively, the desire to improve continuously, the desire to provide students with a high quality education, etc.

*Praxis Tests:* A Praxis test is one of a series of teacher certification exams written and administered by the Educational Testing Service. The Praxis I test measures basic academic skills, and the Praxis II tests measure general and subject-specific knowledge and teaching skills.
**Professional Attributes:** Refers to attributes such as instructional ability, command of content area and subject matter, classroom management attributes the willingness to pursue professional growth, the desire to pursue remediation when necessary, etc.

**Title I Schools:** Schools where at least 40 percent of the children in the school attendance area are from low-income families or at least 40 percent of the student enrollments are from low-income families eligible to receive federal Title I funds. The proportion of low-income families is most frequently measured by the percent of students receiving free and reduced-price lunch. Title I funds are to be used for programs designed to improve the academic achievement of children from low-income homes. Over half of all public schools receive funding under Title I.

**Organization of the Remainder of the Study**

The study is organized into five major chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research study, background of the problem, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, significance of the study, overview of the approach, limitations and delimitations, and definitions of terms. Chapter 2 contains a review of related literature and current research regarding the teacher selection process, highly-qualified teachers, and effective teachers. Chapter 3 focuses on the study design and methodology. An analysis of the findings is presented in Chapter 4 and a summary of the findings, conclusions, discussion, and recommendations for further study is included in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of a school principal when making recommendations to hire teachers. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive review of selected literature and relevant research to better understand the study. This chapter is divided into sections that include (a) the teacher selection process, (b) the characteristics of an effective principal, (c) the characteristics of a “highly qualified” teacher, (c) the reasons to hire a highly qualified teacher (d) the characteristics of an effective teacher, and (e) the reasons hire an effective teacher.

The Teacher Selection Process

Every school and school system faces the challenge of creating a process that leads to a match of a candidate to the school’s description of what it takes to be an effective teacher. This challenge has resulted in some schools and school districts reviewing and refining their teacher selection processes to identify the best teachers for their school systems. Some schools and districts have started using technology to enhance the selection process. Fairfax County School district in suburban Washington, DC has implemented an online application process. They no longer accept paper applications. Candidates upload their resume onto their system or create a resume online using their resume tool. Forms are only filled out after a job offer is made. Many other school systems, including Pittsburgh Public Schools use an online application for teaching positions.

In the state of North Carolina, candidates for public school teaching positions begin
by completing an online application which they direct to the schools systems in which they are interested. The applicant then completes supplementary application materials on paper and submits them to the county or counties of their choice. The principals at the schools in that particular county have access to the application. Applicants watch the posted job openings and send an email or call the individual principal or school representative to request an interview. The principal then has the option of interviewing the candidate.

In the county being studied, a job fair is offered in the spring of the year for perspective teaching candidates to apply in person for positions in the school system. An online posting for the fair and an email reminder is sent to applicants stating how to register for the fair, as well as, the time and the place. This fair usually coincides with spring university graduations.

The past two years have presented problems with districts freezing the hiring process. This has limited the choices for principals as they try to find the best teachers for their schools. Wise, Darling-Hammond, & Berry (1988) examined six school districts to reveal the operations of their teacher selection procedures. These studies showed tight linkages that were determined to be critical in the selection of candidates. The linkages included (a) casting a wide recruiting net; (b) timely decision making and open lines of communication; (c) using cost- effective screening tools; (d) communicating to candidates their professional value; (e) involving experienced teachers in writing job descriptions, screening activities, and monitoring new hires; (f) blending teacher selection, curriculum and staff development, and teacher evaluation processes; (g) appropriate placing and support of new hires; and (h)
exhibiting committed leadership that demonstrates shared values and professional norms for teaching.

Individual schools and systems use different methods for selecting teachers, but there are common components necessary in all to make them valid and reliable. The schools each need to identify the attitudes, behaviors, and skills that would characterize the type of teacher needed. The teacher selection at the school needs validation so that it can predict excellence and follow federal, state, and local laws. The creation of a process where the top candidates rise to the top of the applicant pool is necessary.

Liu’s (2003) study, conducted in California, Florida, Massachusetts, and Michigan, surveyed 486 teachers to collect feedback on their experiences in the hiring process. The results showed that hiring mainly relied on paper credentials. The hiring team made their hiring decision on the information they read in the resume, the letter of recommendation, and application. Even though there are differences in the teacher selection systems, most newly hired teachers have more interactions with individual schools rather than with district central offices (Lui, 2003). Lui’s research shows that 88% of new teachers interview with the school’s principal, 50% of new teachers interview with teachers at the school as a part of the hiring committee, 10% of new teachers interview with a parent or have a parent on the hiring committee, and less than 1% interview with a student on the hiring committee. Trimble (2001) supported this when she stated that hiring superior teachers can be an extremely difficult task because of teacher shortages and the difficulty of teaching in today’s schools; but knowledgeable administrators know the significance of employing,
nurturing, and keeping quality personnel and recognize the dangers of hiring the wrong candidate.

**The Characteristics of an Effective Principal**

Effective principals are strong educators who focus their work on learning, teaching and school improvement. Principals are responsible for quality instruction, curriculum development, curriculum alignment, clinical evaluations, and monitoring student progress (Murphy & Louise, 1999). Effective school leaders must also be visionary, inspirational and encouraging to others, all the while, modeling the way. Today, the role of principal must include one that is “moving from B keeper—buses, buildings, books, bonds and budgets to the Four R’s—race, resources, relationship, and rules; into the four A’-academic standards, accountability, autonomy, ambiguity, and into the five C’s—collaboration, communication, connection, child advocacy and community building” (Usden, 2001, p.2). In order to be effective, the principal must be a leader who models, inspires a shared vision, empowers others, and encourages the heart, rather than a manager who focuses on overseeing tasks (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

A principal sets the tone for the school; they establish a vision for students and teachers. Principals celebrate the successes and deal with the problems faced at their schools daily. They work with their teachers, parents, students and community members to ensure the academic and social success of students. According to Fullen (2003), “We need principals who develop leadership in others, thereby strengthening school leadership beyond themselves” (p. 41). Effective leaders need to find a way to bring out the best in others.
The Characteristics of a “Highly-Qualified” Teacher

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) of 2001 defines a “Highly Qualified” teacher as one who holds the minimum of a bachelor’s degree, has obtained full state certification, and has demonstrated subject area competence in each of the academic subjects that he or she teaches (Berry, 2004). NCLBA outlines the following characteristics as having a direct impact on teacher quality: (a) certification, (b) content knowledge, (c) experience, (d) higher-level degree, (e) general knowledge, and (f) ability.

States typically require teacher candidates to have a teaching license in order to be eligible for a teaching position. All teachers are required to obtain a regular license in order to be considered highly qualified under No Child Left Behind. This requirement is the gatekeeper to candidates seeking a teaching position. Lateral entry teachers confuse the issue of certification. These teachers bypass some of the undergraduate work done by teachers but bring professional experiences in other areas into the classroom.

A Highly-Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom

Since there have been schools there have been movements to improve the effectiveness of teachers. Parents have always known that having a good teacher makes the difference in student learning. As a result, a principal continually faces parent requests for specific teachers at the beginning of each school year. This issue did not appear recently, nor will it disappear any time soon. Research during recent decades indicates that the effect of teachers on student achievement results from three variables: (a) teaching ability, (b) teacher motivation, and (c) classroom situations (i.e., class size, student
grouping, time allocations, etc.) (Achilles, 1996; Johnson, 1998). These findings come as no surprise to those involved in education. Research supports what parents already know: a quality teacher is critical to a child’s overall success (King, 2003; Rothman, 2004). Peterson (2002) concludes, “No single school-district activity beyond the moment-to-moment care of young people is more important than the hiring of talented, accomplished, and effective teachers” (p. 32).

James Coleman (1966) conducted research that examined educational opportunity for all students. His results suggested that individual teachers did not have a great deal of impact on student achievement. He found that all of the variability in how students performed linked to their socioeconomic background. Coleman found that a teacher’s educational background and years of experience showed little relation to the achievement of the students. Researchers later found that Coleman’s methodology for his analysis was flawed. His work and data were only from the school level, and researchers understand how this can distort the data. Even though researchers later discredited his work (Bowles and Levin, 1968), his results brought attention to teacher quality. We do know that quality teachers do make a difference. Studies in the area of teacher quality have been value-added studies (Whitehurst, 2006). These studies examine student’s gains from year to year. For example, a teacher that raised her students’ performance scores from the 50th percentile to the 70th percentile is effective when compared to a teacher who raised her students’ scores from the 60th to the 65th percentile.

A study conducted in Dallas, Texas, by Jordan, Mendro, and Weeringhe (1997)
looked at the average reading scores of Dallas fourth graders. The study tracked student progress from fourth grade through sixth grade. The average reading scores of Dallas fourth graders assigned to three effective teachers in a row had the most significant results. Their scores rose from the 59th percentile in fourth grade to the 76th percentile by the conclusion of sixth grade. Students assigned to ineffective teachers during the same time fell from the 60th percentile to the 42nd percentile. The study found the difference directly linked to teacher quality.

Other studies have analyzed the effect of teacher quality on student performance. Scheerens and Bosker (1997) conducted a review of literature in the area of factors contributing to student achievement. They found that about 20% of the difference in student achievement related to the classroom teacher, 20% related to the school they attend, and 60% related to prior achievement and socioeconomic background. Cottrell (2000) pointed out the direct relationship between quality teaching and student achievement. He also identified a need for a process for selection. He felt it is important for administration and the interview team to take time and put in the work to ensure effective selection.

Most principals do not agree that “highly-qualified” equals highly effective. Although studies have been contradictory about which teacher attributes are most likely to produce classroom effectiveness, many studies correlate various teacher attributes and teacher qualities (Goldhaber, 2005). Examples of teacher quality are student performance; high performance ratings from supervisors; and comments from students, administrators, and other key players in the education field (Stronge, 2002). Other
researchers consider knowledge and skills to be the most influential factors determining teacher quality (Leigh & Mead, 2005).

The NCLB legislation is very narrow and focused on the idea that teacher effectiveness is measured by teacher credentials. Principals know that these credentials can be held by teachers who range from poor to great. Principals need to put highly-qualified teachers in their classes who believe in students and facilitate learning.

**The Characteristics of an Effective Teacher**

Teacher effectiveness is a measure of the academic growth that students demonstrate after being in teacher’s classroom for a school year (Sanders & Horn, 1998; Stronge, Tucker, & Ward, 2007). Research on specific behaviors, practices, and dispositions that an effective teacher demonstrates has grown. All sides agree that teachers need to know their content and pedagogy. The effective teacher needs to manage a classroom, plan lessons based on standards, assess student work with validity and reliability, work with diverse learners, and use technology effectively (Berry et al., 2004). Cruickshank and Haefele (2001) created categories or variations of what defines a good teacher. They used exemplars such as ideal, analytical, dutiful, competent, reflective, satisfying, diversity-responsive, and respected as identifiers for a good teacher.

There is no formula for being an effective teacher. Effective teachers possess a variety of qualities. Bohn, Roehrig, and Pressley (2004) cited the following differences between effective and ineffective teachers:

Effective teachers spent more time teaching and used more diverse instructional
techniques than do less effective teachers; effective teachers frequently use positive motivation; and thirdly, effective teachers’ classroom management was so good that there is rarely a disciplinary event and the class functions so smoothly that it is often difficult for an observer to know what the classroom management plan is. (p. 270)

Student test scores have become a commonly accepted standard for determining teacher effectiveness. There exists a definite link between teacher effectiveness and student achievement which is confirmed through the overall finding from value-added studies that effective teachers are essential for student success (Stronge, 2007, p. 170).

Assessing candidates for teaching positions requires reviewing qualifications, skills, and performance of effective teachers and it requires that principals and teachers interviewing/screening these individuals possess accurate first-hand knowledge of the qualifications, skills and performance required of effective teachers in their schools (Wise, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 1987, p. 57). Linda Darling-Hammond and Deborah Ball found that teacher knowledge and skills in content and pedagogy are directly related to teacher effectiveness:

Reviews of several hundred studies contradict the axiom that ‘anyone can teach’ and that “teachers are born and not made.” Teacher education matters a great deal and those with greater training are found to be more effective than those with less. (p.5)

Rice (2003) uncovered five broad categories of teacher attributes that appear to
contribute to teacher effectiveness: (1) experiences, (2) preparation programs and degrees, (3) type of certification, (4) coursework taken in preparation for the profession, and (5) teachers’ own test scores. Teacher effectiveness is also a measure of the academic growth that students demonstrate after being in a teacher’s classroom for a school year (Sanders & Horn, 1998; Stronge, Tucker, & Ward, 2007).

The traits and skills teachers have before they enter the classroom and how they teach once inside the classroom determine teacher effectiveness (Kaplan & Owings, 2002). Traits that are identifiable and measurable characterize quality teachers, and it is necessary to use these attributes in an evaluation for teacher candidates (Lunger, 2000). Harry and Rosemary Wong, in their book *How to be an Effective Teacher: The First Days of School* (1998) wrote, “The successful teacher must be proficient in the following three areas: (1) has positive expectations for student success, (2) is an extremely good classroom manager, and (3) knows how to design lessons for student mastery” (p. 9).

A principal knows that teachers are the key to student success; however, the challenge lies in identifying, recruiting, hiring, and retaining quality teachers (Haycock, 1998; Trimble, 2001). Student learning can improve if all the educational stakeholders agree as to what constitutes an effective teacher and then search for teacher candidates that match these qualities and behaviors (Stronge & Hindman, 2003).

**How do Principals Select Effective Teachers?**

Selecting quality teachers is a top priority and involves some of the most complex decisions that a school administrator must deal with (Hale, 1981; Peterson, 2003).
According to Bohlander & Snell (2004), the most crucial step in the selection process is making the decision on whom to hire. In the hiring process, principals must establish goals, identify constraints, evaluate candidates on the basis of speculations for the future, and make a selection of the candidate they feel best fits their school. Peterson (2003) listed steps that a valid teacher selection system should include:

- Include specific, clearly delineated selection criteria
- Fit into a larger conceptual scheme of good education
- Be agreed upon by local teachers, administrators, and personnel-selection researchers
- Not leave out important ideas about teaching and learning
- Attempt to predict good teaching
- Reliably document and use candidate information
- Compare favorably with other district hiring systems
- Preclude negative side effects, such as the exclusion of particular teaching styles (p. 6)

Wise, Darling-Hammond, and Berry (1987) describe low-cost data, medium-cost data, and high-cost data that can be used in the hiring process. Low-cost includes transcripts and resumes; medium-cost includes interviews and reference reviews; and high-cost includes teacher observation. Principals may not have the availability of time to observe candidates, so most use the interview and reference check as their decision making source.

The typical school system begins the selection process with the posting of a position
at a school. The personnel department screens applicants and the building-level administrator or team members interview applicants for specific positions. The school system relies on the principal’s impressions and professional judgment to select the best candidate for each position.

Principals need to incorporate what research says about the qualities of effective teachers into these two steps of the selection process to increase the likelihood of selecting the best teacher applicants (Stronge & Hindman, 2003). Selection of the best teacher from the candidate pool is the first step in ensuring an effective teacher in every classroom. Trimble (2001) stated that hiring superior teachers can be an extremely difficult task because of teacher shortages and the difficulty of teaching in today’s schools; but knowledgeable administrators know the significance of employing, nurturing, and keeping quality personnel and recognize the dangers of hiring the wrong candidate.

**Summary**

Extensive research is available on the issues of teacher quality and teacher selection, but little research is available on principal perceptions of teacher candidates in the teacher selection process. This study will provide a look at principal perceptions of candidates in the hiring process in a selected Garrett County school. It will specifically analyze the perceptions and insights of a principal as he/she makes recommendations to hire teachers. There is also a great deal of literature about the various hiring tools available to administrators when they are screening candidates (Connors et al., 2004; Liu, 2003; Peterson, 2002; Wise, Darling-Hammond, and Berry, 1987). There is also an
abundance of research on characteristics of quality teachers (King, 2003; Rothman, 2004; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Missing from the literature is a clear description of principal’s perceptions of teacher candidates and the tools they use to identify and recommend highly qualified, effective teachers.

One of the greatest challenges in the hiring process is locating and attracting qualified candidates (Rosse & Levin, 2003). Recruiting highly qualified teachers is problematic and becoming a key concern around the country (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). The factors that affect the perceptions of a principal and the procedures used as a principal makes hiring decisions would enhance the body of literature provided by previous studies of how to hire effective teachers. In this age of No Child Left Behind, a principal must be sure that the best practices to recommend the most effective candidates for hire are in place at their school. This study will enhance the knowledge of how the perceptions of the principal lead to the hiring of effective teachers.

The advent of No Child Left Behind has put responsibility upon the state, the school system, and the individual school to make sure they have “highly qualified” teachers to instruct their students. Maxwell (1998) described the leadership role in an effective manner when he commented on the law of magnetism, “Who you are is who you attract” (p.89), and it is the belief that one must spend the time and commitment to making the teacher selection process an important priority in any school district.

The goal of this research is to fill the gap in the literature by providing insight
into a principal’s perceptions of effective teachers and the procedures used to hire them. The challenge for principals is hiring teachers that match what they believe effective for their school. Principals are looking for teachers who are highly effective with students, match with their school culture, as well as, meet the highly-qualified licensure requirement. Chapter 2 has presented a review of selected literature and research focusing on teacher quality, teacher effectiveness, and the teacher selection process. Chapter 3 will contain the methodology to conduct this study.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore principals’ perceptions affecting the selection of teacher candidates. The school system chosen for the research is Garrett County School System. This chapter presents the research methodology and procedures used to conduct this study. The chapter will describe the process used in conducting the literature review, a description of the population in the study, and the methods used to collect and analyze the data.

Literature Review Process

This design of this study is to assess principal’s perceptions regarding (1) the importance of various criteria used in a teacher selection decision, (2) the importance and utilization of various procedures in the selection process. I conducted a review of literature and research related to procedures used and characteristics considered when selecting a teacher candidate. This review included books, research reports, professional periodicals, dissertations, and other related documents. Access to most of the research materials was through the library at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina. Information was from references cited in the literature review, which included Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest Digital Dissertations Database, Web of Science, Google, and selected organizational web pages.

Participant Selection

The design of this dissertation is as a case study of a school principal in the Garrett County School System. The school system was chosen after emailing and calling several
different superintendents in the general area of my home. These counties did not want to allow their principals to participate in the study because they were concerned about the extra time it would take the principal in an already busy time of year and were concerned about the effect the study may have on hiring decisions made by the principal. The county where I work could not be used because I am in daily contact with principals and this may influence the decision as to whom to hire. After I contacted the superintendents and did not receive any positive responses, I contacted my committee chair for advice. He gave me more school systems to email and put me in contact with one of his students who worked in a neighboring school district. This student contacted the superintendent directly and explained my study. The superintendent then gave permission for the study to take place in one of his schools. After receiving this permission, principals were contacted.

The principal chosen has a valid administrators’ license issued through the state of North Carolina. In order to receive this license, the principal completed an approved program in school administration at the master’s level or above. The principal must have also attained the required score on the School Leaders Licensure Assessment administered by the Educational Testing Service.

The principal was chosen to participate on the basis of two qualities: the principal’s tenure at the school is at least two years and the principal’s ability to successfully lead his/her school to make Average Yearly Progress for the 2008-2009 school year. These qualities were used in order to study a principal who is effective and is leading a school in which he/she has built the staff for a successful school. The school studied also attained Average Yearly
Progress in 2009-2010 and 2011-2012. The school did not make Average Yearly Progress in 2010-11 and the results for 2012-13 are not available yet.

**Design of the Study**

The problem this study addressed was to determine how a principal perceives personal, professional, and affective attributes of teacher candidates. This qualitative study was seeking to determine how a principal perceives and recommends for hire teachers seen as effective. My sent a letter to the principal chosen for this study explaining the study and requesting participation. Once the principal agreed, a phone call and an email followed the letter explaining the study and his/her role in the research.

This study investigated a principal’s perspectives of the importance of procedures, professional attributes, preferred personal traits, and qualifications of teacher candidates. I conducted this study through interviews of a school principal from a high performing school in Garrett County. A high performing school is a school meeting Average Yearly Progress during the 2008-2009 school year. This study examined the methods used to identify and recommend for hire teachers in each of the schools.

**Research Methodology**

I gathered information through a case study approach. Isaac and Michael (1995) state the purpose of case study research: “To study intensively the background, current status, and environmental interactions of a given social unit: an individual, group, institution, or
community” (p. 52). According to Merriam (1988), a case study is a detailed examination of one setting, or of a single subject, or a single depository of documents on one particular event. I chose a single case for this study. According to Creswell, “the study of more than one case dilutes the overall analysis; the more cases an individual studies, the less the depth of any single case” (Creswell, 2007).

Individual interviews with a school principal, observation of interviews of candidates, as well as the study of the documents used in the interviewing process were the basis for data collection. The interviews and observations allowed me to understand the perceptions and procedures the principal uses when selecting a teacher.

The use of a case study design strengthened the construct validity of the study (Yin, 2003). Construct validity “recognizes the constructs that exist rather than imposing theories/constructs on informants or the context” (Creswell, 2007). This is important because as Eisner (1991) stated, “We seek a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility that allows us to feel confident about our observations, interpretations, and conclusions” (p.110).

In order to observe the principal’s behaviors and body language, I used face-to-face interviews as a part of the study design. This process helped build a trusting relationship with the principal and improve the opportunity for collecting meaningful, truthful data. As Hatch (2002) states, “Qualitative interviews are special kinds of conversations or speech events that are used by researchers to explore informants’ experiences and interpretations. . .and to uncover the meaning structures that participants use to organize their experiences and make sense of their worlds. These meaning structures are often hidden from direct observation.”
I used a qualitative method to investigate the characteristics a principal in a high-performing school in a large district in the piedmont of North Carolina looks for in the hiring process. I conducted this study to obtain information regarding the principal’s perceptions regarding the teacher hiring process. The purpose of this study was to identify and gain an understanding of the perceptions of a school principal as he/she hires teachers for their school.

**Approach**

The overall research question lends itself to the case study approach because it allowed me to study the specific actions within and across the context of the teaching and learning environment. A case study is a comprehensive research strategy that allows for the deliberate study of contextual conditions (Yin, 1994). The focus of this study was to investigate a school principal’s perspectives of the teacher characteristics that support student success. The use of this research method allowed me to examine administrator perspectives in the hiring process. A variety of methods was used in this research, including interviews, conversations, observations, notes, and analysis of personal documents used in the hiring process. I created a good level of rapport with the principal being studied to gain depth of information.

Phenomenological methods were used to uncover the experiences and perceptions the principal brings with him or her when making hiring decisions. According to the phenomenological approach, I looked for key words when observing interactions and during
interviews of the participant. Descriptive field notes were taken immediately after the interviews. A description of the setting for the interview and the conversations held were described in detail.

This study employed the following sources of data: school site observations, semi-structured interviews with principal, observation of interviews, and a review of documents used in the hiring process.

**Site Selection and Sample**

This study took place in a large school district in the piedmont of North Carolina. I used this site due to its reputation for effective schools. Only one principal’s perspective was included in the research for this study. I chose from a group of principals in a neighboring school system. The particular principal chosen had the ability to identify highly effective teaching traits and to select highly effective teachers as evidenced by her ability to lead the school to achieve Average Yearly Progress. The anticipated result of the interviews with this principal, observation of their interviews and study of their hiring documents brought insight into their teacher selection methods.

I chose to study one principal within the Garrett County School System. I gathered rich, thick descriptions from the principal and immersed myself in the research. The interview with the principal allowed me to gain understanding of the teacher selection process at their school and to learn how she recognizes effective teachers. The observation of interviews conducted by the principal allowed me to see the interviewing process first
hand. I also examined documents used in the interviewing process. The years of experience of the principal as well as the name of the school in the study were not disclosed.

**Data Collection**

I acquired permission from Garrett County School System to conduct my study. I contacted several principals to ask permission for participation in the study. Once one of the principals’ responded, I then contacted the selected principal by letter or email to explain my study and ask permission to collect data and research their hiring practices. Once the principal agreed to participate, an appointment was set up to allow time to answer questions about the study. The participant received and signed Consent to Participate form at the time of the appointment. Interview questions were used in order to frame the conversations between researcher and participant. See Appendix A for the list of questions. The interviews employed semi-structured interview protocols. Open-ended and follow-up questions were used to encourage candid participant feedback and insight into the phenomenon studied. Pseudonyms protect the identity of the participant and the school sites.

The principal participated in two recorded interviews that I transcribed. Taped interviews and transcriptions are included in the data. See Appendices B and C for transcriptions. All tapes, transcriptions, notes, and school documents are located in a secured, locked cabinet located at my home. All electronic files are password protected on my computer. Detailed notes were taken during the observed interviews.

**Data Analysis**
The time for collecting the data for this study took place during a period of teacher hiring. The process was in conjunction with the teacher transfer and hiring window during the second semester of the school year. The collection of data and interviews were completed, transcribed, and analyzed. Collection and analysis of data occurred throughout the study.

Data analysis began by using the analytical technique open coding. In this process, I combed through the data and label the different concepts present. When coding was complete, I revisited the concepts and grouped them into higher order categories that represent phenomena. These subcategories supply the details about the phenomena: “Categories have analytic power because they have the potential to explain and predict” (Corbin & Strauss, 1998, p. 113).

Bracketing was used in this study so I could set aside any preconceived notions, beliefs and feelings and place my focus on the views of the principal. Husserl developed bracketing to bracket out the world as well as individual biases. Since I have participated in the hiring process in the past, I also bracketed my own personal experiences.

**Research Validity and Reliability**

Validity and reliability are important considerations in the research process. I achieved validity by using various methods of data collection. The methods included individual interviews with the principal, observations, and a review of hiring documents used at the school level. Member checking limited researcher bias. I asked the selected principal to read the research report to verify its accuracy. This technique is considered by Lincoln
and Guba (1985) to be “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314).

Stake goes on to say, “Participants should play a major role in directing as well as acting in case study research. They should be asked to examine rough drafts of researcher’s work and to provide alternative language, critical observations or interpretations” (Stake, 1995). Rich, thick description provided the detail to this study: “With such detailed description, the researcher enables readers to transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p.32). Triangulation ensured the data’s accuracy. The need for triangulation arises from the ethical need to confirm the validity of the processes (Stake, 1995).

I built reliability by using semi-structured interview protocols. Audio recorders ensured accurate transcription of the interview. As Creswell (2007) notes, “Reliability can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing a good-quality tape for recording and by transcribing the tape. Also, the tape recording was transcribed to indicate the trivial, but often crucial, pauses and overlaps” (p. 89). I sent a draft of the study findings to the principal participating in the study to ensure accuracy in interpretation.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of dissertation written and approved → IRB Approval by NC State University → School System Chosen → Permission acquired from Superintendent to conduct research → Principals asked to participate in research → Principal chosen
Figure 1

The Research Process
Subjectivity Statement

I, the researcher, am a senior administrator for elementary staffing in the Wake County Public School System. My experience as an administrator includes five years as an assistant principal at the high school level. My teaching experience includes 17 years teaching elementary school children. I am originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and attended the University of Pittsburgh where I earned my undergraduate degree. My undergraduate degree is in Elementary Education and I have spent much of my career in elementary schools. I also hold a Masters’ of School Administration and a six-year advanced degree in Educational Leadership and Administration from North Carolina State University. My other jobs include being a wife, a mother of two boys, and a graduate student. I am a fifty three year old woman and have been married for 32 years. I am currently working towards a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Administration.

Over the last six years, I have acquired a vast knowledge of the hiring practices used in Wake County. I have spent time interviewing potential teaching candidates, attending job fairs, reviewing files of applicants, and calling references to discuss applicant selections. I have learned that this process is subjective and costly when the incorrect candidate is chosen. The choice of the correct candidate affects the students as well as the school as a whole. I have spent many hours contemplating one candidate over another before making a final decision as to whom to hire. I have made a few mistakes, which have been costly to students, but have learned many lessons in hiring effective teachers.
Over the years, I have seen many different methods for hiring teachers. I have been involved in the hiring process in Wake County as a teacher, assistant principal, and a district administrator.

**Ethics**

Ethical considerations in this study include: protecting the identity of the principals, their schools, protecting the identity of the teacher candidates involved in this study, and collecting the information from the interviews as a researcher, not as a human resources administrator. “At this stage, we consciously consider ethical issues—seeking consent, avoiding the conundrum of deception, maintaining confidentiality, and protecting the anonymity of individuals with whom we speak” (Creswell, 2007). There must be “sensitivity to vulnerable populations, imbalanced power relations, and placing participants at risk (Hatch, 2002).

I work closely with many principals on a daily basis, so the perception of researcher bias will arise. I will be examining the perceptions of a principal in a neighboring school system with which I have not had any contact. I will keep detailed field notes and deliberately separate the description from interpretation of the events. Thus, researcher bias is not an issue.

**Conclusion**

In summary, my research was seeking to find the answer to the question: “What are the perceptions of school principals as to the personal qualities affecting the selection of teacher candidates?” A single case study design was used for this study. Data collection was
through interviews, observations and review of documents. The study continued based on the assumption that principals have perceptions affecting the choice of highly effective teachers.

**Limitations of the Study**

One of the limitations of this study is that it only surveyed one principal in one school system. I did not interview assistant principals or teachers for this study. I only interviewed a principal for this study because she wanted to talk with the person responsible for making the final decision in hiring teachers. I selected one school from the selected school system interview. The selection of the principal was based on the tenure of the principal at the school being at least two years, as well as, the school attaining Average Yearly Progress status for the 2008-2009 school year. The principal studied is currently leading a school which attained its growth targets in all areas. My goal was to have the principal studied leading a successful school by using effective hiring practices for their teachers.

**Summary**

This chapter began with a review of the purpose of the study and literature. Following the reviews, I detailed the study participants, study design, and research methodology. The next section explained the approach, site selection and sample for the study. Information related to the data collection and analysis was then provided. The final
section of this chapter discussed validity and reliability as well as the subjectivity statement, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine the procedures used and the perceptions of a principal as to the personal qualities and pedagogical qualifications affecting the selection of teacher candidates. I sought to understand the process a principal used in selecting a teacher defined the hiring practices. The study investigated the views of an elementary school principal and the hiring process, interviewing strategies, and the applicant qualities that were deemed most important.

Using qualitative research and semi-structured interviews (Patton, 1990; Seidman, 2006), I interviewed a principal to ascertain her perceptions on hiring with a focus on what teacher traits are most important to her; and how successful have the prioritizations of certification, personality, major, and experience been for her. The principal in this study was cooperative, forthright, and, at times, unflinchingly honest. This study sought to determine a North Carolina public school principal’s perceptions regarding teacher hiring practices during the interviewing and teacher selection process. One elementary school principal was purposefully selected to be studied and interviewed, and six of this principal’s interviews were observed during the study. The site of this single case study was a rural school system in Central North Carolina. The school studied was in the Piedmont of North Carolina in a small rural county.

The principal studied stated that she thought what exemplified an effective teacher was a teacher who “takes personal responsibility for student learning and has positive expectations for every learner.” She added, “probably a willingness to grow to be a lifelong
learner and willing to attend staff development.” She also thought an effective teacher is “a teacher willing to become better, moving from good to great is always good”.

The hiring process in the county being studied begins in mid-July with posting the positions to hire. The principal studied stated that before she can post for positions she has to wait for what the budget allows. The positions are allotted by her county office and then she is given a certain number of positions for her school. The principal went on to say, “in May, we have an allotment meeting where we get together with our superintendent and assistant superintendents and look at our allotments to tell what the projections are for the following year. By July, they give you the postings and that is when you can start interviewing. Nothing is done before the budget is released.” When she knows what the budget will be for the following year, she posts the positions.

After the positions are posted, the principal explained that she goes to “a website that we use with the state department where we can look at all the candidates that have licensure. So I start there and I look at candidates who have emailed me to ask about positions. I take that information and add them to the list. I also get candidates from word of mouth from other teachers. People will call and come by to bring their resumes.” “We do not do any pre-recruiting in this county. We don’t have a recruiting group that goes out. We do post positions on our website and we have done Exceptional Children’s positions in the newspaper.” She says she has had 20 candidates at a time apply for a position. She went on to say, “what we do is narrow in from the 20 and take the top 10 candidates. We look at
certifications and completion dates of coursework.” The principal then compares her list of interested candidates to those who are certified for the position.

The study addressed the following research questions:

1) What procedure does the principal utilize to choose which teacher candidate to interview?

2) What procedure does the principal utilize to conduct interviews of teacher candidates?

3) According to the principal, what professional attributes exemplify effective teachers?

4) According to the principal, what personal attributes exemplify effective teachers?

In order to answer the research questions, I collected data from principal interviews, information acquired through the observation of interviews, and analysis of the documents used in the hiring process.

**Data Collection Process**

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) discussed how qualitative research is best done in its natural setting. Creswell (2007) reported that qualitative research is all about learning about the issue from the participants in the natural setting. My goal was to interview an elementary school principal at his/her school and observe interviews conducted at the school by a team designated by the principal. In order to fulfill this task, I obtained one county’s permission prior to contacting possible principal participants to interview.

With the county’s permission, I contacted elementary school principals with teacher vacancies by email. The email explained the rationale behind the study, and asked for a
voluntary participant. Once participants responded, I began by choosing and gaining permission from the superintendent of schools to conduct principal interviews and to observe their interview process. This research was not conducted in the school system where I work so as to not be a conflict of interest. After contacting several school systems, I was granted permission to conduct my study.

Seidman (2006) discussed the selection of participants. He stated that “the major criterion for appropriateness is whether the subject of the study is central to the participant’s experience.” He also discussed the structure of in-depth interviewing. In-depth interviewing involves open-ended questions. I chose the participant based on whether he/she could provide sufficient details about the topic based upon his/her experience. The questions used were open-ended questions, allowing the principal to expound upon her experiences and allow for much further detail. Possible participants were recruited during the spring of 2012. I sent emails to several principals in the school system to ask if they would participate in the study. Two principals responded favorably. One of the schools was a fit with the requirements of the study but the other was not. One of the schools had not met Average Yearly Progress and did not qualify to participate in the study.

I then selected the school and chose one principal to interview. I then contacted both principals and thanked them for their interest. She then called the principal of the school which met the requirements and introduced herself to the principal and began setting up the interviews. The principal interviews were then set and I began asking the principal to let her know about her upcoming teacher interviews. The principal emailed me explaining that she
would not be ready for any interviews until the first of July. I contacted the principal during the last week of June. The principal then said that she would not be able to participate in the study because she was not going to be hiring any additional teachers for the current school year. I went on to look again for another principal to participate. She sent out another round of emails, but did not receive any positive responses from principals. Principals did not want to participate for various reasons. A few responded that they did not have the time to participate. One said that she did not feel that the candidates would want an observer at their interview, and one principal said that she wasn’t sure who would be on her hiring team and wouldn’t be able to speak for them.

After these negative responses, I began contacting school superintendents of other school systems to ask for permission to participate. Several contacts were made at school systems but responses were limited and no final decision was made in regards to participation. It wasn’t until November of 2012 that I heard back from the principal at the original school letting her know she could again participate in the study. The principal had a growth in population at her school, received a resignation from a teacher, and needed to fill some positions. I immediately set up an appointment and asked for a list of all interviewees for the various positions she was posting for hire.

The data collection was initiated after the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of North Carolina State University granted research approval. North Carolina State University’s approval number for the study was 1946. Ethical procedures as established by North Carolina State University’s research protocol were followed.
The interviews with the principal were then scheduled and conducted. These interviews with the principal were recorded and transcribed and an analysis of the transcription was conducted. Selected quotes were used to illustrate the principal’s feelings and perceptions.

Calls and emails were sent to the teacher candidates listed by the principal, to gain permission to observe their interviews. I met with each candidate and explained the study and the IRB process and had each sign the IRB document. Field notes were taken during the observations of interviews I was permitted to attend and hiring documents were collected for analysis. Observations of interviews took place after the interviewees agreed to be part of the study and granted permission for me to observe. I relied on a post-interview reflection which was completed immediately after each interview observed.

Once all data was collected and analyzed, a picture of how the principal conducted the teacher selection process and what criteria the principal used to make teacher selections emerged.

**Researcher’s Perceptions**

My perspective as a high school assistant principal as well as a human resources administrator made the hiring decisions of the principal real. This perspective was necessary and helped me understand and explain this role. I shared some of the same concerns as the principal when approving teachers for positions at the school. The principal in this study reminded me of how she shares some of the same concerns and challenges when making
hiring decisions. I continue to seek out strategies which help choose the best candidate for a teaching position.

Background

School Information

The principal chosen for the study was a principal at a small school in the piedmont of North Carolina. The school was located in a primarily rural area. It is located in a county with a total of 492 square miles and a population of approximately 60,000 with approximately 123 people per square mile. This county school system sits next to a county with 857 square miles and a population of 900,993 with approximately 1000 people per square mile.

The school had 28 full time classroom teachers and a student to teacher ratio of 15 to 1. The school studied was 52% white, 36% black, 11% Hispanic and .5% Asian. The school had a free and reduced lunch percentage of 49%. In comparing this school with schools in the neighboring district, there is a much higher free and reduced lunch percentage. There are a few small industries in the county studied and some farming, but many of the population in the county work in the adjoining county or in the research center close by. The school studied included a higher needs population than its neighboring area.

The school administrative office staff included one principal, one assistant principal and one school secretary. The principal interviewed was the first and only principal of the school studied.
The county studied consists of five municipalities. The largest of these contains 3700 residents. The others contain 2012, 1250, 425 and 89 residents respectively. This county is mostly rural with most of its population making a living through agriculture and tobacco. There are a few light industries and small businesses, but most of the income is gained through farming. The pay in this county was less than its neighboring large county. The neighboring large county was able to pay teachers a larger supplement to their pay based upon larger tax revenue. Candidates for teaching positions generally accepted positions in the neighboring county before looking for positions in this county. The top candidates were hired by the neighboring county and this county had to choose from the best of what was left. The school made their AYP goal. The principal in this study had to spend more time looking for qualified, effective teachers because many of the top candidates had already been offered positions.

Principal Information

The demographics of the principal who granted permission to be part of the study were as follows:

The principal studied was an African American woman, holding a master’s degree, with 10 years’ experience as a principal, 3 years as an assistant principal and 8 years’ experience as a teacher. The principal has spent her entire tenure with the same county. She taught at another school in the county for ten years and worked as an assistant principal for three years before becoming principal and this school. She received her master’s degree in Educational Leadership from North Carolina State University and is currently in their
doctoral program. The principal began in her role as principal in 2004, was chosen to open a new school in 2008 and lead her new school to meet Average Yearly Progress for the 2008-2009 school year. The principal also led her school to receive several national awards for paving the way to 21st Century Learning initiatives. Her goal is to “put children first.” She wants to “hire teachers who will focus on providing rigorous instruction, make learning relevant and meaningful and build positive relationships.” The principal had a positive attitude and high expectations for her teachers and students. The community liked the school and gave it high marks on local and state surveys. They believe that the principal was doing a good job and feel that their children were learning and were safe at the school.

Interviewer Demographics

The demographics of the interviewers were as follows: The team of interviewers was made up of one Caucasian teacher, one African American assistant principal, one African American principal and one Caucasian assistant principal intern. The teacher was in her twenties; the other three interviewers were in their late thirties. The teacher in the team of interviewers was the grade level chairperson. She was in her late twenties and she taught with the school system for approximately five years. She was leaving the system to move out of state with her husband. She said that she wanted to be sure that her students were in good hands when she left.

The assistant principal is a middle aged African American woman who also participated in the interview. She became the assistant principal at the school in July of 2012. She transferred to this school from another school in the system. She worked with the
principal and the administrative intern to develop the list of interview questions. The principal has been at the school since it opened. She worked with the assistant principal and administrative intern to develop the interview questions.

The assistant principal intern is currently a student at a nearby university completing her internship to receive her principal’s license. She is in her thirties and has a lot of energy. She has been working at the school this year shadowing the principal. She also worked on the interview questions with the principal and the assistant principal.

**Interviewee Demographics**

The demographics of the interviewees were as follows: The demographics of the interviewees showed some commonalities. Five of the six interviewees were women and four of the five were in their early to mid-thirties and all had taught previously. One interviewee was in her early thirties and this would be her first full time teaching assignment. Only one of the interviewees was male. He also had previous teaching experience. The interviewees varied in race and years of experience teaching. The candidates interviewed consisted of two Caucasians and four African Americans. Pseudonyms were given to each participant to preserve their anonymity and to personalize the individuals beyond sterile descriptions such as Interviewee 1.

**Data Collection**

I chose to use a structured open-ended protocol for the interviews with the principal. This was chosen because in qualitative program evaluation, open-ended responses to questions provide the evaluator with quotations, which are the main source of raw data.
Patton states that “we interview to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind, to gather their stories” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). Patton (2002) discussed the three types of formats for interviewing: (a) the informal conversation, (b) the interview guide, and (c) the structured open-ended interview. The structured open-ended interview is the most structured of all the formats. Patton goes on to say, “The task for the qualitative evaluator is to provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their point of view” (p. 341). I used this type of interview protocol and listed all the questions asked of the principal.

When writing the questions, I was reminded that Patton (2002) discussed how the questions need to be sequenced in the structured format. He recommended “ordering the questions to make the flow of the interview run smoothly;” Patton also discussed how to write good questions, saying, “Good questions need to be open-ended, neutral, singular, and clear. Open-ended questions give the participant a chance to structure his/her own response” (p. 342). He also made the following suggestions regarding interview questions:

Yes or no questions should be used as little as possible. Multiple questions should not be asked at the same time because the participant might not answer both and that would provide the researcher with less manageable data. Whenever possible, the researcher should try to use appropriate language with which the participants are familiar. (p. 343)

I also reviewed Seidman’s (2006) recommendations on developing the interview questions: that researchers avoid leading questions and that they ask participants more open-ended
questions. When developing the interview questions to be asked of the principal, I was careful to take Seidman’s advice.

When I reviewed the questions being asked of the interviewees, it appeared that the questions were not leading questions, but the questions did lean towards candidates who taught in the district. Questions asked about specific curriculum used in their school indicated that the committee was looking for someone with previous experience in their district.

Patton (2002) discussed the mechanics of gathering data during an interview. Patton discussed how the questions need to be sequenced in the structured format. He recommended ordering the questions to make the flow of the interview run smoothly. He also discussed how to write good questions. Good questions need to be “open-ended, neutral, singular, and clear.” Open-ended questions give the participant a chance to structure his/her own response. Dichotomous or yes/no questions should be used as little as possible. Multiple questions should not be asked at the same time because the participant might not answer both and that would provide the researcher with less manageable data.

Patton (2002) also states that the best and most common way to gather the data is by using a recorder. Recorders allow the researcher to capture the words exactly as stated and spend more time focusing on the participant and his/her surroundings. The digital recorder has the obvious advantage of preserving the entire verbal part of the interview for later analysis. Although some interviewees may be nervous to talk while being recorded, this usually disappears in a short time. Patton also recommended that the researcher take notes.
The notes help the researcher to pace the interview. In this study, I used a voice recorder to tape the interviews as well as a notepad to record specific notes in her interview with the principal. Tapes were also used to transcribe the interview. These transcriptions helped me draw conclusions about the interview process and how the committee chose the candidate to recommend for hire.

I began the study with an interview of the principal. The first interview was conducted on October 29, 2012, at 9:00 a.m. in the principal’s office. The office was bright and sunny and the principal’s attitude was excellent. There were various pictures on the walls inside and outside of the office. One picture showed the principal reading to a group of students. The pictures gave the office an inviting and comfortable feeling. The principal showed confidence and enthusiasm about her school. She smiled as she spoke and nodded her head to emphasize key points in the conversation.

I used a standard open-ended interview format. The questions were developed based on the statement of the problem, the overarching questions and the review of literature. The interview protocol for the first interview consisted of 44 questions. The first interview took approximately 30 minutes and was recorded. The second interview consisted of 12 follow-up questions and lasted approximately 20 minutes and was recorded as well. I took notes as well as taped both interviews.

I contacted the candidates to be observed one week prior to their interviews. They were each asked for permission to observe their interview with the principal and the interviewing team. An email address for each was obtained and the permission to participate
and the IRB forms were sent to each. I also met briefly with each candidate who agreed to the observation to answer any questions and to sign the IRB form. After receiving permission to attend six of the interviews being conducted, I spent the morning on October 29th as well as the mornings of October 30th, November 9th, and November 10th observing interviews with perspective candidates. An interview with the principal was conducted as well as three interviews of teachers were observed on October 29th. Two interviews were observed on October 30th. Three interviews were observed on November 9th and one interview was observed on November 10th.

I did not take notes during the observations of interviews but did collect the hiring documents and reviewed the resume of each candidate. I made field notes of key points discussed immediately after each interview. In addition to these documents, I asked for a copy of the documents used in the selection and hiring process. The interview transcriptions, field notes and hiring process documents were used to triangulate the data. The triangulation was used to strengthen the results of the data collected. The second interview of the principal took place on November 29th at 10:00 a.m.

Interviews took place in a small conference room which was friendly and inviting. It was in a more intimate setting than a large conference room. The room contained one large table with 6 chairs and a bookshelf. It was more inviting for a small group and less intimidating for the candidate. The list of questions asked of each candidate is included in Appendix C. All interviewees brought a resume with them for the review of the team. All interviewees also had the state application as well as the three references on file at the
Central Administration Office for the school system. All candidates answered the questions asked in a thoughtful manner. Candidates appeared to have difficulty when asked to name two areas of weakness that they are working to improve. The candidates easily came up with one rehearsed weakness but had difficulty naming a second. The candidates were prepared to answer the usual interview question discussing one weakness, but were not prepared and had to think about a second weakness. Each interviewer had a copy of the questions and was told which questions to ask before the interviewee arrived. The same questions were asked of each interviewee and each interviewer took notes.

Upon review of the hiring documents, I noted that there was a documented process used by the county to recommend a candidate for hire. This process began with the posting of available positions, the availability for principals to view applicants’ files, an interview record form to be completed for each applicant, an employment recommendation checklist and ended with the submission by the principal of the Human Resources Payroll Action Form to the Human Resources office.

The second interview with the principal was conducted on November 29th at 10 A:00 a.m. This interview was conducted by telephone conference, was recorded, and transcribed. During this interview, there was a discussion of the decisions made as to who was recommended to hire for the second grade position.

Themes

With the many variables that are part of the hiring process, principals are tasked with narrowing their searches from the many applicants they receive. How do they go about
making these choices? What qualities does an elementary school principal put at the top of his/her list? The answers to these questions emerged as themes through the data analysis of the interviews of the principal and the observation of their interviews with candidates.

**It’s All about the People**

When discussing the role this principal took in the hiring process, an emergent theme was the bottom line requirement to hire the best candidate. Hiring the best applicant for the position is the most important role the principal takes to affect student achievement. The principal felt it was her utmost responsibility to find the most qualified teachers for her vacancies. The principal felt that many principals see their role as a visionary or overseer of the hiring process, the principal interviewed wanted to have a hands-on approach to hiring her teachers. She felt it was her most important responsibility as a building principal to hire more than just a qualified teacher. She needed to hire a teacher that would fill a niche in terms of talent, personality, teaching style, and philosophy. The principal alluded to Jim Collins’s (2001) *Good to Great* metaphor of getting the right people on the bus and then in the right seats on the bus. Basically, the principal expressed the need to hire the teacher who would be the best fit for her school.

**Quality and Qualified First**

Since the adoption of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, teachers must be highly qualified in the area in which they teach. Licensure of the candidate being interviewed and possibly hired must be checked to be sure of the candidate’s area of licensure and to check if the license is valid and not expired. The principal in this study carefully checked the
licensure of the candidates before interviewing. She may interview and recommend a teacher who just finished his/her teaching credential, but only if the applicant had a license pending approval with the state department of public instruction.

The balance of genders also plays a factor in the interviewing of teachers. Teaching has a long history of being a female-dominated profession, and the number of male candidates has been consistently low. The principal studied wanted greater gender equity in her school, but she felt that she must be consistent and hire the most qualified teacher instead of merely seeking to hire a male teacher. A male teacher was interviewed and I did observe the interview of the male candidate.

The balance of color in the school was also a theme that played a factor in the interview process. Again, the principal wanted to hire the most competent candidate above all else for the position at her school. The school district studied promotes diversity within its teaching ranks. Four of the six interviews observed were of African American candidates. The principal wanted her teaching staff to mimic the school population at her school so that all the children in the school would have appropriate role models. Again, the principal was adamant that she wanted the best candidate in the position without regard to race.

**Character, Competence and Chemistry**

With the many qualities of teachers to consider when deciding who to hire, the principal interviewed wanted the whole package. She wanted a teacher who had high character, the ability to effectively teach students, and a fit with the school’s needs, culture
and climate. The principal wanted an applicant who would positively contribute and be able to weave him/herself into the fabric of the school. As Handler (2006) states, “The idea of ensuring a good fit between a candidate and a job or organization is pretty much the main idea of the hiring process” (p.1). The principal ultimately wanted to hire teachers with commitment, confidence, integrity, love of kids and overall aptitude for teaching.

**Interview Observations**

I was given the list of all candidates being considered for the positions. I asked that the school not include names of candidates who had a connection to her county. The school gave me the names of ten applicants scheduled for an interview for an upcoming position at the school. Each of the ten applicants was contacted by telephone by me to ask for permission to observe their interview. Six of the interviewees answered favorably to the request that I observe his/her interview. After talking with each of the interviewees and discussing the study, the six interviewees were promptly sent the Internal Review Board, Informed Consent Form by way of an email attachment. I also met with each applicant prior to their interview to answer any questions and have the form signed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Interviewee</th>
<th>Does the Candidate have Experience with the County</th>
<th>Current Position(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Yes, worked in high school 5</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Years Ago</td>
<td>Number of Years Ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>50 years ago</td>
<td>Yes, previous teacher assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Interim 3rd grade teacher in a neighboring county</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Sub and long term sub in county and neighboring county</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Substitute teacher in county</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Long term sub in a middle school in county</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I assigned each of the interviewees a pseudonym to protect their anonymity and each is identified by that name in the previous table and the section which follows.

Mary

Mary was the first interviewee she was a white female in her 30’s. It was clear from her body language that she was nervous in the interview. She came to the interview prepared with copies of her resume. Mary explained that her references were on file with the county and that she had completed her application with the state. She said that she had a valid teaching license in elementary education. Mary answered the questions with only a few words and did not elaborate much. She taught previously in the county but had been out of
the profession raising children for the past five years. Mary’s experience was mostly at the high school level, although she did have some experience substitute teaching at the elementary level. She wanted to return to work now that her child was starting school. It was clear that she had not kept up with programs currently being used in the elementary. Mary said that she was very familiar with the neighborhood near the school and was a member of the community. She was interested in teaching at the school because she felt that this was an excellent school and wanted to contribute to her community. She did not go into much detail about any of her experiences in the classroom. When asked about some of the programs used in the school, she was not familiar either Reading Street or Envision Math both which were being used as instructional programs.

The panel of interviewers appeared very professional and it did not appear that the panel was developing any connection with the candidate. The interview was businesslike and did not last very long. Panel members took notes and did not make much eye contact with the interviewee. The interview was completed in approximately 20 minutes. At the end of the interview, Mary did not have any questions for the panel.

Jane

The second interview was with a black female in her early 30’s named Jane. She came to the interview with two copies of her resume, had completed her application, qualified for a North Carolina teaching license and had her references on file with the school system. The candidate appeared calm and confident. She passed the two resumes to the members of the team to share. Jane knew a few members of the interview team and had
worked directly with one of them. This candidate was a previous teacher assistant at the school. Jane had left the school to complete her bachelor’s degree and her student teaching. She wanted to return to the school in a teacher role. She had experience as a teacher assistant with kindergarten classes. Jane was familiar with the instructional programs used in the school, but had not used them herself. The school where she student taught used similar programs and she explained her experience with them. She discussed her experience and her resume with pride and confidence. She stated that she feels the connections teachers develop with their students and parents makes a teacher more effective. Jane felt that she knew about the needs of the students at the school because of her previous experience at the school. She already knew many of the parents and students at the school and felt that she would be a good fit to meet the needs of the students. She would not hesitate to contact parents for support or assistance. She felt connected with the community and felt that if she reached out to them, she would have their strong support. She did not answer the question about her weaknesses fully. She stated that working too hard was her weakness, and did not offer a second weakness in her answer. She went on to talk about how she had experience with special needs students and how she would meet their needs. Jane explained that she was confident that she would be able to meet the needs of all the students in the class. Jane asked a few questions at the end of the interview in regards to the principal’s timeframe and hiring process.

The interview panel appeared to like the candidate and had good experiences with her in the past as a teacher assistant. They caught up with her briefly at the end of the interview.
and asked about her family. The panel appeared comfortable with the candidate and there was a positive feeling about the candidate. This interview was completed in approximately 45 minutes.

David

David was the third interviewee and was a white male in his early 30’s. He came to the interview with copies of his resume for each member of the panel, had a valid North Carolina teaching license in elementary education, had his three references on file, and had completed all paperwork and requirements through the county’s central office. David was currently teaching in a school in a nearby county. He was working as a long term substitute in a third grade classroom. His current assignment was going to end very soon, and he was looking for a more permanent position. David appeared confident and did not appear nervous during the interview. He had not taught in the county and did not appear familiar with either of the instructional programs mentioned. He discussed the type of reading and math instruction he was currently using in his classroom. David’s answers to the questions were based on his current experience in his third grade classroom. David explained that he did not have as much contact with the parents as he would like because he was currently filling in for a teacher out on maternity leave. He went on to say that he would contact parents of the students in his own classroom. He felt that he was an effective teacher and the students in his charge were learning and achieving. He did not elaborate on many of the questions asked and had a difficult time coming up with two weaknesses. The only weakness he mentioned was the amount of time he was spending trying to meet the needs of all his
students. He said that he was staying late at work in order to plan lessons to help all of his students achieve. David discussed his work with special needs students and said that he enjoyed seeing them grow and learn. He did not feel that he had any problems with discipline in his classroom, and did not feel that he would need to send students to the office for discipline. He did not ask any questions at the end of the interview.

It appeared that the team liked this candidate and appeared excited about the possibility of having a male teacher in their school. This interview was complete in approximately 35 minutes.

Susan

Susan was the fourth interviewee and was a black female in her thirties. She had an application on file, had a valid North Carolina teachers’ license and had her three references on file as well. Susan was currently substitute teaching in the school system and had recently completed a long term substitute assignment at the school and another at a school in a neighboring county. Her teaching license was valid for elementary education and reading. She had finished her reading certification the previous year. The candidate appeared confident during the interview and was able to answer all the questions asked by the panel with ease. She recently decided to apply for full time teaching and was ready for a full time assignment. She was familiar with the math and reading programs used in the school and had used them when she filled in for a teacher out on leave. Susan was familiar with the community and it was apparent that she connected with the teachers. She was comfortable with the people on the hiring panel but remained professional and kept her comments strictly
about the second grade position. She was aware of the discipline policies at the school and agreed with them. She felt that she was an effective teacher and would be a valuable asset to the school. Susan expanded on the questions asked and highlighted her personal experiences and connections she made with parents at the school. Susan saw herself as an effective teacher who meets the needs of all her students. She prided herself in building positive relationships with students, parents and other teachers. Susan said that the time she spent completing her reading certification helped her see how to meet the needs of regular as well as special education students. She felt that she could work with special needs students and would be glad to study and meet the needs of their Individual Education Plans. Susan felt that her weakness was not having as much experience as some of the other teachers of her same age. She spent the time after graduation traveling to different parts of the country with her husband for his job. She did not have the opportunity to stay in one place to begin her career. Now that her husband was settled in a job nearby, she was ready to start her career in this county. She wanted to stay close to home and was hoping to stay put for a long time. Her interview lasted approximately 30 minutes.

**Carolyn**

The fifth interviewee, Carolyn, was a black female in her thirties. She was currently a stay at home mother and substitute teacher who wanted to become a full time teacher. Carolyn had copies of her resume to distribute to the group, had a valid North Carolina teaching license, had her references on file at the central office and completed her teacher application. Carolyn appeared nervous but was well prepared for the interview. She
answered the questions completely and it appeared she was very well read in educational practices and methods. She used what she knew from reading and studying to answer the questions about instructional practices. She did not have much experience with special programs students, but knew about the processes involved in Individual Education Plans. Carolyn felt that her weakness was the lack of full time teaching experience. She also felt that her strength was her ability to learn and read literature to build on her classroom experiences. Her teaching experience was limited to the substitute teaching she had done during the past few years. Carolyn was moving to an area near the school and was excited to teach in a school near her home. She explained that she had good relationships with the members of the community and their children. At the completion of the interview, Carolyn asked what the timeframe for hiring would look like. She also wanted to know if there would be any second interviews for the position. The principal explained that she should have a decision in approximately one week. Carolyn’s interview lasted 20 minutes.

Dorothy

Dorothy was the sixth interviewee and was a black female in her early 30’s. She came to the interview with a portfolio of her work, copies of her resume, and a notebook. Dorothy was currently working as a long term substitute. She was teaching sixth grade math and science in a middle school in the same county as the school. Dorothy had all her information on file with the county and had a valid teaching license for elementary education as well as middle school math. She did not have any lower elementary school experience, but had worked with sixth grade students at the middle school and was aware of the reading
and math programs used in the elementary school. Dorothy had worked with special programs students in her current classroom and understood the use of their Individual Education Plans. She was confident and felt that she could work with and meet the needs of the second grade students as well as the special programs students in the class. She explained that she had elementary aged children at home and was familiar with the work they were doing at school. Dorothy was not familiar with the curriculum for second grade, but would spend the time to learn. She answered all the questions during the interview with short, to the point answers. She was confident that she could learn the curriculum, become up to date on current elementary reading and math instructional practices, and become familiar with the Common Core Standards for grade two. Dorothy wanted to move to elementary school to work with younger students in a self-contained classroom setting. She said that she was looking forward to working with the same students throughout the school day instead of five different classes of students. She did not go into much detail or use personal experiences to support her answers. Dorothy was familiar with the discipline policy at the school and she explained that one of her strengths was to develop good relationships with her students and their parents. She didn’t have any questions to ask of the committee at the conclusion of her interview. She thanked the committee and told them she looked forward to hearing from them about the position. The interview lasted approximately 20 minutes.
Table 2

*Candidates Interviewed and Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Education/Cert.</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Notable Information</th>
<th>Hired or Not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>BS, Elementary Ed.</td>
<td>2nd grade teacher</td>
<td>She said that she lives in the area, is familiar with the school and wants to contribute to the community. She didn’t ask any questions</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>BS, Elementary Ed.</td>
<td>2nd grade teacher</td>
<td>She said she have previous experience at the school and felt that she would have strong support of parents. She asked about the timeline of hiring.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>BS, Elementary Ed.</td>
<td>2nd grade teacher</td>
<td>He said his weakness is that he stays too late at work in order to plan lessons to help all students achieve. He stated this one weakness and asked no questions.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>BS, Elem. Ed &amp; Reading</td>
<td>2nd grade teacher</td>
<td>She said she was familiar with the programs at the school, had reading certification, was familiar with the community and appeared comfortable with the committee. She asked no questions.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn</td>
<td>BS, Elementary Ed.</td>
<td>2nd grade teacher</td>
<td>She knew about the programs mentioned but only substitute experience with them. She asked about the</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>BS, Elementary Ed.</td>
<td>2nd grade teacher</td>
<td>hiring timeframe.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>She had not taught lower elementary school but said she would be able to learn the curriculum. She wanted to have a one group of students all day. She didn’t ask any questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Perceptions of the Principal**

The principal studied found believes that hiring is not an exact science and no one process is perfect. During the interview process, it became apparent that she was looking for teachers with a connection to the community. These connections may include living near her school, substitute teaching in her school, or student teaching in her school. She felt that teachers who had personal connections to the school would more likely stay and build a career there. Living and working in the school system with which he/she are familiar and working with people with whom they have personal relationships makes these teachers feel more connected to the school and to the community. She felt that these teachers have the most desire to give back to their community and have the most understanding and love for the students. The principal knew that credentials, content knowledge and education are important, and she stated that “the best way to ensure the hiring of good people is really knowing them, not just what they are on paper or in a short interview.”

As far as her yearly hiring process, the principal said that she has not had much trouble filling open positions. Her school is attractive to candidates because it is near a large school system with an excellent reputation. She said, “I didn’t have any problems filling vacancies
this year, but some in the past have been exceptional children positions.” She went on to say, “a lot of the good candidates are not certified in the area and with the highly qualified requirement; they must be certified in order to teach specific exceptional children classes”.

She went on to say that some years she has trouble filling positions because “we are sitting right beside a large county that is willing to give them stipends and willing to give them signing bonuses, and we don’t have those things. That does make a difference, money usually talks.”

Table 3

*Principal’s Hiring Sequence Checklist*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequence Number</th>
<th>TASK / ACTIVITY SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>Completed (✓)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Receive a Position Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Send a Posting to HR for the position to be posted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Receive resumes and sort through and look for “highly qualified” and “best fit”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Choose candidates to be interviewed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Select Interview Committee (Committee)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Meet with Committee to develop interview questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Call candidates selected in line 4 to set up interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Conduct interviews using the Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Committee discusses and ranks candidates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Committee makes recommendation to principal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Principal reviews recommendations and makes final decision as to whom to recommend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Principal sends recommendation to Human Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Principal notified by Human Resources whether or not candidates have been approved for hire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What procedures does the principal utilize to choose which teacher candidate to interview?

Principal’s Candidate Selection

Establishing Criteria

The principal explained that she meets with her team of interviewers to discuss the criteria for hiring the teacher candidate. They review the list of interview questions and add or delete questions they feel are not applicable. She went on to explain that “they have a list of questions they use depending on the content and the grade level.”

Choice of Candidates to Interview

The principal studied receives names and resumes of candidates as a result of her posting, as well as, from recommendations she receives from other teachers in the school and resumes dropped off in the school office. She then reviews the qualifications and the applications of candidates she is interested in interviewing. She looks for candidates with whom she is familiar or whom she has received a referral. The principal at this school is constantly looking for possible teachers for her school. She then looks for names of those substitutes or student teachers to possibly interview.

The principal checks to be sure that each candidate has the appropriate licensure for the position by checking with her central office human resources department. She then compiles the list of certified, interested candidates to prepare the interview schedule. 
Candidates are then called to check on interest in an interview and scheduled for an interview time.

**Selection of Interviewees**

The principal went on to say that once she has a list of candidates, “I go to central office to go into files of teachers and try to pull the files for the 10 good strong candidates. The principal also checks to see if the teacher is licensed to teach in the area of need.

**Interviews**

The interview process begins according to the principal “once we get those and narrow them in, we call them in for interviews. A lot of times people have already taken jobs so we use what we have left. This problem occurs because many times we are hiring late in the summer and many candidates have already taken positions elsewhere.”

**Information Gathered**

Interviews are then conducted. Once the interviews are completed, the principal contacts the former employer of the highest ranking candidates from the interviews conducted by the team. The principal then asks him/her a series of questions to understand the capabilities of the teacher at their current school or position. Often, some of the candidates are student teachers, so the principal must then rely on the impressions of the supervising teacher and university supervisor for information about their abilities as a teacher.

*What procedures does the principal utilize to conduct interviews of teacher candidates?*
Candidate Interview Selection Process

Interview Committee Selection

The principal at this school uses the team approach for all of her interviews. She includes the assistant principal, an assistant principal intern she currently has on staff, a teacher from the grade level, and herself. She meets with each of them prior to the interviews to discuss the questions to ask the candidates, and adds or deletes questions from the interview protocol. The team meets before the interviews to discuss the order of the questions and who will ask which questions.

Question Development

The principal explained that she “has a list of questions depending on the content and the grade level. We have questions that we use. We sit down as a team and develop them.” She went on to say that “we use different sets of questions depending on the position. All Teacher Assistants get the same questions regardless of what grade they are working with. The teacher ones are different depending on what they are teaching. For example, I have some grade levels that are departmentalized; fifth grade is departmentalized so if I was bringing in a science teacher versus a reading teacher, their questions would be strictly about science or reading.”

Table 4

Interview Committee for 2nd Grade Teacher
Interview

“Once we get them in, at the interview we ask if they have completed the state application which covers our county. We also ask if they have done their three references for our school system. If they’ve done that, we go through our interview questions. In the interview, what we do is tally and rank them. We bring our top candidates back in or sometimes we don’t have to; we are able to find the top candidate from our interview. Sometimes we have candidates that are real close, so we bring them back and let the teachers or another team of people look at the candidate. We then get the best candidate from that information.” The principal also stated that “the interviews last from 30 to 45 minutes depending on how detailed the candidate is with the questions. Some people can come quickly to the table, and some people elaborate on the questions. So it depends on the candidate.” See Appendix C for the list of interview questions used.

When asked what are the documents that she feels are most important for a candidate to bring to an interview, the principal explained “Most important would be their resume. A
lot of people use portfolios but I prefer to look at a digital story. It is quicker; I don’t have
time to go through looking at all those pages. I can just look at a digital story and tell
whether or not they have the instructional piece.”

**Reflections from Team**

The interviewers met after the interviews were completed to discuss the results from
their interview protocol and rank the candidates. They spent time comparing the notes they
had taken from the interviews and their impressions. A few of the interviewers were
interested in the male candidate because they currently have very few male teachers on their
staff. They also discussed whether or not he was the best candidate for the position.

**According to the principal, what professional attributes exemplify effective teachers?**

**Professional Attributes**

The principal stated that she thought what exemplified an effective teacher was a
teacher who “takes personal responsibility for student learning and has positive expectations
for every learner”. She added, “probably a willingness to grow to be a lifelong learner and
willing to attend staff development.” She also thought that an effective teacher is “a teacher
willing to become better, moving from good to great is always good.

When asked, “What are the qualities you look for when choosing which candidate to
hire,” the principal replied, “curriculum background, foundational skills, building
relationships with kids, parental involvement, and being able to connect with parents and the
community.” The principal was then asked what signals she is looking for to choose the
right candidate for her school. She responded:
Probably the relationship piece and it’s hard to see relationships in people. You see if the person is a team player and they can be in relationships. But it is what they say. If they are negative, or if they are positive, I know they can build relationships if they are positive.

She also looks for those who have the curriculum background, foundational skills, and relationship-building with kids. This agrees with what Linda Darling-Hammond and Deborah Ball stated that teacher knowledge and skills in content and pedagogy are directly related to teacher effectiveness.

The principal also sees parental involvement and being able to connect with the parents and the community as very important.

**According to the principal, what personal attributes exemplify effective teachers?**

**Personal Attributes**

The principal said this about candidates: “A teacher can come in here and say ‘I’ve done all this and I’ve arrived and I don’t have any leaning to do.’ Those kinds of teachers, I probably won’t recommend. You are leery of those, the ones that know everything.” The principal also described the key factor in her decision making as “making sure that they really fit into this culture. Because we are so connected to the community and building relationships is very important to us.” When asked what would help her do a better job hiring teachers, she responded, “Probably getting some prior knowledge on them. If there was a wiki page or they could email me and say this is the work I’ve done or I’m in this study group. Sometimes a resume doesn’t tell it all.” The principal did not believe that she
had the availability of time to observe candidates in their current schools, so she used the interview feedback and the reference check as the decision making source. The principal said that she was looking for teachers who had a love of children and who worked well with others. She felt that she could work with teachers who had high expectations of students and good people skills. She wanted to see a teacher passionate about the profession and a team player. It was expected that the teacher was highly-qualified. She wanted a teacher as who could manage a classroom, plan lessons based on standards, assess student work with validity and reliability, work with diverse learners, and use technology effectively (Berry et al., 2004).

**Post-Selection Process and Feedback**

When discussing the process after the hiring decision had been made, the principal detailed the deciding factors in choosing the candidate to hire. She said, “We were looking for someone who had experience with some of our programs, who had been trained with reading and who was familiar lower grade curriculum.” The hiring committee and principal agreed on one of the candidates to recommend for the position. They chose Susan because, according to the principal:

She has experience in the classroom. She has some upper grade experience as well as lower grades, like first grade. She has also done fourth grade. She will be the best candidate because she knows the curriculum. She’s not teaching full time now, but she’s worked on common core and goes to staff development on her own. We need
somebody that can come in and know the common core and curriculum. She has the background in reading, and certified as a reading specialist. That was a plus for us.

When asked about candidates not chosen for the position, and whether any of them might be used for another vacancy at the school, the principal replied:

We thought we had one, until we checked references. But that is okay because I don’t just want a warm body. I’m not going to settle. I want to find the best candidate. It is just very vital to be sure you follow the steps in hiring. You can get a lemon, or you can get a qualified person. So I take time and it is very important when I’m hiring that I consecrate that to make sure that I’m getting the best candidate because I am doing this for my students and they deserve the best and my families deserve the best. After hiring, I have got to live with them.

To guard against ethical violations, I received IRB approval from North Carolina State University. I also received consent from the school system studied, the principal studied, and the candidates observed. To increase the dependability of the study, I provided the principal with a list of all questions asked and a copy of the transcription of the principal interviews conducted. A list of the interview questions is included in Appendix C.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings from my face-to-face interviews with the principal, the observations of six interviews conducted by the principal and her team, and the study of the documents used in the hiring process.
As a result of the analysis of data, the apparent themes were (a) the process used in the hiring process; (b) the choosing of the candidates to interview; (c) the process of writing interview questions; (d) the actual interview process; (e) the process of choosing the candidate to hire; (f) the reasons for choosing a particular candidate over another.

The questions used in the interview process seemed to favor candidates who taught in this school system or a nearby school system. Questions asking about specific math and reading programs favored candidates who were currently teaching or taught in the school system previously. The candidates chosen to be interviewed were also those with a connection to the school. Four out of the six candidates interviewed had either completed a long term substitute assignment with the county, substituted frequently in the particular school, or had student taught in the school system.

Through the information gathered and analyzed it was determined that the principal studied had a specific process she used when identifying candidates to hire. She also had a process to interview and chose the candidate she felt was the best fit for the position. The final chapter provides a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, conclusions, and the recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is presented in six sections. The first section is a summary of the research. This summary includes an overview of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and method used to address the research questions. The next section discusses the major findings that were presented in Chapter 4: the selection process, principal interviews, and observations of interviews. The subsequent sections address the study limitations, implications and recommendations for future research. The last section provides a summary of the chapter.

Summary of the Research

This single-case study explored the perceptions of an elementary school principal affecting the selection of teacher candidates in a school system in the piedmont of North Carolina. The data collection technique consisted primarily of semi-structured interviews with the principal being studied and observation of interviews of perspective candidates. I also was allowed access to study the hiring documents used at the school and resumes of candidates being interviewed.

Researchers have argued that the numbers of teachers leaving the teaching profession as well as the burnout of existing teachers is a growing problem for principals. This problem creates a need to hire additional teachers each school year. School systems have policies and procedures in place to select and hire teachers. Local school boards place the responsibility
to hire teachers on the building level principal. Principals implement their hiring practices using their own procedures to select and hire teachers for their school.

**Links to the Literature**

The review of the literature was divided into six sections. In the first section I addressed the teacher selection process. In the teacher selection process, it was noted that schools and school systems across the country are using various methods of collecting resumes and screening candidates for their available positions. As mentioned in Chapter Two of this dissertation, the creation of a process where the top candidates rise to the top of the applicant pool is necessary. Trimble (2001) supported this when she stated that hiring superior teachers can be an extremely difficult task because of teacher shortages and the difficulty of teaching in today's schools; but knowledgeable administrators know the significance of employing nurturing and keeping quality personnel. The principal studied clearly understood the importance of the hiring process and devoted a lot of time deciding whom to interview, the questions to ask, the people to be part of the interviewing committee, the opinions of the interviewers and the recommendation made by the committee of the person to hire. The principal was aware of the attraction for a teacher to take a position at a school in the neighboring county where he/she could make more money.

The second section of the literature review discussed the characteristics of an effective principal. Fullen (2003) stated that, “we need principals who develop leadership in others, thereby strengthening school leadership beyond themselves” (p.41) The principal
studied included her assistant principals and a member of her teaching staff in the interview process; therefore, strengthening their role as leaders in her school. Each committee member had a voice in the hiring of teachers.

The third section covered the characteristics of a “highly qualified” teacher. In Chapter Two the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 defines a “highly qualified” teacher as one who holds bachelor’s degree, has obtained full state certification, and has demonstrated subject area competence. The state of North Carolina requires all teachers to obtain a teaching license in order to be considered highly qualified and eligible to teach in the state.

The fourth section discussed the reasons to hire a “highly qualified” teacher. As mentioned previously, most principals do not agree that “highly qualified” equals highly effective but they are required to hire a “highly qualified” teacher licensed by the state. The principal begins with those who are “highly qualified” and choose the teachers who they feel will have the greatest impact on student achievement. Whitehurst (2006) studied teacher quality and the gains students made from year to year with one teacher compared to another.

The fifth section described the characteristics of an effective teacher. According to Berry et al. (2004), the effective teacher needs to manage a classroom, plan lessons based on standards, assess student work with validity and reliability, work with diverse learners, and use technology effectively. It was also stated in Chapter Two that the traits and skills teachers have before they enter the classroom and how they teach inside the classroom determine effectiveness (Kaplan & Owings, 2002). The principal in this study clearly was looking for
these traits and skills and was finding these through the hiring of teachers with whom she knew were effective in her school previously.

The last section discussed how principals select effective teachers. This section referred to the statement that selecting the best teacher from the candidate pool is the first step to ensure an effective teacher in every classroom. Principals must establish goals, identify constraints, evaluate candidates on the basis of speculations for the future, make a selection of the candidate they feel best fits their school. The candidates chosen for an interview for the position at this school met the qualifications of the principal prior to being asked for an interview.

**Discussion**

I conducted two semi-structured interviews with an elementary school principal. The interview consisted of 44 open-ended questions. I ensured the accuracy of the data by digitally recording the interviews, taking field notes during the interviews, and collecting the documents used in the selecting and hiring of teachers.

I observed six interviews with candidates for hire at this school. After the observations, I recorded notes about the process for each candidate. After notes from each were analyzed, I found patterns and codes. These results were used to help describe the selection and hiring process of the selected principal.

The purpose of this study was to determine a school principal’s perceptions regarding personal qualities and pedagogical qualifications affecting teacher candidate selection. Specifically, the study aimed to identify criteria used to guide teacher selection, how the
criteria was developed and what were the perceptions of the principal in making the final decision of which teacher to hire. The research questions were:

1. What procedure did the principal use to choose which teacher candidates to interview?
2. What procedure did the principal use to conduct interviews of teacher candidates?
3. According to the principal, what professional attributes exemplify effective teachers?
4. According to the principal, what personal attributes exemplify effective teachers?
5. According to the principal, what is the key factor when deciding which candidate to hire?

The research was conducted using semi-structured interviews of an elementary school principal. An analysis of the hiring documents from the district as well as the school level was completed, and I observed six interviews of teacher candidates. The elementary school was chosen as a result of an email sent to the principals in the school system that agreed to allow me to conduct the study, the principal’s tenure at the school being at least two years, and the school’s ability to meet Average Yearly Progress during the 2008-2009 school year.

Interviews and observations were arranged with the principal during a period of teacher hiring. One of the principal interviews was conducted in the counselor’s office next to the principal’s office, the other by conference call. The observations of interviews took place in a small conference room adjacent to the main office. The interview process was designed to provide for consistent dialogue but allowed me to explore and discuss additional
information on teacher selection at the school and the principal’s role as it related to the selection process.

The interviews with the principal were recorded and responses transcribed for analysis. Copies of the transcriptions were emailed to the participant for review. Once the transcriptions were approved by the principal, a content analysis was performed related to the research questions.

**Discussion of Research Findings**

I found that the principal studied had a defined process in place in accordance with state and local guidelines. The state requires that the principal hire a teacher who meets the highly qualified criteria set out by the No Child Left Behind legislation. The county studied requires the principal to post available positions in her school on the school system’s website for ten days. The principal could then review the resumes received in response to the posting. After reviewing the resumes, the principal then visited her central office to review the credentials of the potential candidates and then decide whom to interview. She then chose and met with her interview team to compose questions to ask during the interview. The committee and the principal met to compose the questions to ask based on the position for which they are hiring. The committee chosen by the principal develops different questions to ask depending on the grade level, special education area or specialist area for which they are hiring.

After the committee is selected and the questions developed, the interviews are then scheduled and conducted. After each interview, the committee discussed the candidate. After
all interviews were conducted, the committee ranked the candidates and made a recommendation to the principal. The principal then made a recommendation to her human resources department for hire.

This principal indicated that her goal was to find a teacher who was highly qualified and effective. The principal also reported that the decision as to whom to hire was a highly decentralized process in her school district. Her school system allowed principals to make choices as to whom to hire as long as the candidates meet state licensure requirements.

The principal studied wanted to hire people who feel connected to her school. She felt that hiring a teacher who lives and works in the school community helps to develop a sense of connectedness with the students and a desire to give back to the school. She felt that these teachers genuinely care for her students and these are the teachers she would like to hire.

In research question one, I found that the principal had a set procedure she used to select candidates to interview. The principal received the names of possible candidates who responded through emails responding to posting of the position, reviewed the names of those interested with their files at her central office, and reviewed the licensure qualifications of those applicants.

I also found that the principal did not have formalized training in the interview process. The principal used a model she observed and used when she was an assistant principal at another school in the same district. She felt that the principal for whom she worked had a good system and she decided to use the same one for her school. This principal developed her own system that appeared to work when choosing a teacher to recommend for
a position. I came to the conclusion through this research, that it would be beneficial to this school system to offer their principals staff development in the hiring process. This should assure that all the principals are following the same guidelines and making the best hiring decisions for their schools.

In research question two, I found that the principal used a committee to help her select and hire teachers. The principal formed a committee made up of a grade-level representative, an assistant principal, an assistant principal intern and herself. She worked with the committee prior to the interviews developing the questions based on the need in this position. The committee took turns asking questions in a pre-prescribed order. After each interview was complete, the team discussed the candidate’s responses to the questions. After all interviews were complete, the team discussed all the questions and the responses of each applicant. The team then individually and then as a group ranked the interviewees to decide who they felt was the best candidate for the position.

Research question number three reverts back to the principal and what professional attributes she feels exemplify effective teachers. No Child Left Behind is a reminder that a principal must hire a fully qualified teacher for every classroom. The principal in this study brought to mind that we should not hire someone just because they have good credentials or a good resume. These items are very important and must be there, but the best way to ensure a good teacher is being hired is by really knowing the teacher. The candidate needs to come to the table fully credentialed, have an excellent teaching history or student teaching record, a willingness to participate in professional development opportunities, and an awareness of the
programs and systems used at the school. The principal’s responses align with Clement's (2008) belief that:

A candidate's cover letter, resume, and letters of recommendation are meant to present the candidate's skills, experiences, and interests in the most positive way possible. As an employer, the paperwork gives you the first impression of the candidate and helps you to begin the sorting process. There may be candidates who appear wonderfully skilled on paper, but who cannot stand up in the front of a class and teach. Some candidates may have weaker paperwork, but are skillful in their work with students. (p. 34)

Research question number four seemed to be quite important for the principal in this study. She felt that the administrator should be aware of and talk to the people who have had relationships with the candidate. The goal of the principal is to hire a teacher who will fit with their school and be effective in that environment. The best way to see if that is the case is to have a track record with the candidate and know that he/she is in fact effective with the students there. Other ways to judge if they will be effective are to contact people who have a track record with the candidate. The principal felt that she needed to talk to the candidate’s cooperating teacher during the student teaching experience, the supervisor at his/her last job and, if possible, members of the community where the candidate lives. It is very important that the principal know the genuine characteristics of the candidate to help predict the future success of him/her as a teacher. A successful school principal wants the best for their
students and accomplishes this by hiring the most effective teachers with their particular students.

Research question number five details what the key factor a principal looks for when deciding which candidate to hire. A majority of the interviewees had a previous relationship with the school. Either the candidate taught there previously and was returning, was a teaching assistant at the school or was a current substitute doing an excellent job at the school. One of the most significant findings of this study was that administrators are recognizing and hiring the best teachers using something other than typical hiring philosophies. Many administrators are of the belief that, hiring people that she was more familiar with have a better chance of turning out to be better teachers. She feels it is because she knows more about their performance and personality. The principal felt more confident hiring people she knew, people she trusted, and people that reflected her standards. Although she felt more confident hiring people she knew, she said, “Hiring is not an exact science and this process isn’t perfect.”

Based on the interviews and the observations, I conclude that all steps in the hiring process are equally important to the overall success of the hiring process. Each step builds upon the previous step, and the quality of the teacher who is hired in the end will be only as good as the quality of each step in the process. The research is clear: the hiring process needs to be strategic in design. This means each step must be managed within a detailed plan which can be evaluated and improved as needed.
Messmer (2007) agrees and states that there is no one right way to screen candidates, but he recommends developing a system for screening before applications and resumes are received. He goes on to say, "It should include a set of hard criteria to use as the basis of your decisions. Otherwise, there's a good chance you'll end up making choices based on factors that may have no bearing on desired work performance" (p. 91). Clement (2008) discusses teacher hiring of the past:

It seems that the hiring process used to be easier. In most areas, if a teacher retired, moved away, or left the profession, a principal could post the opening with three or four colleges and garner enough applications to find qualified people to interview. An interview consisted of getting to know the applicant, talking about student teaching or previous teaching, and trying to determine if the candidate would ‘fit in’ to the community and stay in the position. (p. 1)

The shift is from a time when many building principals would have a quick informal conversation with a candidate before offering a job to one where more stakeholders are involved and more time and strategy is used in the process in order to find the best teachers available.

When it comes to making decisions about the people in an organization, Collins's (2001) research is clear. He states that there are three practical disciplines for being rigorous in hiring decisions:

1. When in doubt, don't hire - keep looking.
2. When you know you need to make a people change, act.
3. Put your best people on your biggest opportunities, not your biggest problems. (p. 63)

I came to the conclusion during the interview process that the principal was following the protocol set by her county and by her school board, but was looking for teachers with whom she was familiar. She asked the candidates questions during the interview about familiarity of curriculum used in her school or her school system. She also asked a question about how familiar the candidate was with a particular reading and math series used in the school. It appeared that the principal wanted to hire someone with a specific experience set, and that experience would be easiest to get if it came from her school or her school system. I believe that the principal was unaware of her bias towards candidates with whom she was familiar.

Implications

The findings from this research suggest implications for principals and candidates for teaching positions. Implications are also included in the following section for school boards, superintendents, interview committee members and other teachers.

Implications for Principals

This study provided an opportunity for the participating principal to reflect on her process for selecting and hiring teachers. As a result of this study, the principal had the opportunity to reflect on (a) her knowledge and training in the hiring process (b) whom she chose to include on her hiring team (c) the procedures she used in the hiring process (d) the methods she used to differentiate between candidates and (e) the criteria she wanted her teachers to meet. The implication pointed to the need for principals to be proactive when it
comes to looking for teachers to hire. They should not just wait for the posting of positions and the resumes to follow. The principal should be constantly monitoring and taking note of great teachers they come across. These may be long-term or daily substitutes, student teachers or teachers that have been referred to them through teachers in their building.

The principal needs to always be looking for great teachers. These teachers need to be found at any time of the year, not just during the heavy hiring season. The principal does not need to continue to rely just on job fairs and postings, he/she needs to also network with other principals, teachers and universities to help seek out great teachers.

The hiring process has just become harder for principals in the state of North Carolina. The governor of North Carolina signed a bill in July of 2013 to remove tenure for teachers by 2018. As a result of this signing, the process of hiring teachers in North Carolina may get more difficult. Beginning in 2018, teachers will either be on one year, two year, or four year contracts with the criteria yet to be determined as to who gets which contract. This change in contracts may create a rapid turnover in teaching positions. This legislation could adversely affect the number of teachers in the hiring pool and the quality of the candidates. As a result, principals need to be even more vigilant in looking for the best candidates.

Implications for Candidates

The study also provides information which can be used by a teacher candidate to plan a path to being recommended for a position. This includes preparing for the interview by studying the programs used at the school and becoming familiar with them. Also, the research suggests that becoming a substitute teacher, teacher assistant or volunteer at the
school would give the applicant a better chance of being hired. This allows the school the opportunity to get an up-close look at the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher and the candidate’s ability to implement the academic programs being used at the school. Thirdly, making sure that his/her teaching license is current and letting the committee know of other areas of interest, such as reading certification or special education certification that is being worked on or looked at in the future. Lastly, the candidate needs to develop an understanding of the culture of the school and determine how he/she can be a good fit for the school.

**Implications for Superintendents**

Although this study did not specifically study Superintendents, there are still implications for them. Superintendents can use some of the same methods for hiring principals as principals use to hire teachers. The superintendents should make an effort to seek out those administrators they know who have great potential and recruit them to their schools. They also need to pay attention to teachers who have great potential and encourage them to further their career by becoming qualified for a principalship. They need to get to know the principals as well as spend time in the schools to get to know the teachers. This will help the superintendent develop those relationships which will help them recruit and hire the best people for his/her schools.

**Implications for School Boards**

Since school boards hire superintendents, principals and teachers, the implications mentioned earlier would also apply to them. They generally hire the superintendent and then
make the final approval on the principals and teachers being recommended, so hiring the right superintendent is crucial. The school board needs to be sure they hire a superintendent they know has an excellent record, is highly qualified, and with whom they know they can have a good relationship.

**Implications for Other Teachers**

Teachers often have personal or professional connections to the community they were hired by and may have acquaintances that are or are going to school to become teachers. Teachers take great pride in their school and want the best to work at their school. They can help their school succeed by recruiting candidates they feel are the best and brightest to apply for positions in their school. They may have professional relationships with students studying to become teachers, may know that a former teacher colleague is moving into the area, or may know of a teacher who is coming back into the profession after raising children. The teacher can make recommendations to his/her principal and give a favorable reference for a teacher candidate they believe will make a great teacher. It is also beneficial for teachers to keep looking for excellent teachers who can be recruited to the school.

**Researcher’s Takeaway**

One of the most important roles a principal plays is the recommending of teachers for hire to the superintendent and school board. Based on the results of these findings and the review of the literature, the following conclusions can be made.

The principal in this study valued the track record of the candidates. The committee as well as the principal was looking for a teacher who could step right into the class and “hit
the ground running.” They wanted a teacher who knew about the needs of the students at the school, the programs the school currently used, the policies implemented at the school, and the ability to build relationships with the staff, students and parents. I observed that the committee wanted teachers with experience over those without. I also observed that there was a definite preference for those candidates with previous or current experience in the school studied. The principal felt that she knew about the candidates who had experience in her school, and felt that hiring one of them would be less of a risk. She knew what they were capable of and did not know about the others. Although the final decision of whom to hire was done by the principal, it appeared that the members of the committee were of the same belief as the principal in her hiring decision. They also wanted someone with whom they were familiar and with whom they knew they could work successfully.

**Implications for Practice**

After reviewing my results, I conclude that there are implications for practice in this study. Based on this study, school systems need to be sure that their principals are trained in the hiring process. Part of the induction process for principals in school systems should include the training of principals in the hiring process for that particular system. More guidelines need to be set for principals besides posting positions and verifying that the teacher being hired is “highly qualified.” The principal studied uses a process that appears to work for her and fits with her school system, but this principal is an outlier when it comes to hiring. She spends her time and energy attempting to hire the best teacher from the candidates available. Her process is time consuming, but she feels is worth it.
While researching for this study, I also found that many school systems throughout the United States are making it possible for principals to review applications and references of candidates on line. This is convenient for principals, but principals need to base their hiring decisions on more than just these credentials. Since hiring is one of the most important tasks a school principal must deal with; how the principal perceives the candidate’s success as a teacher is very important. The principal studied wanted to know enough about the candidate to be able to speculate for the future success of each candidate and she could not see that type of information by looking at a resume or references. The principal wanted to select a candidate she felt best fits at her school based on her perceptions of the candidate’s effectiveness as a teacher and this was only possible through a face to face interview.

**Implications for the Researcher**

As a human resources administrator at the district level, I see many principals in my day to day work looking for teachers to hire. Some principals network with other principals and administrators looking for candidates, some come to the administration office looking for leads on candidates, and some only look at candidates who respond to their postings. As a result of this study, I see why many of them are looking for candidates through networking. If the principal does not have anyone in mind to hire, they go to a colleague whom they trust to get a recommendation of a teacher to hire. They see this as the next best thing to knowing the teacher and feel that they have a better chance at success with the candidate if they are recommended by a principal they trust.
Limitations to the Study

There are several areas in which this study has limitations. The first one is the narrow focus of the study. I only studied one principal in one school and could have broadened that focus to more principals in more than one school. I believe that this study is accurate and valid. As part of a further study, I would like to interview more principals in different areas across the United States.

Another limitation was in the acquiring of permission to conduct my study at a school. This process included first emailing and calling several different superintendents in the general area of my home. After receiving no responses or negative responses from the superintendents, I had to contact others for help. My committee chair put me in contact with one of his students who worked in a neighboring school district. This student contacted the superintendent directly and explained my study. The superintendent then gave permission for the study to take place in one of his schools.

Certain limitations exist with any qualitative case study research. According to Merriam (1998), although a thick, rich analysis of a phenomenon may be the goal of the researcher, time may limit the extent of a particular study. I decided to study a school in a county near where I am currently employed as a matter of convenience. I chose one school to study to keep the size and scope of the study manageable. The results of this study could be strengthened if multiple cases were included in the research (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, the results of this study may not be generalized to another population. I also used member
checks to verify participant responses prior to any analysis of the data to enhance the accuracy of my findings.

Another limitation exists because I feel that the principal who participated in this study is highly skilled in the interviewing and hiring process, and it was clear that she devoted a lot of time and energy in the design and implementation process of hiring at her school. She followed all the rules and guidelines set forth by her school system’s central office and was not trying to just fill positions with any qualified teacher who applied. Therefore, I also conclude from my experience as a staffing administrator that this principal is an outlier in her profession and may not be a representative sampling of most principals.

Even with these strategies, the results of this study are still reported through the lens of this researcher whose background and experience frame the report of the findings. I conducted this study because the knowledge and experience gained from the process would be beneficial to my work as an administrator in the school district where I am employed. Therefore, the findings reported in this study contain a certain bias that results from an evaluation of existing programs of which I am very familiar. I have made every effort to report the data accurately and apply the results with objectivity and integrity.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

During this study, one principal was interviewed and six candidates for hire were observed in their interview process. Five of the six interviewees were currently or formerly employed by the county studied. The principal studied had developed her own hiring process based on the human resources department’s guidelines in her county. She put together her
hiring team and questions using her assistant principals and a teacher from the grade level with the vacancy.

Future research could be conducted to broaden this study throughout the United States to learn principals’ perceptions of the teacher hiring process elsewhere. Private and charter schools could also be studied to include perceptions of their principals. Another area of interest would be to investigate if a majority of principals in systems throughout the country are provided formal training prior to being given the responsibility of hiring teachers.

Also, a comparison of the rate of teacher attrition and job satisfaction between principals using various interview techniques would further this research. Another area of interest would be to investigate if principals in systems throughout the country are provided formal training prior to being given the responsibility of hiring teachers. Other questions to explore may be: which method was most successful in hiring teachers who stay and are happy in their job? Which method was most successful in hiring the most effective teachers? Which methods and processes impact the overall hiring effectiveness would be a topic for a future study.

Additionally, comparing the rate of attrition and job satisfaction of teachers between principals using various interview techniques would be of interest. Which method was most successful in hiring teachers who stay and are happy in their job? Can it be determined if the right people are being hired?

I feel it would be valuable to interview teachers in order to analyze what they felt was the deciding factor in their recommendation and if the community, student teaching, and
substituting experience had an effect on their retention in the school. I also feel that it would be beneficial to interview additional principals in order to compare this data to a sample which is larger. I learned the most from the interviews I conducted with the principal. I was able to share the information I received from the interviews with the principal, but was not able to duplicate the body language, pauses and mood of the meeting. The time spent with the principal was valuable in observing what she felt was relevant to running her school and finding, hiring and retaining good teachers. Interviewing additional principals would be helpful in supporting these conclusions and very useful and thought provoking for further research.

Summary

After conducting the study, I came to the following conclusions about this principal’s hiring practices. I came to these conclusions based on the interviews with the principal, observations of the six interviews, field notes taken, and the documents viewed during the interviews. First, it became clear to me that the principal was not given any specific training in conducting the hiring process. She developed her hiring process from her observations of the interviewing process while she was an assistant principal, what she learned from her leadership classes, the information she received from her human resources department, and from what she read as best practices in hiring.

Secondly, I noted that the principal found it critical to include other participants on the interview panel. She made sure that the assistant principal or the assistant principal intern, as well as, a member of the grade level team were included in the creation of
questions as well being part of the interview team. She wanted a team to be part of the
decision as to whom to hire so that they could work as a team towards the success of students
and success of the school as a whole.

I also noted that although the principal made the final teacher selection, the majority
of the decision-making process was completed by the interview team. These results include
the wisdom passed on by an experienced administrator who has made a career out of hiring
proficient teachers. This study also revealed that the principal studied uses good criteria to
evaluate potential teachers. She utilizes criteria that are associated with qualities of effective
teachers and effective teaching. She also uses criteria, such as fit that are far more
subjective. These criteria are not formalized, not written and not shared among the selection
by the hiring committee.

In conclusion, the hiring process is not an exact science. The findings of this study
reaffirm what many administrators already know while it uncovers one principal’s
perceptions behind hiring the best teacher candidate.
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APPENDIX A: Email to Principal

Dear Principal,

I am currently working on my dissertation with North Carolina State University. I am studying the hiring practices of principals. As a part of this study, I am interviewing one principal and observing the interview process. I have spoken to several superintendents throughout the Piedmont of North Carolina and have received permission to ask principals in your school system to participate in my study. As part of my study, I would like to interview you and observe upcoming interviews with several applicants for positions at your school.

I will be conducting two one on one interviews with you, each consisting of a series of questions about your hiring practices. I will send you the list of questions to be asked at these interviews prior to each interview for you to review. I will also observe interviews with perspective candidates and will be taking general notes while the interviews take place. I will also ask to view the list of questions being asked of the candidates. I will not be observing all interviews or contacting all interviewees. I will not disclose which candidates were contacted for permission to observe.

The name of the county, school, principal, and interviewee will not be disclosed in the dissertation.

Please respond to this email and let me know of your decision. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Pamela Smith
APPENDIX B: Email to Candidate

Dear Candidate,

My name is Pam Smith and I am currently working on my dissertation with North Carolina State University. I am currently studying the hiring practices of principals. As a part of this study, I am observing the interview process at __________school.

I have received the list of candidates for the ____________position at __________school and I understand that you will be interviewing for one of these teacher positions. As part of my study, I would like to observe your upcoming interview with (principal's name). I will have no input into who is hired for the position, and will not be recording your answers. I will have no active role in the interview or the decision making process. I will have the list of questions being asked by the principal during the interview. Other candidates for the same position will be observed as well and the information I gather will only be used in a general sense. The name of the county, school, principal, and interviewee will not be disclosed in the dissertation.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and will have no impact on the job interview or hiring decision. I will not disclose to the principal that I contacted you and asked to be present. If you decide not to allow me to observe, the principal will not be aware. Several interviews are taking place and not all candidates are being asked to participate in the study. The principal will not know if you did not allow me to observe or if you weren’t asked to participate.

Please let me know if you would agree to my presence at your interview. Your participation could be a key factor in my research; it may help professors prepare students and those candidates who come later to understand what a principal is looking for when making hiring decisions. If you agree to participate, please email me the date, time and location of your interview so that I can attend. Also, you have the option to withdraw from this study at any time before the interview.

Thank you and good luck with your upcoming interview.

Sincerely,
Pamela Smith
APPENDIX C: Principal Interview Protocol

Before we begin to talk about hiring teachers, please begin by telling me a little about yourself.

1. How long have you been a principal at _______________ school?
2. Before becoming a principal, what did you do?
3. What level of education have you achieved?

I would now like to talk about job vacancies you may have at your school.

1. When in the school year do you begin hiring teachers for the next school year?
2. When do you begin posting for your teaching vacancies?
3. How do you begin your search for teachers to hire?
4. When do official efforts to recruit a teacher to fill a vacancy begin?

Now I would like to ask some questions as to how the school gets the word out about vacancies at your school.

1. Besides official postings for the school district, do you do any formal or informal advertising of vacancies to prospective candidates?
2. Do you attend any type of job fair conducted by the school system?
3. If not, who represents the school at these fairs?
4. When attending these meetings, what specific characteristics are you looking for in a candidate?
5. How successful are the job postings of vacancies to have a high quality candidate pool?
6. Is there anything about your school that would make it unattractive for candidates to apply?
7. Do you have openings that you did not fill or had trouble filling this school year?

I understand that you receive resumes from prospective candidates and you look through these to decide who to interview.

1. What makes someone stand out and make you want to interview them?

2. Take me through the steps you used to narrow the field.

3. Where do you find your best candidates?

4. What documents do you feel a candidate should bring with him/her to an interview?

5. What proportion of candidates do you find through personal contacts versus other sources?

6. Do you have the primary responsibility to screen applications and decide who to interview? If not, who does have this responsibility at your school?

7. How many candidates do you generally have apply when you post an opening at your school?

Now, I’d like to ask you about the actual interview process.

1. How long do you spend interviewing each candidate?

2. Do you have a team of interviewers or do you interview them one on one?

3. If you do have a team of interviewers, who makes up this group?

4. Are there specific materials you ask candidates to bring to the interview?

5. How many times does each candidate interview?

6. Do you ask candidates to teach a demonstration lesson or provide you with a writing sample as part of the interview?

7. Do you use a commercial scoring system for candidates or do you have your own?

8. If you write your own questions, may I please have a copy?
9. Do you use the same set of questions for every applicant?

10. While interviewing the candidate, what signals are you looking for to tell you he/she will be a good fit for your school?

11. What professional attributes do you feel exemplify effective teachers?

12. What is the key factor you look for when deciding which candidate to hire?

13. Do you look for different qualities in teachers for different positions at your school?

14. After the interview, what methodology do you use to make your decision?

15. Do you or you and the team have a rating system to help in the selection process?

16. This interviewing and selection process takes about how much of your time?

The next few questions I have deal with the quality of applicants you have when you interview.

1. How would you rate the general quality of applicants you receive when you post a position?

2. If you have experience in another system, please compare the quality of applicants and the hiring process between the two.

3. If you do not, please tell me what you think can be done to improve the hiring process in this school system.

4. Do you believe there is anything that makes it difficult to find a good fit for your school?

5. Is there anything within this school system that stands in your way of your being able to hire teachers effectively?

6. What would help you do a better job hiring teachers?

7. Is there anything else you want to tell me about?
APPENDIX D: Elementary Interview Questions

Applicant: _________________________ Interviewer: _________________________
Date: _____________________________

General:
1. Is your application complete? Do you have 3 references on file at central office?
2. What do you know about our school, students, and/or community?
3. Why are you interested in teaching at this school?

Teaching:
4. What have you found to be most challenging about teaching?
5. What do you think makes some teachers more effective than others?
6. Name two areas of weakness that you are working to improve.
7. What sources have you used that contribute to your students’ successes?
8. Are you familiar with the Common Core Standards for grade two?
9. What current reading and math instructional practices are you comfortable using?
   Have you used Reading Street or Envision math?
10. What instructional practices have you had the most success with? Why?

Classroom Management:
11. How do you engage students so as to minimize student disruptions?
12. What role should the principal play in classroom discipline?
13. When will you contact parents for support or assistance?

Special Needs:
14. How have you accommodated children with special needs in your classroom?
15. What questions can we answer for you?
From: Carol Mickelson, IRB Coordinator  
North Carolina State University  
Institutional Review Board

Date: November 21, 2011

Title: The Perceptions of a School Principal as to the Personal Qualities and Pedagogical Qualifications Affecting the Selection of Teacher Candidates

IRB#: 1946

Dear Dr. Smith,

The project listed above has been reviewed by the NC State Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research, and is approved for one year. This protocol will expire on November 3, 2012 and will need continuing review before that date.

NOTE:

1. You must use the attached consent forms which have the approval and expiration dates of your study.

2. This board complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU the Assurance Number is: FWA00003429.

3. Any changes to the protocol and supporting documents must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

4. If any unanticipated problems occur, they must be reported to the IRB office within 5 business days by completing and submitting the unanticipated problem form on the IRB website.

5. Your approval for this study lasts for one year from the review date. If your study extends beyond that time, including data analysis, you must obtain continuing review from the IRB.

Sincerely,

Carol Mickelson  
NC State IRB
From: Deb Paxton, IRB Administrator  
North Carolina State University  
Institutional Review Board  

Date: October 23, 2012  

Project Title: The Perceptions of a School Principal as to the Personal Qualities and Pedagogical Qualifications Affecting the Selection of Teacher Candidates  
IRB#: 1946  

Dear Pamela Smith  

The continuation request for the project listed above has been approved in accordance with policy under 45 CFR 46, and is approved for one year (through October 17, 2013). If your study lasts beyond that time, including data analysis, you must apply for continuing approval before the listed expiration date.  

NOTE:  
1. This committee complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU projects the Assurance Number is: FWA00003429.  
2. Review de novo of this proposal is necessary if any significant alterations/additions are made.  

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the IRB office at 919.515.4514. Please provide a copy of this letter to your faculty sponsor, if applicable. Thank you.  

Sincerely,  

Deb Paxton  
NC State IRB
APPENDIX G: IRB Informed Consent

North Carolina State University
INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

Title of Study: The Perceptions of a School Principal as to the Personal Qualities and Pedagogical Qualifications Affecting the Selection of Teacher Candidates
Principal Investigator: Pamela T. Smith
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Paul Bitting

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this case study will be to determine the procedures used and the perceptions of a principal as to the personal qualities and pedagogical qualifications affecting the selection of teacher candidates. The actual process a principal uses in selecting teachers will be reviewed.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in two approximately one hour, one-on-one interviews at your school with the researcher, one before your interview a series of candidates for a teaching position, and one after you interview the candidates. In addition, you will be asked to allow the researcher to sit in on your interviews with candidates for a teaching position, assuming that the candidate has also granted the researcher permission to observe the interview. You will also be asked to provide the researcher with documents used in the hiring process at your school. Finally, you will be asked to review a transcription of the audiotaped interviews between the researcher and yourself, and to review a draft of the report in order to assure accuracy and anonymity. The total duration of the project will be no more than 6 months.

Risks
Risks are minimal because pseudonyms for the names of participants, the principal, as well as, the location will be used. You will have the opportunity to review all materials to help assure that your anonymity is maintained in the final reports.

Any documents reviewed will have the name of the candidate and school removed prior to being reviewed by the researcher. The findings from the interviews will be generalized to minimize risk to the candidates.

Benefits
This study will benefit potential teacher candidates in understanding which qualities a principal looks for when hiring his/her teachers. In addition, this study may force principals to rethink their perceptions in the selection criteria and expectations of teacher candidates. The results may also help institutions as they prepare future teachers.

Confidentiality
The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. All tapes, transcriptions, notes and school documents will be stored securely in a locked cabinet at the researcher’s home. Electronic files will be password protected on the researcher’s computer. No reference will be made in oral or
written reports which could link you to the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study; although you may be identifiable by colleagues from reports about the research. You will NOT be asked to write your name on any study materials so that no one can match your identity to the answers that you provide.

**Compensation**
The principal participating in this study will be doing so voluntarily. There will be no payment associated with this participation there will be no compensation for participating in this study.

**What if you are a NCSU student?**
Participation in this study is not a course requirement and your participation or lack thereof, will not affect the researcher’s class standing or grades at NC State.

**What if you have questions about this study?**
If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Pamela T. Smith, at 6308 Windy Ridge Court, Raleigh, NC 27606, or 919-219-1753.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**
If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

**Consent To Participate**
“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Subject’s signature_______________________________________ Date _________________
Investigator’s signature____________________________________ Date _________________