The Professional Implications of National Board Certification

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University

By

Angela R. Thomas, B.S., M.A., N.B.C.T.

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The Ohio State University

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Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Mary Jo Fresch, Advisor

Dr. Rhoda Becher

Dr. Mollie Blackburn

Dr. Lynn Johnson
Abstract

This qualitative, multi-case study explored the issue of the long term, professional impact of becoming a National Board Certified Teacher. Eleven NBCTs, representative of four regions of the U.S., participated in a survey and three one-on-one phone interviews. The participants earned National Board Certification ten to fourteen years ago. Six remained classroom teachers while five chose to pursue other areas of education. All eleven NBCTs stated professional differences in their careers including reflective practices and new responsibilities. Many stated an increased sense of confidence as well as a change of dispositions and perspectives. Findings suggest new categories of change to professional lives than found in previous research regarding NBCTs including frustration and disappointment.
Dedication

To my beloved and cherished daughters, Shayla and Christi Thomas

Dearest Christi,

You taught me far more about life than I could have ever possibly imagined. You are the reason I am completing my dissertation and obtaining a lifetime dream of earning a doctorate degree. Through your battle with cancer you taught me that life is short and one should not put off achieving their dreams; therefore, from the Ronald McDonald House of Philadelphia, I submitted my application for entry into OSU’s Ph.D. program.

Throughout my years of coursework, you were always curious about what I was learning. In the midst of my residency, you earned your angel wings at the tender age of nine. In your honor and memory, I somehow continued my work. With your amazing mind, zany sense of humor, deep and abiding love for others and zest for life, you created memories that will never fade from my mind. You left lasting footprints on my heart. Until I see your beautiful face and hold you in my arms again in a much better place, remember I love you, sweetpea!

Love, Mommy
Dearest Shayla,

Your earliest memories of life are of living in the Ronald McDonald House of New York City where you spent hundreds of nights as a four year old. Your life was put on the back burner for four years while daddy and I cared for your older sister, yet you always understood, never complained, demonstrated great courage and provided us with so much joy and laughter. I believe those early years transformed your life and molded you into the incredibly thoughtful, loving, compassionate and caring person you are.

Your life has been filled with so many experiences both good and bad. Your heart is filled with sweetness.

Throughout my doctoral program, you have been my biggest cheerleader and my proudest supporter always encouraging me. “It’s really cool to have a mom who is going to be a professor.” “What do you mean you don’t care if you get your first B? You’ve got to go study, mom!” You understood when I would leave you in the care of others for my studies and were often saddened when I picked you up because of the special attention you received from friends and family. You cannot possibly ever know the enormity of my love and devotion to you and how very proud I am of you, young lady. I am the luckiest mom on earth to be blessed with a daughter as wonderful as you. Thank you for richly blessing my life. I love you so much!

Love, Mom
Acknowledgements

To my husband, Shayne: Words cannot adequately express my gratitude to have your unconditional understanding, patience, humor and love as I have endured this lengthy process. Despite the stressful challenges surrounding us in recent years, I’m thankful the bond between us remains strong. Throughout this six year process, you have given me endless support, tireless love and large tuition checks, helping me through each and every step of this incredible journey. Your undying love and support, not only during this doctoral process, but with all of my undertakings over past the 25 years we have been together, allows me to accomplish my goals and to achieve my dreams, thank you.

To my esteemed doctoral advisor, Dr. Mary Jo Fresch, who guided me through my years of the doctoral program at Ohio State and who believed in me when I questioned myself, thank you! Dr. Fresch provided me with constant reassurance. I owe her deep gratitude for supporting me, encouraging me and assuring me with her expertise and insight throughout my various endeavors over the years. I’ve been incredibly blessed with an outstanding advisor, professor, role model and friend.
Things always seem less painful and more manageable if you have a friend to endure the pain with you. I could not have completed this dissertation journey without Olivia, a compassionate, intelligent, interested friend with swift and immaculate proofreading talents and “eagle eyes”. Who knew such an ugly childhood disease could bring two strangers together and create a beautiful friendship? Olivia will forever be appreciated.

To the participants who willingly provided the breadth and depth for this investigation by sharing their professional and personal experiences with me, I feel a special indebtedness. Others will gain from their input. I am honored to present their stories.

I also express appreciation to my family, the first to show me the joys of learning and the first to believe in me and to encourage me to pursue my dreams. I am fortunate to have such a wonderful family actively involved in my life.

Finally, I am indebted to all the teachers who have touched my life and who have shown me the delight of learning. They’re the inspiration for my motto, “Those who love teaching teach others to love learning.” Thank God for you! The implications of good teachers should never be underestimated.
Vita

1989 Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education – Bowling Green State Univ., B.G., OH

1989-2004 Elementary Teacher – Seneca East Elementary, Republic, OH

1991 Master of Arts in Education – Heidelberg University, Tiffin, OH

2004 National Board Certification – Early Childhood Generalist

2004-2009 Middle School Reading / Language Arts Teacher – Seneca East, Attica, OH

2007 National Board Certification – Early Adolescent English / Language Arts

2006-2009 Adjunct Instructor of Education – Heidelberg University, Tiffin, OH

PUBLICATIONS

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Education
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1980s, *A Nation at Risk* served as a catalyst for moving education from a social problem to a public policy issue (Fowler, 2004). As a result of the public awareness and focus on educational reform generated by that report, in 1986, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* was published. This called for the creation of a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan and nongovernmental organization. The report also called for a restructuring of schools to provide a more professional environment for teachers, greater accountability for student progress, and incentives for teachers linked to student performance (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy Task Force, 1986). The NBPTS was created to establish standards for high professional teaching competence and to issue certificates only to those who meet the highest of standards.

The NBPTS mission is to establish high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do, to develop and operate a national voluntary system to assess and certify teachers who meet those standards, and to advance related education reforms for the purpose of improving student learning in American schools (NBPTS, 1991). The NBPTS hopes that teachers who score high enough to become National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) will be rewarded with higher
income, more job prestige and given leadership roles in teacher preparation, support and supervision (NBPTS, 2000).

The NBPTS provided a definite set of standards stating what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do, as well as a way to measure who meets those standards. The certification earned by NBPTS is different from that of licensing which occurs after teachers have graduated from an accredited institution. National Board Certification (NBC) is currently available in 25 different certificate areas that include 15 subject areas and are classified into seven different student age categories. These certificates (See Table 1.1) are applicable to more than 95 percent of America’s teachers (NBPTS, 2008).
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Table 1.1 2008 NBPTS Certificates Available with Disciplines and Student Ages
NBC is meant to complement the existing licensure procedures currently in existence. Completing the voluntary, performance-based assessment, the average candidate for national certification spends 200-400 hours in preparation of their portfolio and in test preparation for the assessment center examinations (NBPTS, 2003). This voluntary process requires deep analysis and reflection while stressing collaboration and consideration towards change and growth. Teachers who engage in this process are required to be thoughtful and analytical about their content, pedagogy and assessment. Despite investing those hours, the first time passing rate for candidates is low. Although NBPTS does not release official figures, of the approximately 20,000 teachers who attempt the rigorous certification process for the first time each year, it is generally acknowledged that only about 40% of these candidates will be successful in scoring high enough to certify (Carol, NBPTS Processing Center, personal communications, April 22, 2008).

NBCTs have provided information regarding the positive impact that the NBPTS process has had on their professional lives. In teaching, relatively limited opportunities for career advancement exist. Teachers can make powerful contributions to their schools (Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery, 2005; Keller, 2005; Patterson & Patterson, 2004); however, the expertise of NBCTs needs to be recognized in order for these teachers to be invited to help improve their schools. NBCTs could be used as coaches, leaders, and mentors to help improve the educational system for their students.
STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

As of today, nearly 64,000 teachers, more than 1% of the nation’s teachers, have earned NBC (NBPTS, 2008). Many NBCTs report that achieving NBC made a significant impact on their classroom teaching including an increased confidence and sense of responsibility (Iovacchini, 1998). They report that they now utilize a variety of authentic assessments (Clehouse, 2000) provide cognitively challenging assignments (Strong et al., 2008) and that other opportunities within the field are now available (Kelley & Kimball, 2001). Research studies have reported that many NBCTs do not leave the education profession after obtaining their NBC; however, many do leave the field of teaching to accept other leadership opportunities (Berry & King 2004; Stokes, et al., 2003). All states offer financial incentives as an attempt to keep these accomplished teachers teaching in today’s classrooms, yet some still leave.

The NBPTS has developed a voluntary national certification system to recognize, reward and help retain highly accomplished teachers (NBPTS, 2007); however, is the system doing this, or is it instead pulling quality teachers from the classrooms? Research by Stokes, Helms and Maxon (2003) found that nine percent of NBCTs left the classroom after earning their NBC. Having attained what is commonly referred to as “the teaching profession’s highest honor” NBCTs report that other opportunities become available to them that were not available before achieving NBC (Kelley & Kimball, 2001). Some report, after leaving the classroom, that they have become teacher-leaders in their schools, moved to higher education, served as consultants and/or worked as professional
development providers. Another study reported NBCTs often serve in mentoring or coaching roles, or are asked to develop or select programs/materials to support increased student learning (Sato, Hyler & Monte-Sano, 2002).

While approximately 200 studies on NBC have been published, the majority of the research regarding NBC has been conducted in large scale quantitative studies typically focusing on the achievement of students in terms of test scores (Frank, 2002). For example McColskey, et al. (2006), Cavalluzzo (2004), Goldhaber and Anthony (2004), Vandevoort, Amrein-Beardsley and Berliner (2004) and Stephens (2003) all compared student test score data and examined whether the teachers serving those students were NBCTs or not. There are other aspects worthy of study including the professional implications of NBC on teachers. This study, for example, focused on the impact of NBC on teachers, not students. The researcher of this study only found eight studies closely aligned to the topic of this investigation.

Research studies regarding the impact of the NBC process on the teaching practices of teachers and on student learning have also been conducted (Frank, 2002; Park, Oliver, Johnson, Graham & Oppong, 2007). Many NBCTs report that achieving NBC has made a significant impact on their teaching careers (Areglado, 1999; Baratz-Snowden, 1992; Boyd & Reese, 2006; Rotberg et al., 1998). Research shows that NBCTs engage in more leadership activities when compared to their non-NBCT counterparts (Farrell, 2005). This leads to a question that this study addressed: What is the impact of attaining national certification on NBCTs’ professional lives and how do they provide support to others within the field of education?
Merriman (1998) stated that MacDonald and Walker observe that “educational case studies are usually financed by people who have, directly or indirectly, power over those studied and portrayed” (p. 187). The NBPTS has commissioned a variety of research studies designed to better understand the national certification process relative to teacher change and student learning. These studies include the application of statistical models to student achievement on standardized tests that follow NBCTs and non-NBCTS over multiple years, with multiple classes of students. Other studies focus on the relationship between NBC and changes in teachers’ practices and quality of student work (Ellett & Teddlie, 2003). Independent studies, like this one conducted outside of the NBPTS, have a role in the field of research. Finally, most of the research published on NBC has not been in highly respected, peer reviewed journals making this study needed.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the purpose of a study is to reveal the properties to which the instance being studied belongs. Becker (1968) defines the purposes of a case study as twofold: “to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under study” and “to develop general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process” (p. 233). Therefore, this study provides an examination into the professional lives of ten NBCTs ten to fourteen years following their attainment of NBC as well as one NBCT (the researcher) who earned her certifications in 2004 and 2007.

As of 2008, 64,000 teachers, more than one percent of the nation’s teachers, have earned NBC (NBPTS, 2008). All states provide some type of financial incentives for
their NBCTs but the incentives vary widely. Some NBCTs receive assistance with the cost of the application fee, or a one-time award upon successfully attaining NBC. Others receive a financial stipend yearly for the life of their ten year certificate, as an incentive to keep the best teachers teaching in today’s classrooms (NBPTS, 2008). In the state of South Carolina, for example, the annual financial incentive is currently $7,500 per year if the NBCT remains in the classroom (NBPTS, 2008). In Mississippi, the financial incentive is $6,000 each year (NBPTS, 2008) while in Ohio the same annual incentive is $2,500 (Ohio State Department of Education, 2007). Despite financial incentives, it is reported that many NBCTs leave the classroom for other opportunities. This raises the question, “What happens to the careers of NBCTs after achieving NBC?” Are there career changes and if so, what are they? If the NBCTs remain in their teaching positions, what is different about their role as a classroom teacher?

The NBPTS believes the single most important action this country can take to improve schools and student learning is to strengthen teaching (NBPTS, 2008). Teachers who have participated in the NBC process have stated it is the most powerful professional development experience of their careers; they say it transforms them as professionals (Bohen, 2001; Lustick & Sykes, 2006; Tracz, Daughtery, & Henderson-Sparks, 2005). Following this transformative process, are willing NBCTs used in leadership roles to help improve education? How are the skills of NBCTs, identified as accomplished, utilized to help others in the teaching profession?

In teaching, relatively limited opportunities for career advancement exist. Johnson (2001) stated that NBC may have the ability to create a structure designed to provide expert teachers with a set of advanced career steps, increasing status in the teaching
profession. He believes that in teaching, career advancement is important to “attract and retain excellent teachers, revitalize pedagogy, strength instructional programs, and create more responsive schools” (p. 394). Allowing NBCTs to assume new roles and responsibilities would offer teachers the recognition and increased professional standing and responsibilities they desire. This may ultimately keep them in the teaching profession. NBCTs have provided information regarding the positive impact that the NBPTS process has had on their professional lives.

Teachers can make powerful contributions to their schools (Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery, 2005; Keller, 2005; Patterson & Patterson, 2004); however, the expertise of NBCTs needs to be recognized in order for these teachers to be invited to help improve their schools. NBCTs could be used as coaches, leaders, and mentors to help improve the educational system for their students. This leads to the question, “How is the expertise of NBCTs being used to help schools and students?” If it is being utilized, in what ways is this happening and if not, why not? Additionally, what happens when a NBCT decides no longer to be a classroom teacher? Does the national certification play a role in this decision? Is the career path of a teacher affected as a result of becoming nationally certified? What professional differences are noted after NBC?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions served as the focal point of this study. They were generated from prior research combined with the researcher’s personal observations and experiences with NBC.
1.) What professional differences (if any) are noted since becoming a NBCT and how does this affect their careers?

2.) How does becoming a NBCT influence an individual’s career path over time?

3.) What are NBCTs’ perceptions on the ways they provide assistance to others in the education profession?

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The terms listed below are important to understanding the study:

**Career Path** = the change(s) in the requirements, responsibilities and roles of NBCTs in the classroom and in the wider education community.

**Highly-Qualified Teacher** = holds a bachelor’s degree, full state licensure or certification, proves they know each subject they teach (United States Department of Education, 2008).

**A Nation Prepared** = a report, a response to *A Nation at Risk*, recommended that the best way to improve America’s educational system was to focus on our nation’s teaching force. It called for the establishment of a National Board for certifying teachers. (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy Task Force, 1986).

**A Nation at Risk** = This report called for a educational initiatives including higher standards for teachers (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004).

**National Board Certification (NBC)** = a voluntary performance-based, advanced certification process where teachers demonstrate they meet national standards. The standards dictate what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. Scoring high enough earns advanced certification (Buday & Kelly, 1996).

**National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT)** = a teacher who scored high enough to certify according to the NBPTS’ performance-based system (NBPTS, 2003).

**The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)** = a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, certifying accomplished teachers since 1987, to strengthen the teaching profession (Koppich et al., 2004; NBPTS, 2007).

**Professional Development** = activities to improve and increase a teacher’s knowledge, skills and dispositions.
**Professional Differences** = the changes in one’s professional experiences in the field of education since becoming an NBCT.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY**

This study contributes to the field of education in the area of teaching by identifying facets that contribute to the likelihood that a NBCT will remain in the classroom and / or will have leadership opportunities which are not available to all teachers. This study will add to the knowledge base about the professional experiences of accomplished teachers after obtaining NBC.

This study is significant because it will build a broader base of information about how teachers, identified as accomplished, can provide assistance to others in the field of education. This study will contribute to understanding the ways that NBCTs share their expertise, experience and wisdom within the field. The information helps to clarify how achieving NBC affects teachers’ career paths.

Case study research with data collected through interviews allowed the investigator to examine NBCTs with multiple variables. Attached to real-life situations, case studies can provide rich and holistic accounts of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 1998). “Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice and future research” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). This study can bring about understanding of the influence of NBC on NBCTs that in turn can affect schools and ultimately the students they serve. It offers insights into the role NBC plays in NBCTs’ professional lives.

Insights about the NBCTs’ experiences will be of value to the profession and to society as various entities have made commitments tied to NBC. Some groups make
financial awards to NBCTs to encourage them to remain teaching in today’s classrooms; others use the achievement of NBC as an indicator of teacher evaluation or special distinctions. Some districts encourage their NBCTs to conduct professional development, training and the mentoring of other teachers while other districts do not utilize their NBCTs.

According to Frank (2002) challenges have been raised about the value of NBC in terms of prestige, opportunities for advancement, salary increases and recognition among peers. To date, there has not been a nationally recognized formal hierarchy associated with the teaching profession, and this certification may develop a sense of have-haves and have-nots among teachers.

There also exists the possibility for improving the status and quality of the teaching profession with NBC that has not existed in previous reform initiatives. As individual teachers complete the certification process while reflecting on and critique their practice from different perspectives, they may become more capable of making appropriate decisions for the students in their classroom (Frank, 2002). In this way, NBC has the potential to affect teaching, staff development and teacher education programs.

Analysis of the information revealed throughout this study could have implications for schools’ professional development programs, for mentoring programs and for supportive programming to enhance National Board Candidates’ experiences while attempting certification. Additionally, there may be implications for the structure and integration of the NBPTS’ standards and principles into the NBCTs’ every-day work as a result of having completed the process.
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A case study is a detailed examination of a single subject, a particular event, or a collection of documents (Merriam, 1998). In this qualitative research study, interviews were used to gain a holistic portrait of how NBC impacts eleven NBCTs’ careers in years subsequent to obtaining NBC. The author of this study makes no assertions about the findings being applicable to the careers of a larger population of NBCTs. Through the use of detailed descriptions, the author aimed to bring the reader closer to the study.

NBCTs are a highly researched group of teachers. As a result, they receive many surveys which may potentially impact the number of teachers willing to volunteer for this study. Additionally, only the NBCTs who agreed to have their names and schools released at the time of their applications (1993-1997) received an invitation to participate. Because some of these NBCTs may no longer be with the school district they taught for when they applied for national certification, they may not have received the letter of invitation.

In qualitative research, the primary instrument is the human. Research is only as good as the investigator. All interviews and the data analysis were filtered through the researcher’s worldview, values and perspectives. Therefore, the researcher brought a construction of reality to the research situation, which interacts with other people’s constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 1998). “The researcher as human instrument is limited by being human. Mistakes can be made and opportunities can be missed. Personal biases may also interfere” (Merriam, 1998, p. 23). In an effort to prevent mistakes, member checks were conducted via email with each
study participant after each interview was transcribed and each narrative was written. This was done to verify the accuracy and interpretation with all of the participants.

Bias refers to ways in which data collection or analysis are distorted by the researcher’s theory, values or preconceptions. The researcher is aware of personal biases and the potential influence. This study is an interpretation of the participants’ views filtered through the researcher’s own views. Additionally, because the investigator of this study, focusing on NBC, is also a NBCT, the researcher’s bias of the NBPTS certification process may be a limitation to this study. There was the expectation, on the part of the researcher, that participants felt positively toward being an NBCT and to the changes in their professional lives. This expectation may have influenced the responses of the participants during the data collection and the subsequent member checks.

SUMMARY

This study examined the careers of NBCTs ten to fourteen years following their attainment of NBC. Chapter one serves as an introduction to the study. Chapter Two addresses the literature on NBCTs which focuses on the issues of teacher quality, professional development and teacher leadership. Furthermore, the literature considers the effect of NBC on teachers and their careers. Chapter Three presents the methodology which was used to conduct this study while Chapter Four presents the findings of this investigation. The discussion of the research study is shared in Chapter Five.
Chapter 2
TEACHER QUALITY

Improving the quality of teaching in America’s schools continues to be an emphasized focus of educational reform. Teacher quality is complex and contains many dimensions. It is conceptualized differently by different people and can be measured in many ways. High-quality teaching is multifaceted, and influenced by many elements.

Researchers studying teacher effectiveness in the late 1960s and early 1970s focused on teachers’ behaviors; however, as research progressed throughout the 1970s, 1980s and into the 1990s, researchers have become more interested in teachers’ intentions, teachers’ decision making, subject matter knowledge, and students’ understanding and interpretation of instruction (Alkin & American Educational Research Association [AERA], 1992). According to Shulman (1986), “In the 1970s and 1980s, research on teaching moved from an examination of teacher behavior to a view of the teacher as a decision maker who creates a classroom environment that facilitates students’ understanding of subject matter” (p. 1374).

Five key behaviors are essential for effective teaching according to Borich (2000). They include: lesson clarity, instructional variety, teacher task orientation, engagement in the learning process and student success rate. Effective teachers make their points understandable, explain concepts clearly and have an oral delivery that is clear and
audible (Borich, 2000). Husen and Postlewaite (1994), state that competency to teach is defined in terms of possession of subject matter and professional knowledge.

Researchers recognize that teachers must adapt instruction to individual differences in students and at times re-teach or provide enrichment. Research also emphasizes the need for students not to just learn the facts, but to be allowed to integrate and apply knowledge (Alkin & AERA, 1992). Shulman (1987) defines seven types of knowledge that comprise the knowledge base for teaching. They are: content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of the learner, knowledge of educational context, and knowledge of educational purposes.

Berliner (1984) and Shulman (1987) studied effective teachers advocating that the study of effective teachers is useful to inform practicing teachers and teacher educators. Berliner believes that student learning is the combined result of many variables. Some are under the teacher's control and have strong effects on students' behavior, attitude, and achievement (Berliner, 1984). These variables include the following: high expectations, management and planning skills, learning-oriented classrooms, engaged time, appropriate learning activities and effective questioning.

According to Rosenshine and Meister (1992) a solution that researchers have developed to help students to perform higher level operations is to teach cognitive strategies. In addition, Rosenshine and Meister (1994), state that there is a need for more research on the effects of different teaching strategies. Brophy and Good (1986) state that teachers who achieve the most student achievement establish task-oriented classrooms in which learning is clearly the business at hand.
There are general indicators of effective teaching that are supported by the research (Borich, 2000). They include: having positive expectations, matching difficulty with ability level, providing opportunities for students to practice, maximizing instructional time, providing direction and engaging students through questioning, using a variety of instructional materials, eliciting responses, encouraging students to elaborate, and providing mental strategies for learning.

Beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s and continuing into this century, a variety of new developments in teacher effectiveness and school effectiveness have emerged. According to Ellett and Teddlie (2003), a significant development has been the work of the NBPTS to develop assessments for national certification of teachers. The NBPTS has developed and implemented a variety of content specific, standards-based tasks for identifying and nationally certifying accomplished teachers relative to a set of beliefs and values about exemplary teaching (Mistilina, Chung, & Darling-Hammond, 2008).

A model for identifying high-quality teachers is the NBPTS (Cavalluzzo, 2004; Ellett & Teddlie, 2003; Farrell, 2005; Frank, 2002; Smith, Gordon, Colby & Wang, 2005). The NBPTS is at the center of efforts around the nation to bolster the profile of high-quality teaching (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004; Ingvarson, 1998). Research about the impact of effective teaching reinforced what common sense would suggest: teaching matters (Humphrey, Koppich, & Hough, 2005). Research indicates that the most important factor in predicting student outcomes is the quality of the teacher in the classroom (Aklba, LeTendre & Scribner, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Humphrey, et al., 2005).
Many studies conclude that out of all of the variables in the classroom, the quality of the teacher is the strongest predictor of student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Scheetz & Martin, 2006). According to research by Scheetz and Martin (2006), students can exceed one grade-level equivalent in annual student achievement growth by having a high-quality teacher. There is little agreement, however, about what the relationship is between teacher credentials (Hanushek, 2005) and teacher effectiveness (Goldhaber, Perry, & Anthony, 2004).

The NBPTS asserts that attributes of quality teaching, specific qualities that constitute a good teacher, can be measured, according to candidates’ ability to show mastery of a predetermined set of NBPTS standards. They believe by utilizing a rigorous assessment process examining candidates’ teaching, based on their five core propositions, they can categorize high-quality teachers (NBPTS, 2000; Park & Oliver 2008). The 2001 federal legislation, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) stresses the importance of having a high-quality teacher in every classroom. NBCTs are recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as meeting the definition of “Highly Qualified”.

While states set their own licensing standards for entry into the teaching profession, the NBPTS sets rigorous national standards to identify accomplished teachers via a voluntary process. For entrance into beginning teaching, the Praxis tests are used by the majority of education agencies in the United States. These national tests are used to make decisions regarding the licensing of new teachers, not seasoned teachers. The Praxis I test measures basic academic skills while the Praxis II tests measure general and subject-specific knowledge and teaching skills (Bennett, McWhorter & Kuykendall, 2006). Unlike NBC, each state determines its own examination requirements.
The NBPTS certification process, on the other hand, is designed to capture the complexities of accomplished teaching grounded in concerns for student learning by focusing on how teachers make decisions and carry out courses of action in their classroom(s) (Frank, 2002). The NBC was not meant to replace state licensing of teachers since the certificate is a credential offered by the profession, not a license to teach; however, many states have opted to allow NBC to substitute for the state license. The NBC process offers seasoned teachers an opportunity to engage in vigorous reflection and analysis of their teaching practices using rigorous standards as “tools for critique” as well as valid performance assessments (Mistilin, Chung, & Darling-Hammond, 2008).

The NBPTS defines highly accomplished teaching by a complex array of skills and practices. Teachers who achieve NBC have been assessed with high standards in terms of their knowledge of content and pedagogy, use of instructional practices, assessment skills, reflection on their practice and involvement in professional activities (Bond, Smith, Baker, & Hattie, 2000; Cavalluzzo, 2004; Ellett & Teddlie, 2003; Frank, 2002; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004).

NBC is a focus of nationwide efforts to increase the profile of high-quality teaching. The NBC process is primarily focused on seasoned teachers improving student learning. Because the NBPTS conducts the assessment process independently from states and school districts, it has been respected as a strategy for externally defining and evaluating the quality of accomplished teaching (Frank, 2002; Stronge, Ward, Tucker, Hindman, McColsky, & Howard, 2008).
According to Mistilin, Chung, and Darling-Hammond (2008), the NBPTS standards provide a vision of practice that most teachers do not have prior to their engagement with the NBC process. Systematic analysis and reflection on their classroom work is prompted by NBPTS questions that focus on evidence of student learning and alignment of their practice with the teaching standards.

*A Nation Prepared* (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986) suggested the best way to improve America’s educational system was to focus on the quality of our nation’s teaching force. There are not any curriculum packages, neither textbooks nor technology that can substitute for good teachers and high quality, effective teaching. In a concerted effort to improve teacher quality, professional development opportunities can be provided. Professional development can be a mechanism for deepening teachers’ knowledge and improving their practices to improve teacher quality.

**NBPTS BACKGROUND**

When *A Nation at Risk* (1983) was published the report served as the catalyst for moving education from a social problem to a public policy issue. In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* reported that student achievement was too low for the economic viability of our country. This report provoked a reform of educational initiatives including increased accountability for student achievement via higher standards for teachers (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

As a result of this new public awareness and focus on educational reform, in 1986 *A National Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* was published as a response to *A Nation at Risk*. This report called for establishing the NBPTS, a restructuring of schools
to provide a more professional environment for teachers, greater accountability for student progress, and incentives for teachers linked to student performance (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy Task Force, 1986). In this second report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (1986) it was recommended that the best way to improve America’s educational system was to focus on the quality of our nation’s teaching force.

The NBPTS Standards represent a vision of accomplished practice put forth by the individual committees that have designed the teaching standards (Frank, 2002). In 1987, a task force created the NBPTS, a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, to strengthen the teaching profession (Boyd & Reese, 2006; Frank, 2002; Imig & Imig, 2006; Koppich, Humphrey, & Hough, 2007; NBPTS, 2007). Its expectations were to raise the quality of education throughout the country by offering standards-based professional development and advanced certification for experienced teachers (NBPTS, 1991; NBPTS, 2003). The Board’s mission was to create national standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do, as well as to design a process for assessing and certifying teachers who met those national standards (Ballou, 2003; Buday & Kelly, 1996; Shapiro, 1995).

One part of the plan was to create an elected governing Board of 64 members, primarily teachers, but also other individuals from state and local education agencies, higher education and business (Baratz-Snowden, 1993; Barringer, 1993; Rotberg et al., 1998). In October of 1987, the Board held its first meeting. It sought to improve the public’s perception of teachers, restore faith in education and instill in teachers an improved sense of self-esteem (NBPTS, 2004a). The Board set out to do so by
increasing the knowledge base for teaching and by encouraging the development of more rigorous teacher education and professional development programs.

At the center of the Board’s vision was the concept of a national teacher certification system. The model the Board had in mind was that of the medical profession’s National Board examinations for specialty areas such as oncology and hematology (NBPTS, 1991). According to Berry, Johnson and Montgomery (2005) and Mistilin, Chung and Darling-Hammond (2008) it was determined that the process would be voluntary and that the teachers who sought the national certification would be expected to engage in very intense self-reflection and analysis of their own teaching. Those who obtained the title of being a NBCT would be those teachers who demonstrated the ability to enhance student learning by following the Board’s five core propositions (Buday & Kelly, 1996; Frank, 2002; NBPTS, n.d.a; Park & Oliver, 2008).

All NBPTS standards, assessments and scoring rubrics are rooted in the Five Core Propositions of what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do (NBPTS, 2004a). According to NBPTS (2008) the Core Propositions are the underpinning and outline the combination of knowledge, skills, dispositions and beliefs that characterize NBCTs. These propositions include:

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

A National Certificate granted by the NBPTS is valid for ten years from the date of certification and it may then be renewed. The renewal process is not the same as the
original certification requirements (NBPTS, 2008). In order to be eligible for NBC, teachers must have a bachelor’s degree, have three full years of teaching/counseling experience and possess a valid state teaching/counseling license for that period of time, or, if teaching where a license is not required, have taught in schools recognized and approved to operate by the state (NBPTS, 2008).

Standards that define accomplished teaching are a main component of NBPTS. As of 2008, standards have been developed for all 25 certificate areas. All standards are based on the National Board's five core propositions and serve as the basis for NBC. According to research conducted by Cavalluzzo (2004) and Wise and Leibbrand (2001) the NBPTS standards are widely accepted in the education community and have led to a realignment of standards by other accreditation agencies including NCATE. NBPTS’ standards are intended to signify what the accomplished practice of teachers is and what teachers should strive for in their classrooms. They are designed to accommodate the variety of settings in which teachers work, reflect the reality of a range of teaching circumstances, and describe the multiple approaches teachers might take to reach curricular and pedagogical objectives (NBPTS, 2004). There is no one way to be a good teacher and the standards endorse that belief.

The design for the NBPTS took nearly a decade; it certified its first teachers in 1994. The passage of “Goals 2000: Educate America Act” (U.S. Department of Education, 1998) called for the use of the NBPTS standards as the “benchmark for accomplished teaching”. To this day, it continues to be utilized for professional development opportunities.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS

Despite the time and financial investments, the typical teacher’s professional development experience is not one of high quality (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Little, 1993) and the opportunities for growth in most schools are limited (French, 1997). Research results suggest that change in teaching occurs when teachers experience high quality professional development (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Little, 1993; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi & Gallagher, 2007).

High-quality professional development enables teachers to grow to their next level of expertise and ability. According to research conducted by Abdal-Haqq (1995) and French (1997) true professional development is a self-motivated, collegial, and voluntary process of learning relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes. Professional development programs cannot succeed if they are something done to teachers, if teachers are passive recipients instead of active participants. Teachers must believe that what they learn produces changes for their students and their classrooms (French, 1997).

Professional development can improve teacher effectiveness in school classrooms. A large-scale study, conducted by Garet et al., (2001), examined professional development and changes in teachers’ knowledge and practice. The researchers found evidence supporting the value of professional development with structural features such as teacher study groups being more effective than traditional professional development settings, such as one day workshops or college courses.

In order to have a substantial effect on teacher learning and to improve classroom practices, professional development should be focused on providing high-quality
experiences. Professional development is most effective when it is organized around the cooperative participation of teachers, and when it is focused on active learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Ingvarson, 1998) and specific teaching practices (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002). Professional development focused on precise instructional practices increases teachers’ use of those practices in their classrooms (Fishman, Marx, Best & Tal, 2003). According to research studies by Abdal-Haqq (1995) and Garet et al. (2001) key features of professional development include: type, duration, collective participation, active learning, and content focus.

Professional development has been criticized for keeping teachers in a passive role (Ingvarson, 1998). A model of continuous professional growth allows individual teachers to critically examine their own classroom performance and to discover ways to improve their practice. The NBPTS has pioneered a system of professional development tied to assessments for NBC that enable teachers to measure their performance against high standards developed by their peers (French, 1997; Ingvarson, 1998). The goal of the NBPTS is to strengthen the profession of teaching, with expectations of raising the quality of teacher education across the country (NBPTS, 2007; NBPTS, 2008). The NBPTS developed an intensive standards-based teacher certification process which may be used as a model for professional development for teachers.

According to work conducted by Burroughs, Schwartz and Hendricks-Lee (2000) a new image of the professional teacher is emerging. These teachers work creatively and collaboratively as members of the learning community and think systemically about their own practice in the context of educational research. NBC from
the NBPTS is an example of teacher-directed growth where teachers choose to seek certification and study their own teaching to find ways they can improve. In order for effective professional development to occur, teachers must take the lead. The existence of NBC and the growing number of teachers participating in it changes the way professional development courses function and raises the standards of quality for professional development for teachers (NBPTS, 2007).

Professional development should no longer be viewed as an event that occurs on a particular day of the school year; rather, it must become integrated into the daily work of educators (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001). Teachers need opportunities for reflection, analysis, and the chance to improve instruction; however, few occasions and little support for such professional development exist in teachers’ environments (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). True professional development guides teachers to critical reflection, which is an examination of themselves as teachers, of what they believe and why they believe it. This process of self-reflection is the key to meaningful professional development (NBPTS, 2007; Smith et al., 2005).

**NBPTS AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

NBC is often perceived as a positive professional development experience for teachers (Bohen, 2001; Lustick & Sykes, 2006; Tracz, Daughtery & Henderson-Sparks, 2005). NBC is the process teachers voluntarily undertake to attempt certification by the NBPTS. The NBC process is demanding and rigorous, requiring many hours to complete extensive reflection papers and document instruction (Clehouse, 2000; Smith et al., 2005) but it is often perceived as a positive professional development experience for teachers
Less than half of the teachers who have completed the process have actually obtained certification on their first attempt (Boyd & Reese, 2006; Burroughs, 2001; Keller, 2005; Lustick & Sykes, 2006; Parks, 2004; Rotberg, Hatwood Futrell, & Leieberman, 1998). The NBPTS, now in its 20th year, reports that only four out of ten teachers score high enough to certify on the first attempt (NBPTS, 2007).

Professional development provides teachers with the opportunity to learn something they did not know before and the option of acting upon their new understanding in a productive manner in the classroom. According to research by Ingvarson (1998), the best system for professional development is the NBPTS. Many view the NBC process as a high-quality learning opportunity, holding the potential to affect candidates’ knowledge, skills and practices in ways that help them bring about improved student performance. According to Mistilin, Chung and Darling-Hammond (2008), the process of NBC allows teachers to have a personal professional development process which capitalizes on reflective opportunities for teachers to hypothesize about what is working well in their daily work and what needs to be refined. The focus is on the teachers’ own practices, rather than being asked to focus on teaching disconnected from their daily work.

Research indicates the NBC process can develop teachers’ practice and also provides high-quality professional development (Areglado, 1999; French, 1997). Lustick and Sykes (2006) conclude that when compared to other professional development options, such as graduate coursework, NBC is a transformative experience for many teachers. Lustick and Sykes’ (2006) research explains that the NBC process itself
improves teacher knowledge and skills in the areas of advancing and supporting student learning. NBPTS promotes its certification as a process that fosters collaboration, reflection and recognition of effective teaching practices (NBPTS, 1991; Tracz et al., 2005).

Soonhye, Oliver, Johnson, Graham and Oppong (2007) examined 14 high school teachers in Georgia. Five of these teachers were NBCTs, five were going through the process and four were considering attempting the process. This study investigated the nature of the interaction among teachers that occurred around the NBC process and how that collegial interaction influenced teachers’ professional development. Results indicated that teacher interactions triggered by NBC helped their individual professional development in several ways including: enhancing reflection on teaching practice, establishing professional discourse, raising the standards for teacher performances and facilitating collaboration.

Studies regarding the effect of the NBC process on candidates have been conducted (NBPTS, 2001b, 2001c). According to the results of those studies, 80% of the teachers surveyed reported that the process was better in improving teaching practices than any other professional development experiences (NBPTS, 2001c). Sixty-one percent said that the act of going through the process had a greater impact on them than actually achieving the certification itself (NBPTS, 2001c). Results from the survey of candidates paralleled findings from the survey with NBCTs. Ninety-two percent of candidates perceived that the assessment process made them better teachers (NBPTS, 2001b).
Recent initiatives in teacher education have emphasized performance-based assessments (Liston, Borko, & Whitcomb, 2008). NBPTS certification is a voluntary, performance-based teacher assessment process based on a teacher’s grade level and subject area. Teacher performance is assessed through a portfolio documenting the teacher’s practices over many months, within the context of the teacher’s own classroom. Teachers have rarely set the agenda for their own professional development (Ingvarson, 1998). Unlike traditional professional development, with NBC candidates determine the specifics they will incorporate into the portfolio.

The average National Board Candidate reports spending 200-400 hours in preparation of their portfolio (Jennings & Joseph, 2004; NBPTS, 2004; Parks, 2004). Completing the portfolio is a demanding, rigorous, and tedious process embedded in the day-to-day work of teachers (Lustick & Sykes, 2006). In the portfolio, teacher candidates provide a written reflective commentary and analysis on each entry which contains additional pedagogical knowledge assessment. Inside the completed portfolio of each candidate are two video tapes or DVDs.

One recording features the teacher teaching in a small group situation, the other shows the teacher teaching in a whole class situation. A third entry demonstrates detailed examples tied directly to improving the learning of two individual students over the course of four to eight months and the fourth entry features the teacher’s work beyond the classroom and his/her work with the communities and families of his/her students (Jennings & Joseph, 2004; Mack-Kirschner, 2005; Parks, 2004). The four entries comprise the performance-based assessment portion of the NBC process which makes up 60% of each candidate’s score (Jennings & Joseph, 2004; NBPTS, 2003; Parks, 2004).
The remaining 40% of the score is determined at an assessment center where candidates take six exams on a computer. Each candidate is given 30 minutes to respond to each of the six prompts, all based on the standards for that particular candidate’s attempted area of NBC. In the assessment portfolio, candidates for NBC are asked to provide clear and consistent evidence of their adherence to the NBPTS’ standards in their daily teaching (Mack-Kirschner, 2005; NBPTS, 2003).

Studies have indicated that teachers have changed their practices as a result of this performance-based professional development. Nearly 90% of teacher candidates reported that the NBC process equipped them to create stronger curricula and improved their ability to evaluate student learning (NBPTS, 2007). A significant percentage of teachers who participate in the process (40%) say that their experience permanently changed their teaching beliefs and practices (Iovacchini, 1998). Studies by Lustick and Sykes (2006) found that the NBC revitalized teachers’ interest and enthusiasm for teaching.

The NBPTS candidates have provided testimonials about the impact that the process has had upon them. NBCTs stated that going through the NBC journey helped them to be more professional, allowed them to critically examine their own practice and provided meaningful professional development (Areelado, 1999; Baratz-Snowden, 1992; Boyd & Reese, 2006; Rotberg et al., 1998; Tracz, et al., 2005; Wise & Leibbrand, 2001). In various research studies, NBCTs were asked about the impact of the NBPTS process on their teaching and learning. They agreed that the process was an effective professional development that improved their students’ learning, their teaching practice and their lives (Buday & Kelly, 1996; Hamsa, 1998; NBPTS, 2007). Teachers who
achieve NBC know they have been identified by their peers as accomplished practitioners who make sound judgments about student learning and act effectively on those judgments (NBPTS, 2001c).

Evidence suggests that the process of NBC promotes teacher learning for the candidates. Iovacchini (1998) conducted a qualitative study with nine NBCTs. Her objective was to interpret how the NBC process worked as a professional development activity for teachers and to learn about the motives of teachers applying for NBPTS. According to Iovacchini’s study, all nine participants stated that they initially participated for intrinsic reasons and all nine candidates for National Certification reported attitudinal changes including a renewed commitment to teaching, an increased sense of professional responsibility, and an increased confidence in their professional judgment. Whether they passed or failed, teachers said they felt better about themselves as professionals and believe they are better practitioners because of their efforts (NBPTS, 2003). However, what teachers feel and think may be quite different from what they actually learn. Therefore, inquiring about the exact learning outcomes from the NBPTS process is important.

Teachers who chose to attempt NBC have cited factors that encouraged them to go through the process including: opportunities for professional development, the prospect of increasing the professionalization of teachers and the importance of national standards (Rotberg et al., 1998). Another study (Clehouse, 2000) also reported teachers gained knowledge and skills as a consequence of using authentic assessment in their classrooms. A greater power of reflection on learning and growth was also noted as a result of attempting NBC, a system that’s been certifying teachers since 1993.
RESEARCH STUDIES ON NBPTS

School districts and educational agencies rely on the NBPTS to recognize accomplished practice of experienced teachers (Mistilin, Chung, & Darling-Hammond, 2008; McColskey et al., 2006). This has led to scrutiny about NBC. Research studies have been conducted to examine the NBPTS; however, a minimal amount of empirical evidence has been reported about the NBPTS and the processes, outside of those studies contracted by the NBPTS.

According to the NBPTS (2008), studies of the impact of NBCTs on student performance have demonstrated how the NBPTS’ focus has led to achievement gains for students from all backgrounds. While nearly two hundred reports and papers on NBC have been published, many of them focus solely on student achievement. For example, a large-scale study conducted by Cavalluzzo (2004) compared the achievement gains of 108,000 Florida’s Miami-Dade Public Schools’ ninth and tenth grade math students, measured by the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test), in the classrooms of both NBCTs and non-Board Certified teachers. While taking into consideration other student attributes such as race, socio-economic status and attendance, this study provided evidence that NBC is an effective indictor of teacher quality, based upon student test scores. Cavalluzzo found that students with otherwise similar teachers made large gains if their teacher was a NBCT and smaller gains if their teacher failed or withdrew from the NBC process.
In Mistilin, Chung, and Darling-Hammond’s research (2008), the teachers attributed most of the changes in their practice to their participation in the NBC process. The findings suggest that professional development strategies like those provided by the NBPTS may help to change teacher’s practices and instruction. Findings from a qualitative research study conducted by Park and Oliver (2008) indicated that the NBC process affected aspects of candidates’ instructional practices including: reflection, implementation of innovative teaching strategies, inquiry-oriented instruction, assessments and understanding students.

Frank (2002) stated that there has been considerable discussion in the recent literature about the extent to which NBCTs have a greater impact on student learning and achievement than non-NBCTs. Initial studies addressing this issue provide some evidence that supports the value added by NBCTs. Other studies, however, have raised concerns including the extent to which the process is heavily influenced by candidates’ verbal abilities and the candidates’ abilities to present themselves in the best light for NBPTS assessors.

Results from Stronge, et al. (2007) regarding a comparison of NBCTs and non-NBCTs indicated that NBCTs scored higher on selected pre-instructional and dispositional variables such as providing cognitively challenging assignments, clarity of grading criteria for assignments and planning practices. However, NBCTs were indistinguishable from non-Board Certified teachers on a variety of in-classroom variables including asking higher-order questions and managing the classroom.

Another study was conducted comparing student achievement via test scores of 35 NBCTs with non-NBCTs in 14 Arizona school districts (Vandevoort, Amrein-
Beardsley & Berliner, 2004). Through 48 comparisons, based on measures of academic performance, the study indicated that students in the classrooms of NBCTs surpassed student test scores in the classrooms of non-NBCTs. Goldhaber and Anthony (2004) also examined three years worth of data to investigate the relationship between North Carolina NBCTs and non-NBCTs with pre and post student achievement data of third through fifth grade students. The authors found that NBCTs significantly outperformed those of their non-NBCT counterparts.

Regarding deeper student learning, research by Bond et al., (2000) it was found that NBCTs outperformed their non-certified peers on teaching measures they defined as: differentiation, expectations, feedback, management, organization, clarity, complexity, technology, focus, caring, fairness, relationships, responsibility, assessment and enthusiasm. Smith, et al., (2005) found that students of NBCTs are twice as likely as other students to produce writing that uses complex ideas and integrates subject matter from other subject disciplines. These researchers link the improved comprehension of NBCTs’ students to the lessons and assignments designed by their teachers.

These findings in favor of NBPTS are not universal, however. Research by Stephens (2003) found no significant difference between the achievement of NBCTs and non-NBCTS when they examined the fourth and fifth grade math scores of 154 NBCTs students and 669 students of non-NBCTs in South Carolina. Additionally, Sanders, Ashton and Wright (2005) studied the academic progress of NBCTs and non-NBCTs and reported that no significant differences existed between the two groups. They stated that students of NBCTs received no higher quality of teaching than did students of other
teachers. Schalock, Schalock and Myton (1998) stated there is no evidence showing that the NBC process affected student learning.

Research study evidence indicates that Board Certified teachers are accomplished classroom practitioners and outperform their non-Board Certified peers on numerous dimensions of teaching expertise including knowledge of subject matter, ability to adapt instruction to different types of students and the capacity to develop engaging and challenging lessons for students (Bond, 2006; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004). Research on improving student achievement however, is not unanimously positive.

While most of the NBPTS research studies have focused on student achievement, other studies have examined different aspects of the NBPTS and NBC. These reviews are mixed. McColskey et al., (2006) found that NBCTs have strong teacher performance in practice-related areas such as graduate coursework, student assignments and quality of planning practices. Investigating the relationship between teacher personality and NBC, Walker and Klotz (2001) found those who were NBCTs or candidates for NBCT were stronger in the area of abstract and analytical conceptual reasoning than teachers who did not attempt NBC. Other researchers have analyzed the NBC process and questioned if the assessment is one of a teacher’s writing talents, rather than about his or her teaching itself (Burroughs, 2001; Burroughs et al., 2000). Studies by Darling-Hammond (1998) demonstrated that the NBC process did help teachers become better teachers.

The question of NBCT data has also been addressed in Rotberg et al.’s, (1998) research where they interviewed teachers who were NBC candidates and found a low rate of NBC participation and a low success rate for achieving NBC. They suggested increasing participation in the NBC process. Research by Hamsa (1998) drew attention
to other concerns, namely, the lack of publicity for the NBPTS, and the high cost of certification ($2,300 in 1998, currently $2,565). Hamsa concluded that these hurdles limited incentives to participate and also suggested a lack of support for candidates. Her other concern was that the NBPTS could create an elite group of teachers, a concern which is not entirely unfounded.

Studies have shown the differential success rates of different sub-groups of teachers attempting NBC (Bond, 1998). In terms of gender, approximately 40% of female candidates have achieved certification while only 25% of males were successful (Bond, 1998). In terms of ethnicity, Whites were more likely to score high enough to certify at a rate of 43%; however, only 19% of Asians, 35% of Hispanics, 26% of Native Americans, and 11% of African-American candidates certified (Bond, 1998). The study results of Goldhaber et al., (2004) found that African-American teachers, and/or females who score higher on standardized tests (NTE, GRE and/or SAT) or were younger, were more likely to apply for NBC. Institutions attended and years of teaching experience did not make a significant difference (Bond, 1998).

Another study investigated where NBCTs work. Research by Humphrey et al. (2005) found that the majority of NBCTs work in rural and suburban schools and approximately one-third work in schools with students from low-income families. Twelve percent teach in high-poverty schools and fewer than 20% teach in high-minority and/or low performing schools. Berry’s (2005) study resulted in similar findings. His research concluded that teachers want to work in schools where they will succeed. This finding is especially true of NBCT teachers who are more mobile when compared to their
non-NBCT colleagues and who are more likely than their non-NBCT peers to move to other jobs (Goldhaber & Hansen, 2007).

TEACHER CAREER SHIFTS

According to research most NBCTs are not teaching in low-performing schools because they do not desire to teach in them (Berry, 2005; Humphrey et al., 2005). One implication of the research conducted by Goldhaber and Hansen (2007) is that policymakers may wish to provide differential financial incentives to give NBCTs greater encouragement to work in disadvantaged schools. Currently, incentives designed to entice teachers to teach in high-needs schools are relatively few (Goldhaber, 2006; Kelley & Kimball, 2001). Seventy-nine percent of the 1,136 NBCTs survey respondents from Koppich et al.’s (2007) research indicated the potential for increasing financial compensation contributed significantly to their decision to pursue Board Certification. However, salary incentives alone are not enough for most NBCTs to desire teaching positions in low-performing schools.

Teachers transfer from their initial teaching position to another school district when they face conditions that can be improved by moving to a different school district (Theobald & Gritz, 1996). These conditions typically include low expenditures for salary and other support activities such as teaching materials, and health and guidance services. According to research by Darling-Hammond (2003) teachers leave the profession because of a lack of collegiality with other like-minded teachers and because of a lack of administrative support.
NBCTs have been designated as accomplished (Bohen 2001; Bond et al., 2000; Cavalluzzo, 2004; Clehouse, 2000; Lustick & Sykes, 2006). Policy makers across the nation have determined that NBCTs ought to be a central part of any strategy to improve student achievement (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986; NBPTS, 2008); however, NBCTs are found disproportionately in higher–performing schools, which halts their potential impact on the neediest students (Goldhaber, 2003; Humphrey et al., 2005). The solution to attracting the best teachers to the most challenging schools would seem to lie in designing an appropriate package of incentives, and taking steps to make these schools more attractive places for highly skilled teachers to teach. Unfortunately, most current incentives for NBCTs seem to be doing little to realign the distribution of excellent teachers (Humphrey et al., 2005). Professional growth structures typically require teachers to leave teaching in order to pursue additional roles in education (Anderson & Olsen 2006).

The NBPTS has developed a voluntary national certification system to recognize, reward and help retain highly accomplished teachers (NBPTS, 2007); however, is the system doing this, or is it instead pulling quality teachers from the classrooms? Research by Stokes, Helms and Maxon (2003) found that nine percent of NBCTs left the classroom. Having attained what is commonly referred to as “the teaching profession’s highest honor” NBCTs report that other opportunities are now available to them that were not available before achieving NBC (Kelley & Kimball, 2001). Some report, after leaving the classroom that they have become - teacher leaders in their schools, moved to higher education, served as consultants and/or worked as professional development providers. Another study reported NBCTs often serve in mentoring or coaching roles, or
are asked to develop or select programs/materials to support increased student learning (Sato, Hyler & Monte-Sano, 2002).

Many NBCTs report that achieving NBC has made a significant impact on their teaching careers (Areagldo, 1999; Baratz-Snowden, 1992; Boyd & Reese, 2006; Rotberg et al., 1998). Research studies have reported that many NBCTs do not leave the education profession, after obtaining their NBC; however, many do leave the field of teaching or reduce their teaching in order to accept other leadership opportunities (Stokes et al., 2003). NBCTs report having plenty of leadership opportunities after they become nationally certified. Ohio’s state legislature, like some other states, offers financial incentives (currently $2,500 per year, for the life of the certificate) as an attempt to keep these accomplished teachers teaching in today’s classrooms; yet some still leave. Much research has been conducted regarding the impact of the NBC process on the teaching practices of teachers and on student achievement (Park, Oliver, Johnson, Graham & Oppong, 2007), but what about the impact of NBC on NBCTs’ professional lives or ultimately on the profession as a whole?

UTILIZING NBCTs

In teaching, few opportunities exist for career advancement within the discipline. Salary increases are more or less automatic as experience and education levels rise (Humphrey et al., 2005). Within school systems is a hierarchy of administrative positions, typically filled by former teachers (Brewer, 1996). Some teachers switch to administrative roles in order to advance their careers while others look for alternatives ways to move forward with teaching.
NBC was developed as a main element of what was described as a “new framework for teaching”. This was to be a system where schools could offer the pay and career opportunities necessary to attract high quality teachers (Carnegie, 1986; NBPTS, 1991). Research by Boyd and Reese (2006) stated that salary incentives for Board Certified teachers should be compared with public education’s incentives which actually reward teachers for getting out of teaching and becoming administrators. In Koppich et al.’s (2005) research, 1,136 NBCTs participated. Forty-five percent of the respondents stated the opportunity to advance their career, while remaining a teacher, impacted their decision to attempt certification from NBPTS (2006).

Research conducted by Goldhaber and Hansen (2007) analyzed 5,145 NBCTs with three to 27 years of teaching experience, in a variety of schools, across all grade levels, in North Carolina. They analyzed how long NBCTs stay in teaching and where they accept teaching assignments. Their research found that early career NBCTs (those with less teaching experience) were more likely to leave their teaching position for another option. Other NBCTs had an increased risk of exiting the profession when teaching among lower-performing colleagues. Additionally, this study found NBCTs are likely to leave schools, in spite of financial incentives designed to keep these teachers teaching.

Financial incentives and bonuses are sizable for many NBCTs upon receiving NBC. Nearly 600 local school districts, along with all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, have enacted legislation or policies that create incentives and recognition for NBC (Berry et al., 2005; NBPTS, 2008). In some states, candidates have their assessment fees paid and receive additional professional development days to complete
their portfolios. Florida pays a 10% salary supplement, if the NBCT agrees to provide mentoring services to other teachers. California offers a $20,000 incentive to NBCTs who agree to teach in low-performing schools while New York pays $10,000 for the same agreement. South Carolina pays $7,500 as a yearly stipend to NBCTs and North Carolina awards a 12% salary increase to NBCTs. Mississippi pays $6,000 annually for the life of the certificate while Oklahoma and Virginia pay an annual stipend of $5,000 to their NBCTs (Kelley & Kimball, 2001; NBPTS, 2008).

NBC has had an impact on teachers’ roles in leadership. With the increased emphasis on shared leadership within schools, the potential of utilizing the expertise of NBCTs is especially significant (Berry et al., 2005; Boyd & Reese, 2006). Loeb, Elfers, Plecki, Ford and Knapp (2006) surveyed 838 NBCTs in the state of Washington regarding the impact on professional practice and leadership opportunities. Their survey found that 75% percent of NBCTs take on leadership roles in addition to their classroom duties. Other studies confirm that teachers typically acquire responsibilities of leadership after obtaining NBC (Berry et al., 2005; Keller, 2005; Patterson & Patterson, 2004). Additionally, when compared to their non-NBCT counterparts, NBCTs engage in more leadership activities (Farrell, 2005).

Teacher leaders can make powerful contributions to schools (Patterson & Patterson, 2004). Sato, Hyler and Monte-Sano (2002) interviewed 15 high school NBCTs certified between 1999 and 2001 examining their leadership activities before and after obtaining NBC. Their evidence indicates that teachers who choose to take on new leadership roles, often helping other teachers improve their practice, generally have positive outcomes (Sato et al., 2002). Farrell (2005) investigated how teachers are
utilized for school improvement and learned in most cases NBCTs serve on committees and are involved in numerous reform efforts in their schools.

NBCTs could spearhead improvement in their schools, but only if administrators realize the potential. One teacher (no matter how expert) is unlikely to have a major impact on improving school quality, unless specific steps are taken to incorporate the teacher’s skills into the educational system (Rotberg et al., 1998). In Stokes et al.’s (2003) survey of 153 NBCTs, NBCTs were stated as believing administrators are still growing in their understanding and appreciation of the value of NBC and the leadership potential of NBCTs.

The recognition of NBCTs can make continuous learning more important since non-NBCTs could have a new incentive to pursue additional knowledge and expertise by pursuing NBC. Professional development is also a key in establishing a career path that can keep some of our best teachers in the classroom, instead of leaving the classroom for administration or other areas. NBCTs could have special status as “teachers of teachers”, allowing them time to act as mentors for other teachers and to help colleagues reach higher levels with their teaching. Strong mentoring programs have been shown to successfully retain new teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003). NBCTs could perform professional development for groups of teachers in their subject discipline, or help curriculum developers create new materials. They could open up their classroom for new teachers to watch how they run their classroom.

NBCTs are generally considered to be valuable members of their school communities (Koppich et al., 2007). School administrators should not ignore the knowledge, skills and leadership capacity of NBCTs, many who are anxious to serve as
innovators in the transformation of their schools. Greater emphasis and attention should be given to structuring, encouraging and supporting the leadership roles that NBCTs can play. NBCTs could be utilized as coaches, mentors, instructional leaders, staff-training experts and leaders for other teachers to help improve the educational system for their students.

CONCLUSION

The NBPTS is at the forefront of discussions about high quality teaching (Loeb, et al., 2006). In some schools, NBCTs have helped to shift the discourse from minimal teaching competencies, which have dominated both faculty and policy discussions, to accomplished teaching. Because of the rigorous process by which NBCTs are judged, there should be interest in how NBCTs could provide a model for accomplished teaching, professional development, and teacher leadership.

Reviewing the existing literature allows one to realize the issues at hand and the potential beneficial impact NBCTs can have upon schools and ultimately the students they serve. In order for teachers to grow and develop their craft, professional development opportunities need to be effective and worthwhile. By allowing teachers to take part in these rich experiences, high quality professionals are encouraged to remain in the classroom to positively impact the learning of children.

Most NBCTs have gained self-confidence by becoming Board Certified and many are willing to share their expertise with others. Historically, teachers have lacked a tradition of sharing their expertise with other educators. They are often reluctant to articulate professional knowledge and typically work in isolation (Park, et al., 2007).
Most NBCTs worked collaboratively while attempting NBC; therefore, they understand the value of working closely with others on educational issues. Participating in a collegial supportive environment where teachers shared ideas, examined each other’s teaching and jointly critiqued each other’s work played a vital role in the participant’s understanding of how the NBPTS standards work in practice (Mistilin, Chung & Darling-Hammond, 2008).

A merit of obtaining NBC is how it impacts a teacher’s career path. NBCTs are considered by colleagues, administrators and community members to be knowledgeable about the “big picture”. They are viewed as high-quality teachers willing to share their expertise with others. NBC can help bridge a gap between administrators and teachers when NBCTs are utilized in the schools to assist others. However, with so few teachers participating in the NBC process (Rotberg et. al, 1998) schools do not have the large numbers of NBCTs needed to make significant differences in schools.

In all states, legislation is in place, in terms of financial incentives, to keep NBCTs teaching in the classroom. Teachers report the financial incentives for achieving NBC to be small, but the professional rewards to be great. The opportunities available for teachers to obtain and to exercise many of the professional abilities and responsibilities endorsed by the National Board vary markedly, depending upon the school. Some schools feature strong professional cultures whose norms support collaboration, innovative teaching, and a high degree of collegiality. Other schools provide few, if any, opportunities. By collaborating with, and by utilizing the expertise and experience of NBCTs, schools can determine what is best for their students. On the
other hand, some studies have said that NBCTs leave the classroom despite the incentives to stay (Sato, Hyler, & Monte-Sano, 2002; Loeb et al., 2006; and Goldhaber et al., 2007).

In conclusion, the majority of the research regarding the NBPTS has been conducted by NBPTS. Most of the research studies have focused on large quantitative studies, usually revolving around student achievement data. It has not typically been published in peer reviewed journals. This has provided gaps in the research.

The research division at NBPTS is currently interested in long term qualitative research studies. Qualitative research seeks to explain the experience as a whole and allows the researcher to go into greater depth for a better understanding. More research should be conducted to study the seasoned NBCTs and to discover what happens to one’s professional livelihood after becoming a NBCT. Inquiring into the long term impact NBC has on career paths of teachers and how they can use their skills and knowledge to improve education would ultimately be an asset to the teaching profession.
Chapter 3

OVERVIEW

This chapter provides a description of the procedures and methodology that were utilized while conducting an investigation of the professional implications of NBC on NBCTs. Chapter Three includes: a description of the qualitative research design, data collection methods, participant selection, data collection procedures and data analysis methods. It also contains ethical considerations for this research study including validity and trustworthiness.

RESEARCH PARADIGM

This study was conducted from the perspective of interpretivist / constructivist research (Erickson, 1986). Interpretivist research is based on the interpretation of naturally occurring events and the representation of those events in the data. It is a reconstruction of the perspectives held by the participants. Merriam (1998) writes, “…reality is constructed by individuals interacting in their social worlds. Qualitative [interpretivist] researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 6). Interpretivist research attempts to look at the data to uncover meaning and understand the deeper implications of people’s actions in a qualitative manner (Somekh & Lewin, 2005).
Interpretivist research designs are emergent and flexible, allowing for the construction of knowledge and changes in data collection and perspectives during the study (Erickson, 1986). Constructivists view multiple realities or multiple ways of interpreting a specific set of data (Corbin & Holt, 2005). The interpretivist/constructivist researcher tends to rely upon the "participants' views of the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). Constructivists do not generally begin with a theory rather they "generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings" (Creswell, 2003, p. 9) throughout the research process.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Constructivist grounded theory is a methodology seeking to construct theory about issues of importance in people’s lives (Glaser, 1978). Grounded theory is a research method developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). It is a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed. Theory develops and evolves during the research process due to the interplay between data collection and analysis phases. This inductive research approach focuses on social interactions. The data collection process is inductive because the researcher has no preconceived ideas to prove or disprove. Issues of importance to participants emerge from what they tell about the area of study (Morse, 2001).

This theory is built from the data gathered during interviews and other observations. Grounded theory is made up of the analytic codes and categories created in the analysis that have been clearly integrated to form a theory about the focus of the
research project (Clark, 2003). Theorizing is the final step in developing grounded theory; however, theorizing can occur along each step of the journey.

In grounded theory, the actual data gathered through research develops the theory (Corbin & Holt, 2005). In this study, the researcher initially transcribed the data (word by word) and then gave temporary labels to particular phenomena. Next, the researcher compared and contrasted the data and analyzed them into codes and categories. This analysis determined whether the codes generated through one data source also appeared in other data sources. Associated codes that endured were then put into additional categories. A constant comparative analysis continued throughout and grounded the researcher’s theorizing in the participants’ journeys. The codes and categories from the data were integrated into the theoretical analysis of the researcher’s study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative inquiry typically focuses on small samples (Patton, 1990). Qualitative researchers are concerned with the meaning of phenomena and lived experiences. There is attention to the social context in which events occur and have meaning, and there is an emphasis on understanding the social world from the participants’ point of view (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This study was a qualitative descriptive case study because it presents a detailed account of the NBCTs’ career paths and the ways they provide assistance to others in the education profession. Case studies describe, examine and interpret the information under study (Merriam, 1998).

In this investigation, the NBCTs were ten to fourteen years post NBC achievement. This time-frame was selected because these were the first teachers ever
certified and because this length of time should have allowed professional differences and
the opportunities to assist others to happen, if any changes were to occur. The intended
purpose was to find out what changes these NBCTs have experienced professionally after
obtaining NBC and if the NBCTs perceive that becoming a NBCT played a role in those
changes. Some NBCTs are asked to help improve the educational system in their
schools. This study investigated the ways this is happening.

Qualitative methods were selected because the researcher was in a discovery
mode. The researcher views reality as a multi-layered, interactive and shared social
experience that can be studied from the participants’ perspectives. Therefore, a cross-
case analysis was strengthened by including collective evidence from the data. A look at
the perceptions of eleven different NBCTs allowed the researcher to identify, compare
and contrast the unique features within this population sample.

This investigation was a multiple case study. Multiple case studies allow
researchers to study more than one case. They are often called: collective, cross-case,
multicase or comparative case studies. When multiple case studies are used, researchers
often provide a detailed account of each and then some form of cross-case comparison,
either in prose or in a tabular summary (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative case studies can be
characterized as being particularistic, descriptive and heuristic (Merriam, 1998). In this
multiple case study, a descriptive approach was utilized in order to produce a rich, thick
description. “Thick description” is a term from anthropology and means the complete,
literal description of the incident or entity being investigated,” (Merriam, 1998, p. 30).
Multiple cases are often preferable to single cases, particularly when the cases may not be
representative of the population from which they are drawn and when a range of behaviors/profiles, experiences, outcomes, or situations is being examined.

Unlike other research, case study research does not claim any particular method for data collection or analysis. Any and all can be used. The case study design was selected because the researcher of this investigation was interested in insight, discovery and interpretation. This study was descriptive because the investigator desired information about the characteristics of the NBCTs. Descriptive case studies present detailed accounts of the phenomenon being investigated. They are useful in areas of education where little research has been conducted. These studies can form a database for future research (Merriam, 1998).

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

According to the United States Department of Education, in the 2007-2008 school year, there were 6,200,000 teachers teaching in the United States (United States Department of Education, 2008). As of November 2008, 63,879 teachers had achieved NBC. Nation-wide, less than two percent of all teachers are NBCTs (NBPTS, 2007). Between the years 1994 and 1998, 1,837 of America’s teachers achieved NBC. In order to identify potential participants for this study, the researcher obtained a list from the NBPTS of all NBCTs, who achieved their certification between 1994 and 1998, and who agreed to release their names and school districts. There were 673 of these individuals. (See Table 3.1.)
Table 3.1 1994-1998 Number of NBCTs and Released Names/Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Names &amp; Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>35 names &amp; schools out of 177 NBCTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>43 names &amp; schools out of 199 NBCTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>52 names &amp; schools out of 219 NBCTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>89 names &amp; schools out of 318 NBCTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>454 names &amp; schools out of 924 NBCTs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL: 673 name and schools out of 1,837 NBCTs from 1994-1998

These 673 potential participants were contacted for this investigation via the United States Postal Service in December of 2008. They were invited to participate in this study via a letter which included background information about the purpose and importance of this study, the requirements and criteria for participating, and the amount of time estimated for involvement in this study. (See Appendix A.) This initial mailing also included a demographic questionnaire and postage paid, addressed envelope for the volunteers to return their items back to the researcher. Once selected, this group formed a unique population of teachers who went through the NBC process and achieved NBC ten to fourteen years ago.

Patton (1990) writes that a fundamental distinction between quantitative and qualitative studies is the use of sampling. While quantitative studies rely on probability to gather a sample to generalize the population, qualitative research seeks out a sample
that is data rich focusing in depth on small samples. This investigation followed Patton’s lead and searched for a sample to provide the richest data from that particular field.

In qualitative research, sample selection has a profound effect on the ultimate quality of the research (Coyne, 1995). In this study, participants were selected through the use of purposeful sampling. “The intent of purposeful sampling is to obtain small samples of information-rich cases of individuals” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989, p. 521). A great deal can be learned about the issues of central importance to the study when one examines information-rich cases, therefore the term purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). Purposive sampling implies the goal of carefully selecting particular types of cases to best enhance the researcher’s understanding of phenomenon.

Sampling may take many forms including: convenience, criterion, critical case, homogeneous, opportunistic, purposeful random, snowball, or stratified sampling (Patton, 1990). The underlying principle that is common is selecting cases that are chosen purposefully to fit the study (Coyne, 1995). For the purpose of this investigation, criterion sampling was employed. With criterion sampling, participants are selected for intense study due to some predetermined characteristics. The attributes, listed below in order of importance, were used to select the participants for this investigation.

Selection Criteria for the Participants

1.) **Length of Time.** This qualification was to ensure that each participant had time to experience professional differences as a result of being an NBCT. The first NBCTs were certified in 1994; therefore, all NBCTs from 1994-1998 were sent invitations as potential participants. The exception to this was the self-study examination of the researcher. The researcher had her certification for four years.

2.) **Careers.** This examined NBCs who remained in the classroom and those who left classroom teaching. This criterion was examined because the researcher
wanted to learn about the professional experiences of both classifications of NBCTs.

3.) **Certification Areas.** The NBPTS currently offers 25 different certificate areas that include 15 subject areas, classified into seven different student age categories. The researcher examined the various certificate areas held by the NBCTs. Because of their subject areas and grade levels, NBCTs may have had differing experiences and opportunities.

4.) **Rural / Urban / Suburban.** Although the scoring criteria for NBC are the same for all candidates regardless of school type, this was utilized as a criterion as teachers in different types of schools may have had different career opportunities and experiences.

5.) **Percentage of Free & Reduced Lunches.** This characteristic was used because the percentage of students who receive free and reduced lunch is an indication of the wealth and resources of the school and larger community. This directly ties into the resources and possible development opportunities available to teachers in poorer/more economically depressed areas.

6.) **School Type.** Teachers from all types of schools are permitted to attempt NBC as long as they meet the minimum requirements. Examining a variety of schools (public, private, parochial, charter) aligns with resources. Generally, private schools have more resources than public. But private tend to be smaller so this may mean that fewer opportunities are available in smaller schools for teachers.

7.) **Renewal of Certificate.** Obtaining a renewal of the ten year certificate would demonstrate that the NBCT is interested in NBC and that they were able to submit evidence and write commentary that tied their continued practice to the NBPTS’ five core propositions.

8.) **Region.** Although the scoring criteria for NBC are the same for all candidates regardless of region, region was utilized as a criterion because teachers in different parts of the country may have had different career opportunities and experiences.

Once the potential participants notified the researcher of their willingness to participate, the researcher made certain the length of time for all NBCTs, except for the researcher in the self-study, was 10-14 years. The demographic questionnaires of those
who are no longer in the classroom were next examined according to their careers. The researcher desired to examine those NBCTs who stayed in the classroom and those who did not; therefore, the researcher examined their current careers and classified the respondents by two career categories, those who remained teaching in the classroom and those no longer in the classroom. The researcher selected five NBCTs who left the classroom. They were selected so that there were a variety of educational careers (for example: teaching, left the profession, working in higher education, administration consulting, etc.) experienced by the potential participants.

The remaining five participants were NBCTs who remained in the classroom. These potential participants were sorted, by the researcher of this study, according to their National Board Certification area. This allowed for the examination of a variety of types of teachers teaching various subject areas and grade levels. After these teachers were sorted according to type of NBC, the remaining criteria (rural/urban/suburban, percentage of free & reduced lunch, school type and renewal of certificate) were next examined so that a mixture of participants was selected. While there was some overlap of criteria, the researcher used the attributes to select a variety of participants according to those predetermined criteria.

SAMPLE SIZE

An adequate number of participants were needed to answer the research questions. The sample size should be large enough to make meaningful comparisons in relation to the research questions (Mason, 2002). According to Patton (1990) and Sandelowski (1995) purposeful sample sizes should be judged on the basis of the purpose
and rationale of each study. Sample size determination should represent reflection based on the context and method of collecting data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005).

This information, based on the literature, led the researcher of this investigation to the determination of 10 participants (plus the researcher as an additional participant) in this research design. Therefore, the researcher selected 10 cases to examine based on relevant criteria and she also selected five alternate cases in case any of the original participants were not able to continue with the study.

DATA METHODS AND COLLECTION

Qualitative research methodologies were used to address the research questions. The collection of data involved questionnaires and interviews. This data was designed to document, narrate and interpret the perception of the impact that eleven NBCTs reported having had since achieving NBC over the past 10 to 14 years. Data consisted of narratives, specifying what professional differences have been noticed by the participants since becoming nationally certified (between 1994 and 1998) and ultimately what has happened to their careers and work within the profession since achieving that accomplishment. The focus of this study was to understand the NBCTs’ perspectives of the professional implications NBC has had (or not had) on their professional livelihoods.

Qualitative methods, such as interviewing, offer a potentially powerful means of uncovering the complex experiences of participants in research studies. Coming from an interpretive tradition, qualitative interview-based studies can establish an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the participants and the meanings according to their
own accounts (Broom, 2005). Rather than focus on measuring behavior or attitudes, a qualitative approach focuses on the interpretations of the participants.

Interviewing is the careful asking of relevant questions. Interviews may show considerable differences in the degree to which they are planned. In qualitative research open-ended or semi-structured interview questions are typically used (Merriam, 1998). This is because unstructured interviews are more flexible and more likely to field information that the researcher hadn’t planned to ask.

Patton (1990) identified three basic types of qualitative interviewing for research. These are the informal conversational interview, the interview guide approach and the standardized open-ended interview. All three share the fact that the participants’ responses are open-ended and not restricted to choices controlled by the researcher.

According to Patton (1990), the informal conversation type of interview resembles a chat, during which the informants may sometimes forget that they are being interviewed. Most of the questions asked will flow from the immediate context. When utilizing the interview guide approach (often called a guided interview), a list is prepared to make sure that all relevant topics are covered. The interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions to gather more information. This type of interview approach is useful for eliciting information about specific topics. Researchers using the open-ended interview approach plan a set of open-ended questions which are carefully worded and arranged for the purpose of minimizing variation in the questions posed to the interviewees. This method is often preferred for collecting interviewing data when two or more researchers are involved in the data collecting process (Patton, 1990). The open-ended interview method provides less flexibility.
Because the interview guide approach allows for in-depth probing while permitting the researcher to control the interview within the parameters of the study, the author of this study conducted the study’s interviews using a guided interview format. The researcher was careful to ensure that the data was relevant and sufficient to help answer the research questions (Lewin, 2005). In this approach the interviewer and the interviewee had a list of questions to be asked for each of the three interviews (Appendix F). According to Patton (1990), the major advantage is that the data are more systematically and comprehensive while the tone of the interview remains fairly conversational and informal. Additionally, this type of interview allowed the researcher to probe for more in-depth responses.

The interview strategy for this study needed enough flexibility to capture the perceptions of 11 different NBCTs, and yet the questions and depth of detail gathered from the interviews had to be consistent enough to allow comparisons to be made. Therefore, the interview questions were asked in a guided interview approach.

In many forms of qualitative research, most of the data is collected through interviews (Kvale, 1996a). “The researcher interview is a specific form of conversation,” (Kvale, 1996a, p. 19). According to Patton (1990), the function of interviewing is to find out what is in someone else’s mind. These thoughts cannot be directly observed; therefore, the interview provides a forum for the researcher to ask questions to obtain this information from the participants (Merriam, 1998).

In this inquiry, digitally-audio recorded interviews, conducted over the telephone allowed the researcher and the NBCTs, regardless of their location, the opportunity to engage in a guided conversation regarding the study questions. All NBCT participants
participated in three interviews, each one lasted approximately one hour in duration and was based on/centered around one of the three research questions.

Use of Technology

Adapting research methods to technological advances expands the opportunities for both the researcher and the participants. The telephone interview, as a research method, may be a reflection of social change and technology advances. The increased availability of technology changes, such as mobile phones, Internet resources and email communications may provide researchers with more opportunities to substitute for face-to-face contact with research participants. The telephone conversation is a conversation without the assistance of visual cues. In this investigation, the telephone interview was used as a strategy to obtain data, allowing interpersonal communication without a face-to-face meeting. Kvale (1996a) listed nine types of interview questions: introducing, follow-up, probing, specifying, direct, indirect, structuring, silence and interpreting. All types of questioning can be used with telephone interviews.

According to Barriball, Christian and While (1996) and Law (1997), there is good support in the literature for the telephone interview as a legitimate data collection method for research. Telephone interviews share many advantages of face-to-face interviews, including a high response rate, the opportunity for interviewers to correct misunderstandings and the use of probing questions (Carr & Worth, 2001). It also provides minimal disruptions to the interviewees who may participate in this interview in any environment where they can make a phone call. The anonymity people feel while on the telephone, due to the lack of face-to-face contact, may encourage the participants to
talk more honestly and openly about their experiences related to their attainment of NBC. Control over the interview process lies with the interviewer who can put the interviewee at ease by the use of effective interpersonal skills and the willingness to reword questions as necessary. Additionally, the potential for error by recording data incorrectly can be avoided. Due to technological advances, audio-taping the interviews, with the participants consent, allowed for an accurate record of the interviews in this study.

Disadvantages may occur with telephone interviews including the fact that those without access to telephones, or to those who are unable to use them effectively, may face challenges. For example, those who do not speak English or who have hearing or language challenges would not be able to participate in the same manner in a telephone interview. Due to the fact that NBCTs must demonstrate high levels of proficiency in both written and oral communication skills in order to achieve national certification, these disadvantages of telephone interviewing did not apply in this particular study.

Telephone interviews could include a greater difficulty in achieving rapport. The lack of visual cues to aid interpretation of speech may take away from the quality of the interviews in some cases. Additionally, nonverbal cues such as body language or other physical cues are not available for view in a telephone interview. This might or might not be important, as interpretations of physical cues are not often used in interview data analysis (Mann & Stewart, 2000).

Notification to Potential Participants

Ten NBCTs, in addition to the researcher who is also an NBCT, were studied. Only NBCTs who were still accessible through traditional means, as letters were mailed
to them, made up the large population the researcher drew from. The NBPTS’ database only includes the names and school districts of the 673 NBCTs, certified between 1994 and 1998, who agreed to release this information at the time of their NBC application. The system does not keep up-to-date with NBCTs current employment. Because some of these NBCTs are no longer associated with the school district they were employed with at the time of application, these NBCTs may not have received this invitation to participate. A letter detailed this study and asked for their participation (Appendix A). The researcher also included a demographic questionnaire in that mailing focusing upon questions about their careers including any leadership roles in the field of education (Appendix B).

Collecting data from a sample of elements and drawing from a well-defined population through the use of a questionnaire is used with research (Visser, Krosnick & Lavrakas, 2000). Questionnaires can provide descriptive information about a targeted group (Watson, 1998). Therefore, the researcher used a questionnaire in order to collect demographic data (age, race, school district, email address, grade and subject levels, etc.) and also to ask specific questions concerning the participants’ NBC. As stated in the letter to the potential participants, by completing and returning the demographic questionnaire in the postage-paid envelope provided, the NBCTs demonstrated their willingness to participate in the study and were included in the participant sampling process.

The demographic questionnaires were utilized for future contact with the potential participants and for sampling purposes. It was essential that the investigator selected a sample population that could articulate their thoughts and experiences ultimately
enhancing the investigator’s understanding. To help with this determination, the questionnaire included an open-ended response in addition to basic questions.

Purposeful sampling is "selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 1990, p. 169) when one wants to understand something about those cases without needing or desiring to generalize to all such cases. In January of 2009, the researcher analyzed the returned demographic questionnaires and selected ten participants through purposeful selection to study based upon criteria including: career experiences, certification areas, free school lunch population, rural and urban settings, school types, and renewal of NBC or not. Five alternates were also selected according to the same participant criteria and they were rank ordered. These alternates would have been used if any of the ten NBCTs did not continue with the study.

The selected participants received a letter stating they were selected to participate in the study (Appendix C). The researcher then contacted each participant via email to schedule the first of three rounds of interviews (Appendix H). Two selected participants did not respond to the email so they received a follow up telephone call from the researcher. Their first round interviews were scheduled at that time. Letters to the alternates (Appendix D) were mailed after the ten selected participants committed to the study and completed their first set of interviews. Letters to the non-selected participants were mailed after the ten selected participants and the five selected alternates committed to the study (Appendix E).

The participants were sent each set of interview questions via email from the researcher approximately one week prior to the scheduled interview. They were also informed that he or she would receive a copy of their transcription and would have the
opportunity to respond to its validity. Interviews offer insight into the respondents’ memories and explanations of why things have come to be, as well as to give descriptions of current happenings. When a researcher asks about past events, the interviewees must rely on their memories. The human memory can be inaccurate; therefore, in order to make the interviews as fruitful as possible, the questions were sent prior to the interviews. This allowed the participants to be informed of the areas to be discussed and it provided them with time to think and reflect upon the questions.

The Phone Interviews

All interviews were conducted via telephone and were digitally recorded live via an Internet website located at www.instantconference.com. In the self-study, the interview questions were asked of the researcher/participant from a fellow NBCT. Just like all other interviews, the ones with the researcher as a participant also took place over the telephone, were digitally recorded through the website and transcribed by the researcher. These three self-study interviews occurred prior to any other interview rounds being conducted with the other participants. For example, interview one was conducted prior to any of the other participants’ round one interviews. The self-study round two interview was conducted prior to the round two interviews with the participants and the third self-study interview was conducted with the researcher prior to any of the round three interviews being conducted. The researcher/participant responded to the interview questions based upon her own personal experiences. Going first with each of the three sets of questions allowed the researcher the opportunity to better develop and to further clarify questions. Additionally, this experience allowed the
researcher/participant to better understand how the study participants would feel while serving as a participant.

Each participant in this study received a toll free telephone number to call and a secure access code to enter when prompted. The researcher paid the costs to establish the toll free line so that there was no charge to any of the participants. At the mutually arranged time, the researcher began the process by first calling the participant to make certain that the interview would still occur as planned. According to Kvale (1996a), the first minutes of an interview are important to establishing good contact between the participant and researcher.

Each interview began with an expression of gratitude and appreciation by the researcher. After this brief introduction, both the researcher and the participant hung up, dialed the toll free number and entered the assigned access code. Each participant had a different, private access code for confidentiality. After the connection was made between the two parties via the toll free number, the researcher accessed the recording device. At that time, the study participant was asked, via the computer, if they consented to recording the conversation. When the participant agreed, by entering a certain number when prompted, the digital recording of the interview began. During the interviews, the researcher took notes to capture any critical elements that might not be reflected in the transcriptions. This process assisted with the identification of early patterns and themes and helped to prompt for additional questioning during the remaining interviews.

This study with each of the selected participants included three rounds of individual interviews with question sets focused on each the three research questions. Interviews lasted from 30 – 90 minutes with the average interview being approximately
60 minutes. All interviews were digitally recorded, downloaded into a MP3 file and then transcribed. Following the telephone interview, both the researcher and the participant had access to the telephone playback of the interview in a digital file. The researcher used this downloaded file, on her personal computer, to aid in the transcription process. The participant was able to use his/her personal access code to obtain only his/her own telephone interview; no one else’s telephone interview was able to be accessed.

Each interview ended with a debriefing of what would happen next. At that time, each participant was informed that he or she would receive, via email, a copy of the word-for-word transcription of each interview and that he or she was encouraged to respond to its validity and any other matter. Participants were also encouraged to respond to the written narrative the researcher emailed each participant following each of the three interviews.

Following each interview, the digitally audio recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and a copy was then sent electronically to each participant as a member-check. In the email they also received a narrative summary of the interview written by the researcher. Participants were asked at the end of each interview to check the transcripts and summaries for accuracy and to provide any clarification that was needed. They were also reminded to do this in the email that was sent containing the transcripts and the summaries. Participants were invited to give responses via e-mail, mail, or telephone.

All data involved in this study will be secured in a locked cabinet supervised by the researcher and will be destroyed three years following the completion of this study.
Piloting

The quality of the interview relies heavily on the quality of the interviewer (Morse & Field, 2002). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the researcher piloted two telephone interviews with fellow NBCTs to gain experience in the necessary skills and to obtain input regarding the research questions and the interview process from the NBCTs. The demographic questionnaire was also piloted with the two pilot volunteers, friends of the researcher.

Researchers have recognized many advantages of using piloting for their studies. Pilots are often used to frame questions and collect background information (Sampson, 2004). Piloting can be helpful to refine the research instruments including questionnaires and interview questions. In addition to providing the researcher with additional training, problems with the study or with the interview questions may also be identified by using a pilot. For example, if pilot participants find that the questions are confusing, changes can be made. Furthermore, the pilot allows the researcher to examine how the participants react to questions and to see if the questions asked are the ones that will give the information needed to answer the research questions. Piloting and informal conversations with colleagues can help develop better questions.

Utilizing pilot studies can be invaluable. Pilots may allow researchers to reflect in greater depth on the nature of the activities in which they are studying (Sampson, 2004). In this study, piloting allowed the researcher to discuss the interview questions with the pilot volunteers and to better frame the interview questions as a result. It also provided the researcher with practice in interviewing skills.
Analytic Memos

Qualitative research aims to explore a given phenomena with the intent of establishing the meaning it holds for those whose lives it touches. The researcher must be able to employ analytical strategies that enable meaning to be extracted from the data. A technique called analytic memoing facilitates this outcome by allowing the researcher to answer the question of “What is actually happening in the data?” (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Analytic memoing is most commonly associated with grounded theory (Birks, Chapman, & Francis 2008; Glaser, 1994; Merriam, 1998). Writing analytic memos is a technique used to develop the researcher’s own ideas. They are primarily a tool for thinking. Analytic memos provide an avenue to examine the data at a greater level of abstraction and to explore relationships and explanations contained within the data. Through the use of analytic memos, the qualitative researcher is able to engage with their research at a greater degree than would otherwise be possible.

Memos can help clarify thinking on a research topic by providing a mechanism for the expression of assumptions and subjective perceptions about the area of study (Merriam, 1998). Recording these reflections can assist the researcher later with critical review. They facilitate the researcher’s reflections by assisting the researcher as he or she engages in serious reflection and analysis, instead of just mechanically recording events and thoughts. Can exploration and interpretation be achieved without the use of memoing as a research strategy? If so, it’s likely the end product will contain less depth and quality (Birks et al, 2008). Memos provide ‘a space and place for exploration and discovery’ (Charmaz, 2006, p. 81).
With memoing, similarities and differences are identified and relationships are examined. The result is the generation of theoretical assertions that are grounded in raw data, but also have the quality of conceptual abstraction. The process of memoing requires researchers to acknowledge and demonstrate the logical processes that have brought them to this point (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Memos move the researcher from the concrete to conception.

Glaser (1978) implores the researcher to consider memo writing a priority to ensure the retention of ideas that may otherwise be lost. Regardless of how inconsequential these thoughts, feelings and impressions may initially seem, creating a record ensures that such ideas that may later prove significant and will be preserved.

It is important that memos are organized in a retrievable form so that insights and reflections can easily be assessed for future examination. According to Merriam (1998) managing data can also take place on a computer software program designed for qualitative research. Qualitative research has software developed for the specific purpose of exploring data. Therefore, in this study, the researcher used a computer program, NVivo 8, to assist with analytic memoing.

Analytic memos were written immediately after each interview and during the transcription process. This assisted with the identification of early patterns and themes and helped to prompt for additional questioning and question refinement during future interview rounds.

The focus of this researcher’s memos was descriptive and interpretive. The memos also included the rationale for decisions made and actions taken. The researcher in this investigation wrote memos regarding the activities conducted and the justification
for the selections. The straightforward nature of these memos provided the novice researcher in this study with the opportunity to acquire skills while developing her own style. The memos in this study were all dated and given titles as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998).

Memoing, as a researcher technique, is not restricted to the analytical phase of research. Collection and analysis should occur as simultaneous processes while conducting qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, after each interview the researcher of this study wrote a memo capturing her reflections, tentative themes, hunches, and future ideas to pursue that resulted from the first set of data. She noted things she wanted to ask in the next data collection activity. After the second interview, she compared the first set of data with the second. This comparison informed the third set of data collected. Coding memos enabled a deep involvement in coding and categorization of data (Merriam, 1998). When the author sat down to analyze and write up her findings, she had a set of tentative categories or themes, and answers to her research questions from which to work.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

Qualitative research is subjective and complex. This research approach desires to represent rich, subjective experiences in such a way as to reflect on the consistencies and parallels, but also to keep the nuanced nature of the data (Broom, 2005). In qualitative research, the investigator does not seek to prove or disprove a hypothesis. Instead, the researcher aims to explore central research questions.
Qualitative research produces large amounts of data which need to be systematically analyzed in a logical fashion (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe data analysis in qualitative research as open-ended and inductive. They maintain what is at issue is the best means to make sense of the data. This is done in ways that facilitate the continuing unfolding of the inquiry and lead to a maximal understanding of the phenomena being studied. The selection of data organization should conform to the specific qualitative approach used in the study, which in this research study, was case studies utilizing data gathered from interviews and questionnaires.

The constant comparative method is commonly used for data analysis in qualitative research studies (Merriam, 1998). The constant comparative method involves comparing one segment of data with another segment of data to establish similarities and differences. Data are grouped together according to similar aspects. These aspects are given a label which then makes a category. According to Merriam (1998), the overall object of analysis is to seek patterns in the data. These patterns are arranged in relationship to each other in the building of a grounded theory.

The constant comparative method was developed by Glaser and Strauss as a means of developing grounded theory. A grounded theory consists of categories, properties and hypotheses that are the conceptual links between and among the categories and properties (Charmaz, 2006). The constant comparative method of data analysis has been used by many researchers who are not seeking to build substantive theory.

The researcher of this study used the constant comparative method during the data collection process. She made notes regarding emerging categories and constantly
compared data within the same set and from previous data as she continually searched for conceptual links. This helped to determine the study’s themes.

According to Broom (2005), the process of qualitative data analysis is an elusive, contextual, and ambiguous process that one cannot replicate in a computer program. Within a qualitative interview-based study, data analysis begins during data collection. According to Merriam (1998) the correct way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection. Analyzing data as it is collected allows the researcher to go back and refine questions, develop hypotheses, and pursue in depth emerging paths of inquiry. This approach, within the data collection process, provides an opportunity to establish initial themes and then to look for deviant or negative cases. The groundedness of such analysis means the researcher is open both to unforeseen patterns and also to cases which run counter to the patterns.

The researcher in this study began to process data as soon as they became available. She provided immediate feedback with the word-for-word transcriptions and written summaries and she requested verification of data from the participants following each interview. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the researcher must be responsible and adaptable to change circumstances, holistic, sensitive and have the ability for clarification and summarization.

Therefore, in this study, the investigator simultaneously collected and analyzed data. She initially approached data analysis by systematically reading through each transcript and questionnaire several times. She wrote notes and looked for emerging patterns within the data collected as she recorded interesting and significant items. This
process is referred to as “open coding” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Open coding was conducted, by the study’s investigator, as soon as each interview was transcribed.

While the informal analysis occurred in the midst of the data collection, a more formal analysis occurred with the systematic coding of data. Each of the 33 transcriptions was initially marked and notes were made to determine initial impressions and emerging trends. During the reading and re-reading of each transcript, the research questions were revisited to narrow the data collection. The transcribed and verified interviews were then coded and categorized to encompass the major themes of the research study. The themes provided rich, descriptive information that was then applied to the research questions.

Following the initial analysis, the researcher of this study then reviewed notes of the interviews to establish themes emerging across the interviews. This process of reflecting and writing notes helped her sort through the study’s data. Constantly comparing is the basic strategy of the constant comparative method. In this case, the researcher of this investigation began with a particular event from an interview and compared it with another incident in the same set, or in another set of data. These comparisons led to tentative categories that were then compared to each other and to other instances. Once the researcher identified a theme, she searched through each interview for other related comments, employing a constant comparison to further develop the themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This means that initially unrelated themes were occasionally grounded together as interconnections became apparent.

Next, the researcher of this study employed “selective coding”. Selective coding involves further refining the data, bringing together patterns, consistencies and categories
(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This creates mega themes. By combining related patterns into mega themes, a comprehensive picture of the participants’ collective experiences will be formed.

Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). This process of data analysis is intuitive and flexible. It has the ability to reinterpret and change over the course of the analysis, leading to new ways of understanding as new ideas are put together and participants’ interpretations are seen in a fresh light.

Following coding on paper, a more formal procedure of placing codes on an electronic document on the researcher’s computer were implemented. To aid the investigator in this process, the NVivo 8 qualitative computer program was employed. NVivo 8 allows the researcher to enter data in a word processing document, apply codes, sort by themes, count words and nodes, and create visual organizers. The software helped the researcher manage and make sense of the data as it contains tools for classifying, sorting and arranging information. This tool aided in the organization and interpretation of coding and data analysis by helping to analyze data and discover patterns, identify themes, glean insight and develop meaningful conclusions.

**PARTICIPANT COMPENSATION**

The participants did not receive any financial compensation for their involvement in this research study. The commitment for participation in the study was explained to all participants by the researcher. It was also printed in a confidentiality document. All participants reviewed the voluntary participation agreement and the right to withdraw
without penalty form (Appendix G). They were given opportunities to ask questions before participating and questions were allowed to be asked at any time throughout the study.

THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

The researcher is the instrument in qualitative research, extracting meaning from the data. This is done by filtering the data through the researcher’s own interpretive perspective. The researcher’s perspective establishes, to a significant extent, the context of the study (Patton, 1990).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify the characteristics that make humans the “instrument of choice” for naturalistic inquiry. Humans can be responsive to cues and have the ability to interact with the situation. They have the ability to collect information at multiple levels and are able to perceive situations holistically. “The position of the researcher has a major impact on any research project, shaping its methodological and theoretical foundations and as a result, the final analysis” (Broom, 2005, p. 71).

A study is only useful if the researcher is reflective regarding his/her influence. Research that claims to be objective and not influenced by the investigator is deceptive (Broom, 2005). Having a biased researcher cannot be avoided; however, it can contribute to the worth of the study if this position is acknowledged, thus becoming part of the understanding how the research itself functions. The researcher of this study has personal experience with this topic because she is a NBCT. She had personal experiences similar to the participants. She felt that she was an “accepted member” of the group of case study participants being studied in her investigation.
There is a subjective nature of all social knowledge (Behar, 1996). The researcher of this study recognizes her bias and her subjectivity. She has been colored by her experiences. They have deeply affected her teaching, her professional work and what she has chosen to study. This helped her draw deeper connections between her personal experiences and the subject under study. Strong personal motivation and interest inspired her to pursue this topic of study.

The credibility of a qualitative research report relies heavily on the confidence readers have in the researcher’s ability to be sensitive to the situations and to make appropriate decisions (Patton, 1990). Being a fellow NBCT may have helped the researcher establish rapport with the participants. Interview data was ultimately co-constructed because it reflected items from the researcher and the interview participant. It was important that the researcher constantly reflected on the impact of her own background on the data produced (Broom, 2005). Therefore, in this study the researcher presents her findings as co-constructions, rather than objective accounts of particular events.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All data collections require ethical considerations. “Ethical practice is often defined as ‘doing no harm’” (Piper & Simons, 2005, p. 56). Ethical considerations are very important and in this study they included every participant’s right to privacy and the protection of all human subjects. At all times, participants were assured of anonymity through the use of pseudonyms. That was to help encourage open and honest dialogue.
Additionally, the participants’ specific years of teaching were not included in this study in an effort to protect their identity.

VALIDITY & RELIABILITY

Qualitative inquirers need to demonstrate that their studies are credible (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), reality is “a multiple set of mental constructions...made by humans; their constructions are on their minds, and they are, in the main, accessible to the humans who make them” (p. 295). In qualitative research, humans are the main mechanism of data collection and analysis. Interpretations of reality are accessed directly through the human’s observations and interviews. Therefore, the human, the researcher, was closer to reality than if a data collection instrument had been interjected between the researcher and the participants (Merriam, 1998). When reality is examined in this manner, internal validity is a strength of qualitative research.

Internal validity is how one’s findings match reality. According to Kvale (1996a) internal validity is achieved when the researcher demonstrates the reality of the participants through a consistent line and quotations from their interviews. In other words, internal validity is achieved when the researcher can demonstrate that there is evidence for the statements and descriptions made. Data are connected to their sources. This is demonstrated by quotations so the reader can establish that the conclusions and interpretations directly arise from those statements and descriptions.

Merriam (1998) stated that validity “must be assessed in terms of interpreting the investigator’s experience, rather than in terms of reality itself,” (p. 167). According to
Creswell and Miller (2000) validity is defined as how accurately the account represents participants’ realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them. Procedures for validity include those strategies used by researchers to establish the credibility of their study. In this study this researcher included: member checks, thick, rich descriptions and multiple case studies.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Merriam (1998) recommend specific strategies be used to attain trustworthiness and to enhance internal validity such as member checks. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe member checks as a continuous process during data analysis and also as “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314) in a study. Member checks consist of taking data and interpretations back to the study participants so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account. This allowed the researcher to thoroughly check the data and narrative account with the study’s participants (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Utilizing member checks is a way to use a second lens to establish validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000). With member checking, the validity procedures shift from the researcher to the participants. This lens stresses the importance of examining how accurately participants’ realities have been represented in the study. Performing member checks is an important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and the perspective they have about what has happened. It is also an important way for the researcher of this study to identify her own biases and misunderstandings by verifying the data with the participants. Verification is the process of checking, confirming, and being certain.
Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest thinking of reliability in a qualitative study as dependability or consistency of results gained from the data. Since reliability is the extent to which findings can be replicated (Merriam, 1998) and replication is not the purpose of a case study, one needs to consider reliability in a different manner. To improve reliability in qualitative research, researchers should maintain close contact throughout the study with the participants to check for discrepancies in responses, verify the accuracy of participants’ responses and explore each participant’s responses meticulously (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility refers to how much the data collection correctly reflects the multiple realities of the phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), in qualitative studies, an important way to verify findings and to establish validity is to take the transcripts and the analyzed results back to the participants to ask them if it is correct. Therefore, in this study, credibility was achieved by sharing with each participant the verbatim transcript of the individual interviews and also the drafts of emerging concepts and categories.

After the researcher wrote each draft, she e-mailed the information to each NBCT for review and comment. Additionally, she asked the participants if the themes or categories made sense, whether they were developed with sufficient evidence and if the overall account was realistic and accurate. This is how the researcher of this study conducted member checks to confirm both data and interpretation.

The researcher also incorporated participants’ comments on the member-checks into the final narrative. By utilizing member checks in this manner, the participants in this study had the chance to react to both the data and the final narrative. Member-
checking supports the accuracy of reported facts and increases the validity of descriptive statements. Member-checking helps to provide rich data. Additionally, in qualitative research, an audit trail demonstrates how the decisions were made and how the conclusions were reached. The analytic memos assisted with this.

Another procedure to establish a qualitative study’s credibility is to describe the participants and themes in rich detail (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Merriam, 1998). The process of writing using thick description is to provide as much detail as possible. According to Denzin (1989), “thick descriptions are deep, dense, detailed account….Thin descriptions, by contrast, lack detail, and simply report facts” (p. 83).

The purpose of a thick description is that it provides a narrative that allows the readers to feel like they have experienced the events being described in a study. Therefore, credibility is established through the lens of readers who read a narrative account and are transported into a situation (Denzin, 1989). Intensive interviews enable a researcher to collect “rich” data, data that are detailed and varied enough that they provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on (Merriam, 1998). In interview studies, thick, rich descriptive data requires verbatim transcripts of the interviews, not just notes. This is exactly what was utilized in this study.

Including many cases in the research study is a common strategy for enhancing the external validity (Meriam, 1998). Multiple case studies involve collecting and analyzing data from several cases. For example, instead of studying one NBCT, the researcher in this study examined eleven NBCTs (ten fellow NBCTs and herself). “The more cases included in a study and the greater the variation across the cases, the more
compelling an interpretation is likely to be” (Merriam, 1998, p. 40). This strengthens the validity of the findings.
Chapter four presents the findings of this qualitative research study. The purpose of this investigation was to examine the professional lives of eleven NBCTs, ten to fourteen years following their attainment of NBC. Some NBCTs have reported that obtaining NBC formulated a new career path while others have stated they are “forever changed” as practitioners because of becoming NBCTs. Other professional differences have occurred after becoming NBCTs by the new work they do assisting others in the field of education.

Data in this investigation were collected to answer the following research questions:

1.) What professional differences (if any) are noted since becoming a NBCT and how does this affect their careers?

2.) How does becoming a NBCT influence an individual’s career path over time?

3.) What are NBCTs’ perceptions on the ways they provide assistance to others in the education profession?

Conducting 33 interviews with 11 NBCTs from all regions of the country, the researcher examined the influence of NBC on their work in the field of education. Each NBCT contributed to the gathering of data by sharing their individual experiences.
regarding the impact NBC has had on their professional livelihoods as they answered the
interview and demographic questionnaire questions. Each participant held a unique view
and together the participants provided data-supported themes which guided the analysis
of this study.

Merriam (1998) advises that there is “no standard format for presenting
qualitative research” (p. 227). The approach utilized in this investigation was to arrange
the results around the research questions. After each research question, an overview of
related themes is presented. The findings of each participant are then written
individually, followed by a section showing the relationships between the participants.

The section begins with descriptive information of each of the 11 study
participants regarding demographics. Vignettes are shared to inform the reader about
each individual NBCT and their unique professional experiences regarding NBC. Next
the findings for each of the participants are organized through the presentation of the
study’s themes. The last section of the chapter discusses the relationships of the findings
between the participants.

STUDY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Potential Participants

673 solicitation letters were mailed using the addresses supplied by the NBPTS.
Of the total letters mailed, 49 were returned to the researcher as undeliverable.
Therefore, 7.28% of the mailed letters did not reach the intended NBCTs. Of the
remaining 568 letters, 107 (or 18.84%) were completed by the addressee and mailed back
to the researcher containing information. Of the 107 returned letters, three NBCTs did
not wish to participate, one NBCT did not qualify for the study (it is unclear how she received an invitation to participate as she was not on the original mailing list), one was returned with a note marked “deceased” and another contained a note “no longer working in this school”. The total of eligible volunteers for this study was 101, or 17.78% of the 568 letters. According to Fresch (2007), the normal rate of response for mailed surveys is 10%. Therefore, the return rate in this study is higher than the typical anticipated rate of 10%.

Study Volunteers

All of the 101 volunteers taught in public schools at the time of certification and obtained their certification between 1994 and 1998. There were 92 female and nine male respondents with four to 43 years of teaching experience. Sixty-eight of the respondents remained teaching while 33 left the classroom. Fifty-nine renewed their NBC while 42 did not. Volunteers ranged in age from 37-76 years old and had obtained Bachelors to Doctorate degrees. The free and reduced lunch population in the schools where the respondents taught varied from 0 – 100%. (See Table 4.1 for complete demographics of the study volunteers.)
<table>
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<td>European-American</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>West Pacific Island</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of Certification</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBPTS Certification Area</td>
<td>EA/ELA</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EA/GEN</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EC/GEN</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MC/GEN</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EAYA/ART</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AYA /MATH</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AYA/ SCIENCE</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1  Demographics of Study Volunteers

*Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding of percentages and/or no responses.

**Regions were identified according to the US Census Bureau classifications.
Following U.S. Census Bureau Classifications of States (See Table 4.2), the 101 study volunteers were categorized according to region. Thirty nine of the volunteers were from the Midwest, ten were from the Northeast, 37 were from the South and 15 were from the West.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Midwest</th>
<th>Northeast</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>West</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 4.2 U.S. Census Bureau Population Regions

Twenty-five of the participant volunteers worked in rural schools at the time of volunteering to participate in this study, while 26 were in urban schools and 50 in suburban schools. Eighty of the 101 volunteers were Caucasian, five were African American, one was West Pacific Island, two were Hispanic, four were European American, and one was Asian. Eight did not respond to the ethnicity question.

Selected Participants

A purposeful selection process was based on criteria which included: types of careers, certification areas, percentage of free and reduced school lunch population,
region, type of school setting, and whether a NBCT renewed his or her certificate or not.
A diverse group was sought to represent the larger body of NBCTs. (See Table 4.3.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>*Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>Remained in the Classroom</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Left the Classroom</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten Year Certificate</td>
<td>Renewed</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did Not Renew</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Background</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post Masters</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free &amp; Reduced Lunches</td>
<td>Low (0-30% of school population)</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium (31-70% of school population)</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High (71-100% of school population)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region**</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>West</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Setting</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of Certification***</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBPTS Certification Area</td>
<td>EA/ELA</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EA/GEN</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EC/GEN</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MC/GEN</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AYA/MATH</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Demographics of Selected Study Participants

*Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding of percentages and/or no responses.
**Regions were identified according to the US Census Bureau classifications.
***The categories do not add up to 100% due to multiple certificates by one of the case studies.
After the participants were selected, a mailing was sent via the U.S. Postal Service which informed them that they were selected to participate in the study (Appendix C). The mailing also included a consent form to participate and a postage-paid envelope to return the consent form. When the researcher obtained the signed consent form from the participant, she contacted the participant via email to set up the first of three interviews (Appendix H).

Two of the study participants, who returned their consent form to the researcher, did not respond to six attempts to schedule an interview. Three phone messages were left on their answering machines and three email attempts were made over a three week period. Therefore, these two study volunteers were replaced with two NBCTs who shared similar demographic characteristics to the two original volunteers.

The researcher’s self-participant demographics are included in the following statistics. Two of the selected study participants were male while nine were female. The number of years of teaching experience ranged from 16 to 40 years. The age of the respondents ranged from 39 to 63 years old. The degrees held by the respondents varied from Bachelors to Doctorate degrees. Free and reduced lunch ranges, at the participants’ current schools varied from 2 to 80%. At the time of completing the demographic questionnaire, three of the participants were working in rural schools, two NBCTs were working in urban schools and six NBCTs were working in suburban schools. Participants self-identified ethnicity and race. There were nine Caucasian, one African-American and one Asian NBCT. The years the NBCTs achieved their NBC ranged from 1996-1998.

From the 101 research study volunteers, the researcher selected five NBCTs to participate who remained in the classroom (See Table 4.4.) and five NBCTs who left the
classroom to pursue other careers within the field of education (See Table 4.5). The
NBCTs who left the classroom were selected so that there would be a variety of different
careers represented. In addition to the ten study participants, the researcher conducted a
self-study of her own experiences as a NBCT. Her demographics are listed in Table 4.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NBCT Teaching</th>
<th>Betty” NBCT 1</th>
<th>“Ellie” NBCT 2</th>
<th>“Karen” NBCT 3</th>
<th>“Lydia” NBCT 4</th>
<th>“Brad” NBCT 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Career</td>
<td>1st grade teacher</td>
<td>7th Science &amp; LA</td>
<td>11th &amp; 12th Math</td>
<td>6th grade teacher</td>
<td>3rd grade teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBC Area</td>
<td>EC-GEN</td>
<td>MC-GEN</td>
<td>AYA Math</td>
<td>MC-GEN</td>
<td>MC-GEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Setting</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Lunch Percentage</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Post MA</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Education</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Study Participants: NBCTs Who Remained Classroom Teachers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NBCT – Left Teaching</th>
<th>“Tina” NBCT 6</th>
<th>“Julie” NBCT 7</th>
<th>“Rachel” NBCT 8</th>
<th>“Jerry” NBCT 9</th>
<th>“Kelsey” NBCT 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Career</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Professional Development Provider</td>
<td>Assistant Superintendent</td>
<td>Supervisor of Instruction</td>
<td>Literacy Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBC Area</td>
<td>MC-GEN</td>
<td>EA-GEN</td>
<td>EA-EN/LA</td>
<td>GE-MC</td>
<td>EC-GEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Setting</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Lunch Percentage</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>Post MA</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Post MA</td>
<td>Post MA</td>
<td>Post MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Education</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5 Study Participants: NBCTs Who Left the Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NBCT - Teaching</th>
<th>Angela</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Career</td>
<td>6th – 8th grade English &amp; Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Setting</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Lunch Percentage</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>Post MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Education</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6 Study Participant: Researcher (Self-Study)
The researcher selected NBCTs who had obtained a variety of different certificates from NBPTS. Currently 25 certificate areas are available; (See Table 1.1.) however, it is important to note that only a limited number of certificates were available when NBPTS first started. For example, in 1994 only two certificates were available - Early Adolescent Generalist (EA/GEN) and Early Adolescent English Language Arts (EA/ELA). By 1998, seven certificates were available. (See Table 4.7.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NBPTS Certificate</th>
<th>Year of Certificate Issuance</th>
<th>Year of Certificate Issuance</th>
<th>Year of Certificate Issuance</th>
<th>Year of Certificate Issuance</th>
<th>Number of Study Participants Holding These Certificates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Generalist (EC/GEN)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Childhood Generalist (MC/GEN)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood Art (EAYA/ART)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescence and Young Adult Math (AYA Math)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescence and Young Adult Science (AYA Science)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7  Issuance Years of NBPTS Certificates and Participants Holding Each
*Note: This shows more than 11 certificates obtained by the participants because the self-study participant obtained two certificates.
The researcher selected NBCTs who were teaching a variety of different grade levels and subjects at the time of this investigation.

First - Fifth Grade - 2 participants  
Sixth - Eighth Grade - 3 participants  
High School - 1 participant

Additionally, the study participants were selected so that there would be participants from urban, rural and suburban populations. As supported by the literature reviewed (Berry, 2005; Humphrey et al., 2005), most NBCTs work in rural and suburban schools.

Rural - 3 participants  
Urban - 2 participants  
Suburban - 6 participants

The percentage of free and reduced lunch population was examined so that there would be a variety of participants working in these schools. “Low” was classified as 0–30%, “Medium” consisted of 31-70% of the student population and “High” included 71–100% of the student body. The literature review states that most NBCTs do not work in schools with high free and reduced lunch populations (Berry, 2005; Humphrey et al., 2005).

Low - 5 participants  
Medium - 5 participants  
High - 1 participant

Following classifications determined by the U.S. Census Bureau (2009), the researcher ensured she selected participants to represent all four regions. As learned from the NBPTS the largest concentrations of NBCTs in 1998 were from the South followed by the Midwest, the West and then the Northeast (Shannon, NBPTS Research Division,
personal communications May 31, 2009). This study’s participants do not reflect this regional demographic due to the coordination of all the participant selection.

```
Midwest - 4 participants
Northeast - 3 participants
South - 2 participants
West - 2 participants
```

By selecting participants with a variety of educational degrees, from Bachelors to Doctorate, various perspectives could be brought to the study. This educational diversity impacts information about and the application of theory and practice typically learned in advanced coursework. Therefore, participants with Bachelors to Doctorate degrees were selected.

```
Bachelors - 1 participant
Masters - 2 participants
Post MA - 6 participants
Doctorate - 2 participants
```

The researcher wanted both male and female perspectives and experiences brought to this study. Female teachers make up 79% of the K-12 teaching force in the USA (United States Department of Labor, 2009). Females make up 81% of the population of this study.

```
Female - 9 participants
Male - 2 participants
```

In terms of ethnicity, nine of the 11 participants were self-identified as Caucasian, one was Asian and one was African-American. Minorities represent 18% of the participants in this study. Of those who volunteered to participate, less than 13% were minorities. For example, 5% were self-identified as African American, less than four percent were self-identified as European American, less than 2% percent were self-
identified as Hispanic and less than 1% of the study volunteers were self-identified as Asian.

African-American - 1 participant  
Asian - 1 participant  
Caucasian - 9 participants

A certificate from the NBPTS is valid for a period of ten years. A NBCT may attempt to renew their ten year certificate. A NBCT who is no longer in the classroom may “borrow” a classroom for their recertification attempt. As the first NBCTs to ever certify have now reached their tenth year of certification, this renewal process is relatively new. Eight of the 10 NBCTs have renewed their certification.

Renewed Certificate - 8 participants  
Did Not Renew - 2 participants

NBCTs Who Remained in the Classroom

NBCT #1 “Betty” For the purposes of this study, NBCT one was named Betty. She earned her certification in 1998 as an Early Childhood Generalist (EC/GEN). She renewed her certificate in 2008. At the time of this investigation, Betty had taught for over 20 years. She was a teacher from the South, teaching in a large rural school district with a low free and reduced lunch population. While participating in this study, Betty taught 1st grade. Her highest degree earned was a Bachelors degree. She is Caucasian.

NBCT #2 “Ellie” NBCT two is given the pseudonym, Ellie, for this study. She earned her certification in 1998 as a Middle Childhood Generalist (MC/GEN). She renewed her certificate in 2008. Ellie had taught for less than 20 years. At the time of this investigation, she taught language arts and science in a rural middle school in the Midwest with a low free and reduced lunch population. She had taken Post-MA degree
coursework and was working on a Doctorate degree at the time of the study. She is Caucasian.

NBCT #3 “Karen” NBCT three was named Karen in this study. She earned her certification in Adolescence / Young Adult Math (AYA – Math) in 1997. She renewed her certificate in 2007. She had taught for over 30 years. Karen was teaching in an urban setting in a Midwestern school with a high percentage of the students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. At the time of this study, she was a high school math teacher, but she had held the position of math curriculum manager after obtaining NBC. She earned her doctorate degree seven years after receiving NBC. She is African-American.

NBCT #4 “Lydia” The fourth NBCT was called Lydia. Her NBPTS certificate area was earned as a Middle Childhood Generalist (MC/GEN) in her 5th year of teaching in 1996. She renewed her certificate in 2006. Although not her first career, Lydia had taught for more than 15 years. She was teaching 6th grade in a suburban school in the West with a low free and reduced lunch population at the time of this study. Lydia obtained a Masters degree. She is Caucasian.

NBCT #5 “Brad” National Board Certified Teacher five was called Brad for the purposes of this investigation. His NBC was earned in 1998 with a Middle Childhood Generalist (MC/GEN) certificate. He renewed his certificate in 2008. Brad had taught for more than 15 years. At the time of this study, he taught 3rd grade in a Northeastern school district with a low free and reduced lunch population. He had earned a Masters degree. He is Caucasian.
NBCTs Who Left the Classroom

*NBCT #6 “Tina”* For the purposes of this study, NBCT six was named Tina. She earned her NBC in 1996 as a Middle Childhood Generalist (MC/GEN). She did not renew her certificate. Tina had been in education for more than 15 years. At the time of this investigation, she was a principal in a suburban school district in the Midwest with a medium free and reduced lunch population. Tina had earned an Educator’s Specialist degree and was working on her Doctorate degree. She is a Caucasian.

*NBCT #7 “Julie”* The seventh NBCT was called Julie in this study. Her NBPTS certification was earned as an Early Adolescent Generalist (EA/GEN) in 1998. She did not renew her certificate. She had been in education for over 25 years. Julie worked in an urban school district, located in the West, as a professional development provider at the time of this study. Her school’s free and reduced lunch population was classified as medium. This NBCT earned her Doctorate degree after obtaining her NBC. She is Asian.

*NBCT #8 “Rachel”* NBCT eight was called Rachel in this investigation. Her NBPTS certificate area was earned as a 4th year teacher in Early Adolescence English / Language Arts (EA/ELA) in 1998. She renewed her certificate in 2008. Rachel brought over 20 years in education to this study. At the time of this study, she was an Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction in a suburban Northeast school district with a low free and reduced student lunch population. She had taken Post-Master’s level coursework. She is Caucasian.

*NBCT #9 “Jerry”* The ninth NBCT is named Jerry in this investigation. He earned his NBC as a Middle Childhood Generalist (MC/GEN) in 1998. He renewed his
certificate in 2008. He relocated to another state and brought over 20 years of experience in education to this study. At the time of this investigation, he was working as a Supervisor of Instruction, working for a K-8 suburban district with eight schools in the Northeast. The district had a low percentage of its students on free and reduced lunches. He had taken Post-Master’s level coursework and is a Caucasian.

**NBCT #10 “Kelsey”** The tenth NBCT was called Kelsey in this study. Her NBPTS certificate was earned as an Early Childhood Generalist (EC/GEN) in 1998. She renewed her certificate in 2008. She had been teaching for less than 25 years. At the time of this study, she was a literacy coach within a suburban school district located in the South with a medium free and reduced lunch population. She had taken Post-Masters degree coursework. She is Caucasian.

**NBCT Self Study (The Researcher)**

**NBCT #11 Researcher Angela** The eleventh NBCT was the researcher of this study. Angela earned an Early Childhood Generalist (EC/GEN) certificate in 2004 and an Early Adolescence English/Language Arts certificate (EA/ELA) in 2007. She had not yet been eligible for renewal of her NBPTS certificate. At the time of this study, Angela was in her 20th year of teaching for a rural Midwestern school district. Her school district had a small free and reduced lunch population. She was working as a middle school language arts teacher and as an Adjunct Instructor of Education at a small, private nearby university. She was also a doctoral candidate. She is Caucasian.
Vignettes of Case Study Participants

Various life happenings and events have impacted each individual case study participant’s professional life. Their journeys are as varied and unique as the individuals themselves. Their variety of experiences and accomplishments make them all distinct. This section allows the reader to learn more about each unique and individual NBCT. In addition to the similar components of having achieved NBC, each of the NBCT’s experience reveals some of their individual hallmark features that make them unique. The following are particular features that individualize each NBCT’s story.

NBCT #1 “Betty” Betty teaches in a state that has sizable financial rewards for NBCTs. Although Betty states that she didn’t attempt NBC for the money, she says, “It used to be a way to make money, but now with the economy, who knows if it’ll continue and what that will do to NBCTs.” Betty attempted NBC because she needed to prove to herself that she was a good teacher. She also wanted her profession to recognize what she was doing and to get affirmation.

At the time of this investigation, Betty was getting ready to apply for another teaching job at a different school. She thought that having NBC on her resume would be a “stellar thing” to someone who knows anything about NBC. “I personally felt like it was the ‘jewel in the crown’ although I know most people who are not in the profession have no clue what NBC means.”

As a result of NBC, Betty’s assessment has changed. “I try to do real assessments. I have a very low tolerance for somebody else’s idea of what I’m assessing so I try to minimize that effort while other people may be concerned about ‘filling in the
spaces’ a certain way.” Betty says, on the other hand, she assesses to teach better. She wants to know where her students’ knowledge base is and why, so that she can better plan their instruction. Betty enjoys attending professional retreats and conferences. Her future goal is to write a book or newspaper articles about the teaching profession.

**NBCT #2 “Ellie”** While Ellie’s colleagues at her school did not have any impact on her decision to attempt NBC, she really enjoys them and believes they are one of the biggest reasons she continues to teach there and why she has not looked around for other jobs. “Kids come and go, but the people that you work with, you work with every single day, year after year. I don’t think that I would be able to be where I am at and do what I do if I didn’t have a great staff to work with.” She believes that all of her colleagues love kids and do what’s best for them. She stated that they all share a very similar teaching philosophy.

Ellie achieved her NBC when she was only in her 5th year of teaching. After certification she was appointed to her State Governor’s Teacher Advisory Board, as well as her State Superintendent’s Advisory Board; however, she believes nothing productive came from those appointments. “People mean well, but things move so slowly.” Ellie believes with that committee work people are listening, but change is slow.

While the financial incentives from her state enticed her to attempt NBC, that is not why she stays in the classroom. When considering the possibility of a position outside of the classroom, money did not figure into her decision, but leaving her students did. “I just didn’t want to leave my students. Teaching is what I love to do.”
NBCT #3 “Karen” After achieving certification, Karen left the classroom and served with the math curriculum department for her district. When that position was eliminated, she returned to work as a classroom teacher. Even though Karen believes her time spent in the classroom has been precious, she is interested in leaving the classroom to return to a position similar to what she has done in the past. Working as a classroom teacher again has given her a more in-depth perspective of what teachers go through and the real role of how curriculum plays out in the classroom; however, she believes she would have the opportunity to impact many more students than she currently does as a regular classroom teacher if she worked in a different capacity.

NBC also gave her status because people are impressed with NBC. “People recognize NBC as being a big deal.” Additionally, some of the work she did for NBC, particularly in writing, she has used in other pursuits. She stated that becoming a NBCT intensified her beliefs and practices and she is now more cognizant of her work. She stated, “I have always been interested in perfecting my craft and therefore, pursuing professional development opportunities was something I did on my own before districts made them mandatory.”

Karen believes she would have been introduced to these professional development areas without NBC by attending workshops on her own. “I attended those things not because of NBC, but because that was who I am as a professional learner.” She does not discredit the NBPTS for having something to do with her professional development, but she doesn’t give it total responsibility. “I can’t attribute NBC as the sole catalyst for what I do.”
NBCT #4 “Lydia” After becoming a mother and realizing she wanted a career that is oriented towards families, Lydia decided to become a teacher. After her first year of teaching, she went back to the university to get her Master’s degree in Instructional Leadership because she thought she wanted to pursue a leadership position in terms of mentoring and instruction.

As soon as she was eligible, after her third year of teaching, she became a mentor teacher. Mentors were selected by principals’ recommendations and by interviewing with district personnel. The mentor teacher program in her state at that time assigned new teachers to mentors who would take them under their wings and provide them with resources and support. Lydia took her mentees to professional conferences and observed their teaching. During this time, an assistant superintendent suggested she pursue NBC.

Deciding it would be a good way to validate what she does in the classroom, and to see if there was anything she needed to learn or do differently, Lydia decided to attempt NBC. “I wanted to compare my practice to higher standards, accomplished teaching standards, and to see where I fit in.” Lydia was not the only teacher in her very large school district to attempt it, but she was the first to certify. Lydia stated, “Others were just finding out about what NBC was and they started to celebrate in a slow way that I was a person who had obtained it.”

Achieving NBC validated what she does as a teacher. “It made me feel like I know what I’m talking about.” Lydia believes that she will continue to feel validated as long as she keeps learning and growing and doesn’t just sit back and do nothing. Having breakfast at the White House and getting to meet the President was a highlight of Lydia’s unique experiences she has had as a NBCT.
Lydia believes teachers should be required to renew their certification every ten years. “I’ve seen a couple of NBCTs who were great teachers. Then they became NBCTs and that was pretty much it.” Lydia states that NBCTs should not just kick back and rest on their laurels. They should have to prove themselves periodically as effective teachers.

**NBCT #5 “Brad”** Brad describes himself as ambitious and states that he has remained in the classroom because he “just loves it”. That love, along with starting a family of his own, kept him in the classroom even though he has a principal’s certificate. He says he may want to be a principal someday.

Brad found the process of earning national certification to be invigorating. The NBPTS process has been instilled in his teaching behaviors and is like a part of him. “I go through those essential elements naturally. I go through all of those things required for good teaching.” He believes that NBPTS selected all of the things required of good teaching and incorporated them into their requirements.

Since achieving certification, Brad believes he matured. “I’m more well-rounded as a teacher than I was before.” He believes he’s changed a lot by taking classes and when he began having children of his own, he started looking at his profession a lot differently too.

Brad feels that much of his students’ success is attributed to the relationships he has with them and with the classroom community. “Students feel welcome to come into the classroom. They want to be there and they are sad when they have to leave.”
He chose to renew his certification because he wanted to keep a distinction that so few have. Brad believes it is important that NBCTs have to renew their certificates after ten years. “If you just sat on your laurels and hold that certificate for the rest of your career and don’t go better yourself and continue doing staff development, then I don’t think you deserve to keep your certification.”

One of the main reasons Brad pursued NBC was because he thought it would be good for his professional development. “I’m still the same person I always was. I just think I’ve grown from NBC. I’ve done a lot of good things. I don’t think NBC is the end all. It’s just one of many things I’ve done.”

While he believes that NBC did open doors for him, he believes that opportunities depend upon the individual and whether they pursue new prospects or not. “I think the bottom line comes down to you as a person. Your personality, your work, the people you know and have worked with. I think it’s important to always be professional and nice to people. I guess being a NBCT makes you open doors. It opened my eyes and got me thinking.”

*NBCT #6 “Tina”* Tina looked to NBC as a way to improve her teaching and as a professional challenge. “Going through NBC was to me professionally like having a spa day for my soul.” Tina believes that NBC is the best possible professional development that exists for teachers. She stated, “Being a NBCT instilled in me a love of professional development. Now, as a principal, I encourage each teacher to find their personal level of achievement and to stretch and nurture themselves as professionals.”
Tina looked to NBC as a way to improve her teaching. She looked at it as a professional challenge. When she achieved NBC in 1996 there were more responsibilities given to her district-wide. “I think this is sad to say, but I’m not so sure that my expertise would have been noticed as much without NBC coming in to help me. I don’t want to say it’s just NBC, but it gave me a boost.” After teaching for thirteen years, Tina became a principal.

Tina believes being a NBCT put her “on the map” faster. Additionally, because she resides in close proximity to the state capitol she believes that also encouraged others to ask her to serve on various committees. Tina stated that others know she had to work hard, persevere, and achieve at a very high level to be a NBCT. They know her caliber. Tina believes NBC “gives respect that our leaders, our political leaders or our school board leaders or whoever they are, have some kind of insurance, if you will, that we're good educators and when they need people to serve or help, they turn to NBCTs.”

\[NBCT \#7 \text{“Julie”}\] Julie had already earned a Masters degree when she attempted NBC. After becoming a NBCT, she obtained a Doctorate degree. “National Board was just one milestone, but it made a big difference when it happened. And then everything else just built on top of it…like a cumulative effect.”

Julie’s state has a tiered licensure system where teachers must meet certain requirements (successful evaluations, continuing education requirements, and leadership requirements) in order to advance to the next level. With advancement comes a higher salary. NBCTs are at a higher level on the tiered system. Although this system was not
in place when Julia pursued her NBC, she believes it is a good system and that NBCTs should be rewarded.

Budget cuts bring challenges for Julie. She believes that there isn’t enough money to compensate the teachers for the time that they spend in professional development. “In the collaborative communities, sustaining those communities is difficult as the budget gets cut.” With this program, they bring in coaches, facilitators and a core of trainers four times a year.

The amount of work required by her job is also a challenge for Julie. She is currently working with 17 schools in one intervention program alone. The district is adding more schools and she needs to monitor those teachers and work with them too.

“The teachers are not getting as much support as they need so our data doesn’t look that powerful because the teachers need more. They’re doing the best they can, but they need more help.” She also needs more time. “I might see a needy teacher only once a month and ones who are doing well maybe only once a semester.”

NBCT #8 “Rachel” Rachel was in her 4th year of teaching when she decided to try to obtain her NBC. She decided to do so when she was asked by a fellow teacher, “How do you know you are doing the right thing?” Additionally, the teachers she was working with at the time of her NBC attempt were so negative that that situation ultimately motivated her to attempt NBC. Rachel found the NBC process to be exciting and invigorating.

Rachel believes achieving NBC made her feel more professional. “It was the gold star.” Although she finds others in her district to be supportive of NBC and to view
NBCTs as a “feathers in their cap”, unless they’ve actually attempted the NBC process themselves, they really do not understand. Rachel believes going through the NBC process helps teachers learn the ability to plan sound instruction and to deliver high quality learning experiences for students, regardless of their ages. “Going through the NBPTS process is where I really learned about teaching and learning.”

After becoming a NBCT, she was asked to become a Teacher on Special Assignment by her school superintendent. In this role, she reported directly to the superintendent. She planned professional development for the faculty, aligned curriculum, ran the “new teacher” program, and analyzed test scores.

Rachel was also asked to share her expertise with a university where they were developing a Masters Degree program. She helped develop courses and she taught those courses until recently. She also went on to become the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction and Staff Development for her district where she is in charge of Professional Development for the district.

“Certainly all of what I’ve experienced is the result of national certification and I don’t think I would have been in the position I am in now if it hadn’t been for that question I was asked, ‘How do you know you are doing the right thing?’ I might have come to this point eventually, but I think becoming a NBCT really spurred on the leadership part and just being very reflective about choices that are available. I really think it helped me to connect with a college and to see partnership availabilities.”

NBCT #9 “Jerry” When Jerry attempted NBC he felt that he was teaching with some really good people on his teaching team. He believes that was a benefit; however,
those colleagues did not have any influence on his decision to attempt NBC. “It was more of an individual decision I made.”

Jerry moved to a new state in recent years and he has been surprised by the differences between the two states in terms of financial incentives, attitudes, interests and the union involvement with NBC. In his former state, he felt it was supported and encouraged by the government and by the union. He does not feel that this is true in his new state.

According to Jerry, there are not enough NBCTs and if every teacher could become a master teacher, it would be better for all of our country’s students. “It should be our goal for all of our teachers to be excellent, for all of our teachers to achieve the highest level of certification they can.”

Jerry describes his style of teaching as constructivist. He believes students should construct their own meanings, have opportunities to work on authentic things, to dwell on things, to have choice and to be experts. “I believe by sharing everybody’s knowledge it helps everybody to feel more committed to the educational process.” He also endorses co-teaching and working with other teachers in the classroom. “We need to be inclusive rather than saying, ‘These kids are not my kids’.” Jerry believes all kids belong with all of the teachers and they need to all work together to make big differences for students.

Jerry believes he can reach more kids in more classrooms by helping the teachers become better teachers. That is what he hopes to do as a supervisor and that is one of the reasons why he decided to leave the classroom. Due to Jerry’s work as a Supervisor of Instruction, he also works with teachers on specific issues and concepts, but he feels that
he does not have enough time to do all that he needs to do. The lack of time is one of his biggest challenges.

**NBCT #10 “Kelsey”** Kelsey felt that going through the NBC process was professional development like she’d never experienced before and like she had been wanting for so long. She believes that NBC was solely focused on growing and learning as a teacher. “I have to say that’s the year I learned the most about myself.” She also described the year she attempted national board as one of the best years she’s ever had in teaching.

Although when this NBCT certified, there were no financial incentives, “just the sheer joy of doing it”, but now NBCTs receive financial incentives from the state and also from the district which total around $10,000 a year. As a literacy coach, Kelsey still receives those financial incentives. If she did not, it would have definitely encouraged her to remain in the classroom. “I think the money has been a good part because that has kept good teachers teaching without having to go into administration because they don’t make enough money in teaching.”

Kelsey loves her job as a literacy coach explaining that she works at a great school with a great school culture. “The teachers are very positive and supportive. They really care about each other and do not allow negativity to permeate the building.” She explained that the teachers are not persecuted for having an opinion and for speaking up. The staff does not let resentment build up and they celebrate each other.
Angela achieved her first certification as an Early Childhood Generalist in 2004 while working as a kindergarten teacher. Due to a grade level change, she was eligible to pursue a second certification which she did in 2007 in Early Adolescent English / Language Arts. “Without a doubt, going through my first National Board Certification taught me so much about good teaching and really improved my practice. When I switched grade levels and then had the opportunity to try for a second certification, I knew I had to do it because it would make me a better teacher.” She also states that she’d publicly praised the national board process countless times; therefore, not attempting certification again would make her a hypocrite and would not encourage others to try it.

While Angela has had other opportunities to teach in other places over the years, she has remained in the classroom at the same school district because it had been the best thing for her family. Now that her youngest daughter is older, things have recently changed. “In August, I will be teaching for a state university. It is a longtime dream come true for me and I feel incredibly blessed.” Angela hopes to share her love for teaching and learning with pre-service teachers. “What I’ve learned going through the NBC process is obviously an integral part of who I am and what I do as a teacher. I will now teach this to others in my courses and hopefully instill my love for teaching in them.”

Angela had seen what had happened to other NBCTs in terms of leadership roles and new opportunities and that was one of the reasons why she decided to attempt NBC. She stated that she simply did not have the confidence to attempt NBC before 2003. “Beginning the in the mid 1990s I went to workshops and read all I could about it. I read
and re-read the standards and thought, ‘This is what I do. This is what I believe in’.

However, she knew the rate of failure was approximately 60% of those who tried and she was not confident that she could score high enough to certify. Finally, one day on spring break she decided she would go forward and apply the next year.

Angela thinks that many (but not all) individuals in education know what is required of NBC and that they know the caliber of individuals who are drawn to attempt NBC. “I think that puts those who are NBCTs in a better light. They’ve already proven they are high quality, effective teachers who know their subject areas and how to teach it to students. They’ve proven they have made contributions outside of the four walls of their classrooms.” I think this allows others, who are in hiring positions, to see how advantageous it could be to have NBCTs working for them in their particular area of education. "I believe being a NBCT played a role in obtaining my new university-level position."

Angela shared that districts in her state will soon be required to list on their school report card how many of their teachers are NBCTs. "I believe schools will want as many NBCTs as they can possibly get so that they can try to showcase their school in the best possible light. Additionally with the new initiatives from President Obama and from our state’s governor, it’s going to be very interesting to see the roles NBCTs will play."

DATA ANALYSIS

The study participants spoke passionately about their experiences as NBCTs and spoke openly about their personal perceptions regarding the influence of NBC on their professional life. The participants also shared many common elements. Although their
responses and experiences were often quite similar, they were also quite different. This section will analyze the long term professional implications of NBC on the professional lives of NBCTs.

Coding/Categories

The researcher used the constant comparative method during the data collection process, making notes regarding emerging categories and constantly comparing data within the same set, or from previous data, continually searching for conceptual links (Merriam, 1998). This constant data analysis was utilized to identify emerging trends, patterns or themes that surfaced to assist the researcher in understanding the impact achieving NBC has had on the professional lives of NBCTs. While this type of informal analysis occurred simultaneously, in the midst of the data collection, a more formal analysis occurred with the systematic coding of data.

The coding consisted of the researcher identifying common concepts and patterns which occurred repeatedly throughout the interviews to explore the long-term implications of NBC on the professional lives of NBCTs. Each of the 33 transcripts was initially marked and notes were made to determine initial impressions and emerging trends. During the reading and re-reading of each transcript, the research questions were revisited to narrow the data collection. The transcribed interviews were then coded and categorized to encompass the major themes of the research study. The themes provided rich, descriptive information that was then applied to the research questions.
Concept & Data-Driven Codes

Concept-driven coding uses codes that have been developed in advance by the researcher while data-driven coding implies that the researcher starts out without codes and develops them through readings of the data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Both concept-driven coding and data-driven coding were conducted in this investigation. The researcher of this inquiry first established the concept-driven codes by consulting existing literature in the field as she wrote the literature review. The concept-driven codes selected for this inquiry are listed in Table 4.8. The data-driven codes in this inquiry, utilized while analyzing the data, are listed in Table 4.9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFF</th>
<th>Affirmation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CON</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEAD</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
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<td>REF</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
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</table>

Table 4.8 Concept-Driven Codes and Abbreviations
Table 4.9 Data-Driven Codes and Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANTH</td>
<td>Analytical Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADV</td>
<td>Career Advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>Attempt New Things / Exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH</td>
<td>Change of Roles / Positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCL</td>
<td>Changes Unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIS</td>
<td>Disappointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMP</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRU</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRO</td>
<td>Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW</td>
<td>New Jobs / Careers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOCH</td>
<td>No Changes Noted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RES</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROL</td>
<td>Role Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOR</td>
<td>Worthwhile</td>
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During this inquiry, concept-driven coding, based on the literature review, was initially used. The researcher found no data that supported the use of affirmation, but disappointment and frustration emerged as a new category. These categories were not found in previous studies, thus providing a new and unexpected finding.
FINDINGS

Overall Themes

Important findings evolved as the participants shared their experiences with the researcher over the course of three one-on-one phone interviews, each lasting approximately one hour. This sharing allowed the researcher to learn more about the influence NBC has had upon their professional lives. All data were scrutinized and assigned codes. Subsequently, the following themes related to the long term professional implications of NBC on NBCTs emerged: reflection, confidence, new responsibilities and frustration. The first three themes support previous research; however, the fourth theme, frustration, was a surprising finding, not found in other research. These themes grew from the analysis of the transcriptions of the interviews that focused on the research questions. They indicate the impact of NBC on the professional lives of NBCTs.

Figure 4.1 The Professional Implications of NBC on NBCTs.
This section relates the findings and shares the patterns based on the major themes found in the data. Four overall major themes emerged from the data analysis: reflection, confidence, new responsibilities and frustration. The themes appeared in nearly every transcript of the interviews. They provided rich, descriptive information that was then applied to the research questions for the primary purpose of the study.

In addition to major themes, there were some subthemes which emerged. Subthemes are themes which only a few of the participants might have discussed. With reflection surfaced the subthemes of increased awareness and integration. Many of the NBCTs stated that they have integrated reflection into their daily professional lives, like a routine or a habit. Under the major theme of confidence, the subthemes included: empowerment, validation and the desire to try new things. Emerging as subthemes, under the category of new responsibilities include career changes and helping others.

Professional Difference

This section reports the answer to the first research question, “What professional differences (if any) are noted since becoming a NBCT and how does this affect their careers? In chapter one, professional differences was defined as the changes in one’s professional experiences in the field of education since becoming a NBCT. All eleven of the study participants described reflection, stating they are now much more reflective in their work. Nine of the eleven NBCTs stated they have gained a greater sense of professional confidence and experienced a change of dispositions and perspectives as a result of achieving national certification. All of the participants also described new responsibilities which have changed their careers since obtaining certification.
Reflection

Reflection allows for critical examination of what is working well and what is not. It allows individuals to refine their work and to utilize strategies that work. The ability to reflect upon one’s work was deemed important, worthwhile and meaningful by these NBCTs. Daily reflection allows educators to focus on improving their practice.

Analyzing the data through a constant comparative analysis, it was found that the unique components of NBCTs can best be represented in a description of their reflection. Reflection plays an important role in these NBCTs’ professional lives. All eleven participants talked about reflection and all stated that they now reflect naturally, in an ongoing manner. For these NBCTs, reflection has become a habit.

Research has indicated reflective practice as being a characteristic of high quality teaching that is “crucial to lifelong learning and a professional necessity” (Stronge, 2002, p. 21) for effective teachers. Each case study participant reported about the importance of reflection on their work and that they convey this to others. They believe reflection helps to professionalize teaching.

NBCT# 1 “Betty” Betty believes that the most profound implication of being a NBCT has been in her daily teaching. She believes achieving NBC intensified and clarified how deeply she reflects about every area of what she does in her current teaching position (Q#2, I#1). Going through the process caused her to constantly ask questions of herself and to reflect. The practice of reflection continues today as a natural part of her teaching.
Through reflection she is able to plan for her students’ needs. Betty believes she is more reflective and analytic in the instructional decisions she makes in the classroom than she was prior to becoming a NBCT (I#2). “I see everything differently. It’s like I put on glasses.” She states that if she doesn’t believe what she is teaching has value or merit, she no longer teaches it, instead substituting worthwhile items of importance that her students need to learn.

She thinks that being a NBCT affected and changed her work, making it better. “I don’t know how anybody can go through the process and not rise to a higher level of thinking. It caused me to think higher and then yet deeper about what I’m doing and why I’m doing it,” (I#3). She believes NBC caused her to constantly question the purposes behind her teaching, magnifying what she was already doing.

*NBCT #2 “Ellie”* Ellie states that she is a more reflective teacher because of the NB process saying that she thinks, analyzes and reviews lessons and data much more frequently than before certification (Q#1, I#1). She believes the NBC process made her more aware of the importance of reflection. It confirmed what she already does in the classroom is good teaching.

Ellie believes that going through the NBC process forces you to reflect. Now, working with student teachers in her classroom, she believes reflection comes in handy as it helps her to take the student teachers through in-depth reflection about how things went with their lessons and where and why changes need to be made (I#3). She also uses it with her own teaching to improve her lessons for her students.
**NBCT #3 “Karen”** Karen believes going through the NBC process was a rigorous and very gratifying experience, forcing her to pay attention to outcomes and intentions. She learned to pay closer attention to the students and their work and to deeply reflect. “I don’t believe that prior to NB, I did the kind of evaluation of students’ work that I do now. NBC upped my standards and made them higher for myself,” (I#1). Karen also states reflection is a big part of the process for NBC; however, she does that daily without attributing it to NB (I#3).

“Thereafter NBC, I believe I became more conscious of looking at student work and looking at standards and so forth; however, that was also the time this whole wave of looking at student work in the professional development community changed too. Therefore, I think I became more conscious of examining student work differently, for example, because I had to in order to answer the questions required for National Board,” (I#1).

**NBCT #4 “Lydia”** Lydia believes that as a result of going through the process, she became more reflective and analytical (Q#2, I#1, I#2). She finds that she questions herself a lot more now that she is an NBCT. Lydia feels that the reflection piece required of a NBC applicant caused her to really think deeply about what she does and why she does it (I#2).

The process also impacts the way she plans, analyzes and reflects upon her work as a classroom teacher (Q#2, I#3). It helped her make changes that benefit student learning in a way she was not aware of previously. Being a NBCT has affected the way
Lydia looks at student work and what she does about the results of her students’ work. “I think I’m more informed about the outcome for student learning.”

After beginning the NBC process, she questioned some of the ways she had been doing things. If she could no longer find them to match the standards, she quit doing them (I#2). Lydia believes she learned a lot about things she needed to change, as well as things she was teaching well.

*NBCT #5 “Brad”* Brad feels that achieving NBC met his expectations by making him a better teacher because he learned that reflection is paramount. He states that he is much more reflective about his practice now than before he went through NBC (I#2, I#3). “I utilize reflection every day, just naturally. Going through the NB process instills that in you.”

*NBCT #6 “Tina”* Tina believes that her daily work as a principal allows her to incorporate the NB process in many ways. “One of the main pieces of my evaluation of teachers is for me to find out what they would do differently if they were to teach the lesson again.” She has the teachers reflect and analyze their student work to quantify it. “I don’t want teachers to try to impress me. I want to see that our kids are learning in there.” She believes she has a lot of conversations with her teachers about being real and being authentic, teaching things that matter. Tina believes that reflection permeates through when she talks with her teachers about what’s good for kids (I#1).
"Julie" Julie believes that being a NBCT has affected her professional work by getting her into the habit of constant reflection (Q#1, I#1). “I’ve been more aware of the importance of reflecting and being able to articulate what I’m thinking more specifically than I had before.” Part of the program that Julie is now involved with includes working with teachers and getting them to reflect on their work and to articulate about their practice.

Julie is the lead person in both a reading intervention program and also for facilitating a collaborative community program. Both of these responsibilities require the utilization of reflection. “It’s the key,” Julie stated. The work in the intervention program is data driven so as the teachers analyze the students’ work; they reflect on the reason the data is showing up like it is (I#3). With Julie’s facilitation, these teachers make weekly decisions based on the work their students were engaged in and the results. Teachers then change their teaching after reflecting upon and discussing this data.

In the collaborative community program Julie facilities, teachers bring samples of student work. While Julie works with these groups, they reflect upon and discuss the student work samples. According to Julie, reflective practice is the basis of good teaching (I#3). “No matter what you’re teaching, if you’re not thinking about what you’re teaching and why you’re teaching it that way, you’re not focused. It might be hit or miss so far as knowing the direction that you’re taking your students. I help teachers see that reflection is an important aspect of their practice.”

"Rachel” Rachel looks to NB as the baseline for expectations and for what reflective inquiry really should be for teachers. She strongly endorses reflection
“One of the most valuable pieces of NB is looking deeply at your own teaching practices and what you had happening in the classroom through the videotaping. I find that so often the teachers I work with don’t take the time to really investigate their own practices, to step back and to say, ‘Am I really doing what’s best for kids?’.”

Rachel believes some of the focus on the planning and reflections involved with NB are evident in the processes that she has set up for her new district such as building their professional development plan, working on teacher evaluation plans and examining student academic intervention services. The district now looks carefully at what they are doing and what the students have to show them. They also examine their long term plans and determine how they are going to make it better. Rachel’s efforts are why this reflection piece is now in place. She believes it is very important.

Rachel also teaches professional development classes and co-teaches classes with teachers in her district to model strategies with classroom teachers. Regarding reflection, Rachel says that she will not go in to teach unless she has the opportunity to reflect with the teachers directly after the classes. She believes you can’t get better at something unless you fully discuss it and carefully examine it (I#3). “Really talk about it, pull it apart, call it what it is and make a decision about how to make it better.”

“The teachers I work with see a difference in their practice because they take that moment to really slow down and look at what they’re doing.” Rachel feels that teachers are often are so locked in their classrooms dealing with their daily teaching that they need to back up. “When we step back and really reflect and look critically at what we are doing, and ask for guidance, to ask for other people to help us we can be so much better.”
**NBCT #9 “Jerry”** Jerry believes he is now more reflective in his work (I#1).

“The process helps you learn reflection.” Jerry has incorporated what he has learned from NB within his new job of supervising teachers. For example, he has the new teachers he works with create a portfolio, a collection of different things which reflects the NB process. Additionally, the new teachers observe another teacher and reflect upon that experience. They conduct self reflections too. “I haven’t had anybody say that they felt that reflection wasn’t useful.”

When Jerry observes and coaches teachers, he takes a perspective of reflection rather than going into the classrooms in a stern manner saying, “I will tell you what you did well and what you need to work on.” What he does instead is facilitate a conversation based upon reflection. He asks the teachers to reflect upon their lessons, to think of what the children came away with and what they wanted the students to learn that they didn’t learn. In his conversations with teachers, he tries to lead them to the conclusion that they can influence the student behavior and the learning that they want to happen (I#3). “We can’t control factors in their personal lives, but we can influence what happens while they are in our classrooms.” He also believes teachers need to make adjustments to help their students. “My teachers have to construct meaning from what they are doing. I can’t tell them. After careful reflection and guidance, they usually come to that understanding.”

**NBCT #10 “Kelsey”** Kelsey says that her reflective practice remains with her today in her new career as a literacy coach (I#1). “I think once you go through that NB experience, you always think like that, you never stop being reflective, you never stop
analyzing what you do on a day to day basis.” Kelsey believes NB really changes individuals as teachers and it makes them better. Skills she learned through NBC are embedded in the work she does every day as a literacy coach because she holds many conversations with her teachers where together they analyze the teacher’s teaching and reflect on what could be better (I#2, I#3). They also look at different ways to meet the needs of the children, exactly what was required of her NB attempt.

Kelsey believes being a NBCT affects her professional work every day in the way that she reflects upon her lessons and in the way she works with teachers. She also believes the influence of reflection is apparent when she designs lessons. “I’m always thinking about and reflecting on my work. I’m constantly analyzing lessons and trying to make them better, especially as a literacy coach.” Kelsey believes that reflection has been embedded in her as a result of going through the NB process (I#3). “It’s more subconscious now because I reflect so often.” In her position as a literacy coach, she engages her teachers in that type of thinking too. “So much of my work is guiding teachers to look critically at their own practice.”

**NBCT #11 Researcher Angela** Going through the NBC process increased this NBCT’s awareness of the importance of daily reflection (I#1). “I knew it was important before, but I did not take the time to do it like I should have. Going through the NBC process really makes you cognizant of reflection and reminds you how powerful it can be.” Being reflective has advantages. “Reflection has allowed me to streamline my teaching to be more effective with my students. It is a win-win situation.”

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Because she has seen the value in self-reflection, she also involves her students in reflection. Her students reflect in their journals and in their journal exchanges. They also partake in peer reflection after careful modeling is conducted (I#3). “Reflection has helped make me a more effective teacher. I believe it has helped me take my teaching skills to a higher level.” Angela believes going through the NBC process helped instill the constant reflection in her. "It seems like in everything I do, I continually ask myself, 'How could I have done that better?'"

**Summary Regarding Reflection**

During reflective practice, teachers think critically about their practice, evaluate the effectiveness of their practice and make changes based upon this reflection. Reflective practice as an element of professionalism in teaching was defined as “careful review of and thoughtfulness about one’s own teaching process” (Stronge, 2002, p.20). All participants mentioned the influence of reflection on their professional work. These NBCTs reported increased awareness and incorporation of reflection in their professional work. From their comments, it appears NBC has given these NBCTs the power and ability to reflect in meaningful ways, as they integrate this skill into their daily work.

Upon further analysis of the data, participants elaborated about reflection. Two subthemes of reflection emerged: increased awareness and integration of reflection. Ten of the 11 study participants stated that NB increases their awareness of reflection which allows them to improve their work. For example, if what they are currently teaching isn’t a worthwhile or needed concept for students, they make changes. Ten participants shared that reflection is now an integrated part of their daily work. For example, across these
comments and the larger category of reflection, it appeared that the process of critically examining what is working well and what is not is an important aspect of NBC to the study participants.

Confidence

Confidence gives one assurance and a belief in their abilities. This self-assurance of one’s work was thought to be increased after achieving NBC by the NBCTs in this study. Having professional self-confidence allows these educators to feel that the work they do with others is meaningful, correct and important.

According to Iovacchini (1998), achieving NBC makes an impact on NBCTs’ classroom teaching with an increase of confidence in their professional judgment. In this investigation, nine of the eleven participants noted an increased level of confidence after becoming nationally certified. Eight of the 11 study participants believe achieving NBC can bring on an internal form of validating one’s work while five of the NBCTs shared that they are willing to try new things as a result of NB. A sense of empowerment has been noted.

NBCT #1 “Betty” Betty believes that achieving NBC gave her confidence to question and challenge inefficient and unfair educational processes and practices. She states that becoming a NBCT challenged her to question the system and it gave her the encouragement to be a little more vocal about standing up and doing what’s best for children (Q#2, I#2). She feels that she can defend her report cards, her running records and her comments in terms of student assessment; however, she does not give much
credence to some of the instruments she is expected to use because they are not the best for her students. “I have pretty much discounted anything anyone above me tells me to do that goes against NB philosophies. Since becoming a NBCT, I haven’t done anything different, but hopefully better.”

**NBCT #3 “Karen”** Becoming a NBCT had a profound impact on Karen’s professional life. She feels that completing the NBPTS work and having experienced the rigor of writing the portfolio entries required for NBC, was the most intensive work she had ever done. Therefore, she was confident she could write a dissertation. Karen believes achieving NBC gave her the confidence to attempt a Doctorate degree (Q#2, I#1). She obtained her Doctorate seven years after becoming nationally certified.

**NBCT #5 “Brad”** As a result of becoming nationally certified, Brad feels confident about his teaching ability (I#1, I#2). “Achieving NBC gave me a lot of professional confidence.” Brad displays his national certificate from the NBPTS by hanging it up on his classroom wall. He states that it makes him feel very professional. “You feel good about yourself, as being at the top of your professional game. I think that parents really respect that and know the kids are learning a lot from me. That certificate shows that I know what I’m doing.”

Brad feels comfortable sharing his thoughts with others and in asking them questions because he has gained a greater confidence since he obtained his national certification (I#3). He also believes he gives more input including sharing more mature,
well-thought-out answers, responses and ideas when attending meetings and as a
colleague now that he is a NBCT.

**NBCT #6 “Tina”** Achieving NBC was empowering for Tina, giving her security
and confidence (I#1, I#2). She describes NBC as a quality measure that most people in
education understand. Tina believes becoming a NBCT gave her confidence because of
what she’s been asked and allowed to do. It has expanded her horizons from the
classroom to the district to the state and to the nation. “Now I’m not afraid if anybody
asks me to be a national speaker or to go to Washington D.C. to speak or lobby on behalf
of education. I pack my bags and go.”

She believes that being a NBCT carries some weight in terms of working as a
principal for her teachers. “I think that being nationally certified has given me quite a bit
of clout as their instructional leader. I think they also have a lot of confidence in my
ability to help them learn and teach their students.” Tina also thinks the conversations
she has with her staff carry more meaning because they know about her proven
knowledge teaching in the classroom because she has obtained NBC.

Tina feels that achieving NB increased her confidence because she thinks she has
a credential that proved her high level of work (I#3).

“A Bachelor’s degree only says that you were able to go through the protocol for
becoming a teacher, but I think NB tells the world that you have your teaching,
your way of analyzing lessons and student work, your reflective practice, it has all
been highly scrutinized as actual teaching so it puts a seal of approval on you as a
teacher, instead of just having a degree. Even when you get a Masters degree you
will only get a little bit more of what you need to be successful in the classroom
so I think NB is a unique thing because it has kind of alerted people that my
teaching has been highly scrutinized and found to be of high standard.”
A network comprised of other NBCTs became very important to Tina after becoming a NBCT. It gave her confidence in what she was doing in the classroom (I#3). “I felt really eager and wanted to share more of what I was hearing and doing with others.” She believes this was truly a spin-off of NB because NB taught her how to talk to other teachers about what she was doing in the classroom. She feels she can also ask others for help without feeling intimidated.

*NBCT #7 “Julie”* Julie believes that earning NBC gives NBCTs greater confidence and helps them when applying for other education positions (I#1, I#2). “Having NBCT on your resume is an enhancement. People recognize it.” She feels there is a general belief that NBCTs do indeed make a positive difference with students, even though some disagree.

Julie believes achieving NBC increased her confidence in her professional work (I#3). “It’s a cumulative kind of confidence building. As you accomplish one more thing, you get a feeling that ‘Yeah, I can do that’.” Julie had already earned a Masters degree when she attempted NBC. After becoming a NBCT, she had the confidence that she could write a dissertation. With her university position she took after becoming a NBCT, she did not have to pay to take graduate level coursework. That was the start of her obtaining her Doctorate degree.

“National Board was just one milestone, but it made a big difference when it happened. And then everything else just built on top of it…like a cumulative effect.” Julie feels that achieving NBC gives teachers a confidence factor and then NBCTs begin
looking for new challenges. She thinks that this may be how NBC encourages teachers to turn toward leadership positions.

**NBCT #8 “Rachel”** Obtaining NBC gave Rachel confidence (I#3). It allowed her to see that she was making the best choices for her students and teaching with the best strategies, despite being so different from her fellow colleagues in terms of teaching styles. To her becoming a NBCT confirmed that she was a great teacher.

NBC served as a catalyst and as a confidence builder allowing Rachel to realize it is okay to look at what you do from a different perspective (I#3). Now, as an administrator, she does not believe she’s lost her NB roots. She tries to support other teachers going through the process. “For me it’s that whole culture and the atmosphere around how important it is to help people make that determination for professional growth whenever it sets in their career.” She is not certain if she would feel that way and would truly understand that if she had not gone through the NB process herself and had not been successful.

**NBCT #9 “Jerry”** Jerry works with local groups on projects. He states that being a NBCT gives him confidence and makes it easier for him to get involved and to start up special projects and to try new things (I#3). Being a NBCT makes Jerry feel more secure in what he knows (I#2). “You speak with confidence. You’re willing to challenge the world a little bit more and assert yourself to advance the profession. As you do those things, your career path advances.”
**NBCT #10 “Kelsey”** In terms of confidence, Kelsey believes achieving NBC increased her confidence since she states most NBCTs think and teach differently. Because Kelsey views her teaching as being different from her colleagues, NB gave her a way to validate some of the ways she thought about good teaching. “It helped me find who I was as a teacher.” Achieving national certification allowed her to realize that others recognize her as a great teacher based on national teaching standards.

She attends many professional events with other teachers. “We (NBCTs) just don’t get to work together as much as we like. When we get together, we just jell.” Kelsey believes she gained professional confidence because earning NBC was based upon her teaching not on an interview for example (I#3). “I felt like it was peeling through the layers of what I do, carefully examining it all.” She believes becoming a NBCT validated her work (I#2). According to Kelsey, NBC it is very empowering for teachers.

**NBCT #11 Researcher Angela** It took Angela many years to get up the confidence to attempt NBC. “I first heard about it while attending conferences in the mid-to-late 1990s, but I was afraid I’d fail. Others had told me I was a great teacher, but what if I failed?” The more she learned about NBC, the more she realized that no one “fails” despite not scoring high enough to certify. “How can you not improve your practice after analyzing video after video of your own teaching and after writing over 120 pages about your work?” When she decided to apply, she felt she would indeed be a better teacher by participating in the process, regardless of the points earned.
Angela believes that NBC confirmed her ability to teach her students at a high level. “I knew achieving NBC was considered the teaching profession’s highest honor. After meeting that bar, meeting standards someone else set, I felt like I could do other things in the profession because someone outside of my school had labeled me as an accomplished teacher.” She feels that indicated she could do more for the teaching profession because she proved she is a good teacher. "National Board gave me the confidence I needed to take my teaching to the next level."

As an NBCT, Angela now feels authorized to question unsound educational practices (Q#2, I#1). She has invited her elected officials into her classroom (I#1, I#3). She’s written letters and emailed her concerns regarding legislation for education. She has lobbied at her State Capitol. “Being a NBCT helped me realize that I do indeed know what’s best for my students and that I need to share this information with others. I need to speak up for those who have no voice – our children.”

An increase in self confidence was noted by Angela as she found herself trying new things both in and out of the classroom. Before earning certification Angela said that if a lesson didn’t go as planned, she left it at that. Now she’s not afraid to analyze what went wrong and to try it again in a different way, sometimes more than once. When asked to take an appointment serving at the national level of an accreditation board, Angela was hesitant, but knew she could do the work because she knew about meeting standards from the NBPTS process. “I was told one of the reasons I was being appointed to that national position was because I was a NBCT and they knew I would represent them well. I was nervous, but accepted the position. That was another professional confidence booster.”
Summary Regarding Confidence

Nine of the 11 case study participants expressed a strong conviction regarding confidence that came after achieving NBC. They find that they are empowered to speak up for students and for the teaching profession. They have the confidence to try new things and believe that becoming nationally certified validated the work that they do in the classroom as “high quality teaching” giving them a sense of pride. With this confidence, they feel willing to reach out and share their thoughts and insights with others. They feel validated in their teaching.

“Ellie”, NBCT #2, and “Lydia”, NBCT #4, did not talk about confidence in any of the data collection, despite probing during the interviews. While Lydia stated, “It made me feel like I know what I’m talking about,” she did not indicate that achieving NBC increased her confidence. She believes achieving NBC validated what she does as a teacher; however, she did not mention an increase in confidence.

Upon further analysis of the data, participants elaborated about their confidence. Three subthemes of confidence emerged: empowerment, validation and the NBCTs’ willingness to try new things. Four of the 11 participants stated that achieving NBC gave them a sense of empowerment. For example, these four NBCTs have the confidence to speak up on behalf of others whether it’s lobbying on behalf of educational issues, or making instructional decisions against the wishes of others based on what they feel is best for students. Eight of the participants shared that they felt validated in their work. For example, these NBCTs believe achieving NBC confirmed what they do is good teaching and feel that others recognize the work that they do. Five of the NBCTs believe they now
have the confidence to try new things. Earning NBC helped them realize they could do other, more challenging things, within the field of education.

New Responsibilities

All of the NBCTs examined have had new experiences since achieving national certification. Others have acknowledged their NBC and have asked them to serve in leadership roles. Six of the participants believe that their new responsibilities are a direct result of becoming a NBCT. The influence of NBC on their careers in terms of new jobs, positions and assignments undertaken and the help that these NBCTs now give to others is discussed in the next section.

Influence of NBC on Career

This section reports the data that were collected to answer the second research question, “How does becoming a NBCT influence an individual’s career path over time?” The strong impact of NBC on the professional work of the participants was communicated by the participants. All of the eleven participants described new responsibilities which have changed their careers since obtaining certification. Six of the eleven stated that achieving NBC had a direct impact on the changes they have experienced in their careers. The NBCTs emphasized role modeling and changes in their careers including helping others. They also mentioned how their expertise has been sought out by others. The data suggest that NBCTs find confirmation in becoming certified and they perceive themselves as having an influence in their schools and in wider venues.
These NBCTs hold a variety of leadership positions and responsibilities such as leading committees, working as mentors, teaching classes, speaking to government officials and serving in state-level capacities. These teachers are open to accepting new tasks which perhaps allows them to expand their influence in the field while remaining true to their love of teaching. Table 4.10 shows some of the new roles, positions and responsibilities these case study participants have experienced since obtaining NBC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NBCT</th>
<th>New Roles, Positions, Responsibilities Since Certification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #1 “Betty”</td>
<td>Mentor Teacher, NB Mentor, School Improvement Team Chair, Principal Selection Committee, Site-Based Management Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #2 “Ellie”</td>
<td>Served on the Teacher Advisory Board for the Governor and the State Superintendent’s Advisory Board, Student Teacher Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #3 “Karen”</td>
<td>Math Curriculum Supervisor, Lead Teacher, Department Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #4 “Lydia”</td>
<td>New Teaching Position, Adjunct Faculty, Mentor for New Teachers, Facilitator for NBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #5 “Brad”</td>
<td>New Teaching Position, Served on Governor’s Council, Testified at Statehouse, Teaching on-line Graduate Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #6 “Tina”</td>
<td>Professional Development Chair, Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #7 “Julie”</td>
<td>Teacher on Special Assignment at University, Professional Development Provider, District Resource Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #8 “Rachel”</td>
<td>Adjunct Faculty, Teacher on Special Assignment, Assistant Superintendent, Responsible for k-12 Literacy Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #9 “Jerry”</td>
<td>Adjunct Faculty, Supervisor of Instruction, Board Member of Reading Association, given input to state level organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #10 “Kelsey”</td>
<td>Literacy Coach, Committee Work on Advisory Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #11 Angela</td>
<td>NCATE Assessor, Adjunct Faculty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10 New Responsibilities for Study Participants
New Jobs, Positions and Assignments

Five of the eleven NBCTs studied have had career changes that caused them to leave the classroom. While the other six remained as classroom teachers, they have all experienced new positions and assignments. Many of the assignments and new roles involve helping others.

NBCT #1 “Betty” After obtaining certification, Betty realized if she wanted professional opportunities, she would have to make them happen herself (Q#2, I#1). She has contacted people at the state level and offered her thoughts and help, but they have not seemed receptive to her offers. With the exception of moving into administration or being a curriculum coordinator, which involves coordinating the work of testing which she is not interested in, opportunities for teachers to advance their careers do not exist within Betty’s school district (I#2). Regardless, NBCTs do not have a preferred role in these positions because NBC does not equal having a Masters degree according to Betty’s school district.

Betty believes that perhaps a supervisor submitted her name to serve on some committees because she is a NBCT, but she does not know that for certain (I#3). “I may not know some of the doors that opened because of NB and they would be little itty bitty doors, but my name may have been put forward for leadership positions because someone said, ‘Well, she’s got NBC, that means something’. " She’s also in the midst of a possible new job and isn’t certain if they know about NBC. “I don’t know that NBC is going to weigh heavily on my resume for this new job, but it might.”
After becoming a NBCT, Betty mentored a couple of teachers through the NB process. “We got to have different kinds of discussions than I normally have with teachers.” In her own work, the NB process taught her that she needs to pay more attention to connecting a child’s home life to her lessons. She also brings others in to her classroom so that students receive more than just her voice as part of their instruction.

This teacher’s leadership roles include mentoring new teachers. She also serves as a building representative for a state-wide education group. Betty has served as a mentor because she wants to make certain there are people to take her place when she leaves. She doesn’t mind sharing her classroom because she wants to help facilitate the growth of soon-to-be teachers.

Betty has also been the co-chair of her school improvement team which is site-based management for each school and mandated by the state. Twice she has been the co-chair, an elected position by the faculty. “I feel very honored by that because when a faculty as large as ours elects you, that’s a vote of confidence. She asked someone why they thought she gets elected and they said, 'Because you’re not afraid to stand up and say what you need to say'.”

_NBTC #2 “Ellie”_ Ellie was only in her fifth year of teaching when she attempted NBC. She believes with time came growth, maturity and change in her teaching. Ellie doesn’t believe that all of the changes she’s had as a classroom teacher have been just because of NBC, but also because she is a mom and she’s matured in her thoughts and decision making over the years (I#1, I#2, I#3). “I’ve changed. Things come up and kids
aren’t always going to have their homework done and there are a couple of ways you can handle that. I handle it differently now than I did as a new teacher.”

She believes it is unclear, or hard to distinguish if the changes in her roles and responsibilities are related to becoming a NBCT, or to something else because she became a NBCT so early in her career. Ultimately, Ellie believes the career changes she’s experienced have probably come from a combination of things (I#1, I#2, I#3). She attributes these changes to being involved with her state’s beginning teacher program and also from what she learned by achieving NBC.

In Ellie’s small rural school district, opportunities for career advancement for teachers do not exist (#3). “You’re either a teacher or a principal; there is nothing in between.” She gets involved to make a difference and believes other NBCTs shouldn’t sit around and ask, “Why didn’t I get asked to do something” but they should instead ask, “What can I do to help?” At this time in her career, Ellie does not want to be asked to do more professionally because it would take her away from her students, and away from her classroom.

**NBCT #3 “Karen”** After obtaining her national certification, Karen became a math curriculum supervisor for her district which includes 70 buildings. She served in that role until the curriculum department was eliminated by the superintendent. She believes that being a NBCT played a part in her getting that job because “administrators are very impressed when you say you’re a National Board Certified Teacher because they know the high standards and rigor involved” (I#1).
Karen believes that NBC put her on a different path in terms of her teaching career (I#1). Karen stated that she uses the NBPTS standards in her work, but not consciously. She has internalized them. “It’s just a part of who I am.” She is there for her students and she thinks they all can learn. She believes now that this type of teaching is second nature to her. She said this could also be attributed to the fact she was always interested in professional development and learning how to better herself. She doesn’t attribute a lot of things to NB itself, but to the rigors involved in completing the process such as trying new things with her students and making adjustments again and again as she refines her work to make it better (I#3).

While Karen has always considered herself a teacher, she has done some work in the field of education, outside of a classroom, over the years. She believes that achieving NBC opens the door by elevating a teacher’s status and that it puts them in the running for more leadership positions and opportunities; however, she does not think that NBC played a role in her career change (I#2).

Karen has always been someone who is energized by professional development. She has always been interested in attending national conferences and staying current in her subject area of math and also in the field of education. She looked for leadership opportunities before she became a NBCT; therefore, she is not convinced that NBC affected her professional work in a specific way that she could articulate in the interview (I#1). “I’m not saying that it didn’t have an impact, but to say that NBC affected my professional work in a certain way, I’m not sure I can say that.”
*NBCT #4 “Lydia”* After receiving her NBC, Lydia was recruited to a teaching position at a different school. Although Lydia’s supervisors are usually the ones who invite her to partake in leadership opportunities, Lydia seeks more leadership roles because she is an NBCT. “I’ve always wanted to learn and grow, but as a NBCT it takes on a different level.” Lydia feels that she’s improved education because she’s brought others on board by encouraging them to take on new leadership opportunities; things they’ve not done before. Providing assistance to others in the field is what Lydia believes teaching is all about.

When Lydia first became nationally certified no other teachers in her district were certified. Now there are nearly 40 NBCTs in the district including two at her site. Teachers, at her site, who had never branched out as leaders before are now master teachers, and/or support providers for new teachers. She has helped bring these changes about. Lydia states, “People need to have the encouragement and they need to know that they can definitely give back.” She believes it’s about how you treat people.

After becoming a NBCT, Lydia served as a facilitator for NBC for her district, working as the head support provider for all of the district’s NB candidates (Q#1, I#2). “The facilitator role for NBC grew right out of the fact that I was a NBCT.” She was given a full-time release position for three years to facilitate NB candidates. In that position, she also provided support for new teachers in her district and helped the district's struggling teachers by working as a consultant and a peer assistant for teachers who were on improvement plans or who had received unsatisfactory evaluations. When the funding ran out for a full-time release teacher to serve in that position, she returned to
the classroom; however, she still works with the beginning teacher assessment program and still conducts the NB work for her district.

The beginning teacher assessment program is an induction program which measures beginning teachers against state teaching standards. New teachers must demonstrate that they are able to meet the standards for the state through the incorporation of a portfolio showcasing their work. They are required to participate in this performance based assessment in order to obtain full teaching credentials. This structured program allows for the incorporation of some NBPTS principles (I#2, I#3). “I can help new teachers because they’re required to do many things that my school doesn’t require us to do.” Lydia states, “This (induction program) will eventually encourage them to move right on into NBC which I think is great.” Outside of her district, Lydia is also an assessor for this state-level induction process.

After becoming a NBCT, she started teaching pre-service teachers at the university level as an adjunct faculty member. She also helps the university by serving as a mentor teacher for their student teachers. She believes this came about as a result of being a NBCT (Q#2, I#3). As a mentor teacher she incorporates the NBPTS processes into that work. Lydia believes that the university respects her and reaches out to her for student teaching placements because she is an NBCT. “The university really values my partnership because I have information that they don’t.” Lydia explained she knows where hiring will take place, who would make good cooperating teachers and where ethnic diversity exists. She’s able to assist the university by sharing this information with them. Her work as an adjunct for the university further demonstrates how she helps others in the teaching profession.
Lydia believes that because she is a NBCT a lot of doors have been opened for her (Q#2, I#1, I#2, I#3). “I got to travel a lot and to speak publicly.” She also believes that is why she was asked to teach at the university. “I’m pretty sure that’s the reason why I’ve gotten to do the things I have.”

When asked why Lydia has remained in the classroom she states, “That’s where I’m supposed to be.” She explains she thought she would go into administration and that there are many areas in which she would do well in administration; however, there are politics involved and she is not interested in that. She states that she cares about kids and families and she knows she’s a good teacher. “I feel like I’m making a difference.” When she retires, she believes she will probably continue to teach at the university.

She feels NB has taken her professionally to the next level. She explained that she stays abreast of what is going on in the field. “I think that is because of NB. Otherwise, I might be content to just sort of go along with the flow.” Lydia describes herself as one who continually wants to learn and grow. Being a NBCT is “a nice way of holding yourself accountable.”

Lydia believes that teachers who are not NBCTs still have education related opportunities, but they probably would have a harder time finding them. “Doors are sort of opened to you when you’re a NBCT.” She believes having her NBC enhanced her credentials and has provided opportunities (Q#2, I#1, I#2, I#3). The opportunity to travel and to network with other educators has been another experience provided to her directly as a result of NBC as she has been actively involved in serving her state as a NBC support provider.
According to Lydia, the impact that NBC makes on one’s career depends upon the individual person. For her, personally, she believes it validated the fact that she was already doing some things well (I#2). It also motivated her and caused her to want to keep doing well, to keep researching and reading and staying on top of her game. “I never want to be a dinosaur. I always want to be on the top. I want to go out on the top. I don’t want to be one of those teachers who says, ‘Well, at one time, I was pretty good’.” She believes NB influenced her because she knows what an accomplished teacher looks like and she always wants to be one. It’s her personal drive and who she is as a professional.

NBCT #5 “Brad” When contemplating attempting NBC, Brad thought being a NBCT would be a good way to increase his resume and that it would possibly get him into some other type of career within education (I#1). He described himself as being very ambitious and that NB seemed like the up and coming thing. “I wanted to be on the cutting edge of professional development.”

After obtaining his national certification, Brad had four job offers. Being a NBCT helped him transfer to a different teaching position in a different school (I#1). He took one of those four offers for a teaching position and was paid $13,000 - $14,000 more per year to work in a nearby school without having to relocate. He was the first NBCT in his new school district. “There were many opportunities back then because it was so new.” His principal would tell him about various groups who needed teachers to serve and would encourage him to take those positions. He went to the State Capitol to testify on behalf of other NBCTs and he served on the Governor’s council. Currently, he
represents his grade level teachers on the Instruction and Assessment Curriculum Council and he’s also on the school Improvement Team. Recently, he finished a facilitation class for PBS and he will soon start teaching on-line graduate level courses. Becoming a NBCT helped Brad feel much more professional.

As a NBCT, and one of the first groups to certify in his state, Brad said, “It was exciting!” There were no financial incentives back then (I#1). Now Brad receives $2,000 a year from his county and $2,000 a year from the state because he is a NBCT.

Brad teaches in a very large school district which allows teachers to have more leadership opportunities. They have teacher mentors, teacher consultants, and National Board staff developers. He states that possibly, because he is an NBCT, he has been asked first for leadership opportunities, before other educators within the school system, because of the status that goes along with NB (I#2, I#3). “They kind of come to us first to serve on committees, get on councils, and get on different decisional making panels. It’s like we have the first bid which tells me that this district really values its NBCTs.”

He also believes that the committee work he does outside of the classroom is different than the work he does as a classroom teacher. As a classroom teacher, his students move on to the next grade level and he never really gets to see the fruits of his labor, but when serving on committees he often gets to see changes that he was a part of creating (I#3). “I do know that all of the work I put in does have an impact on children.” For example, Brad explained that he served on a grade card committee which revamped the way their district shows assessment information. It is now based on a rubric system. Beginning in the fall, Brad will serve as a facilitator for on-line graduate classes. “I was appointed based on, I guess, my credentials, a national board thing.”
"Tina" Since becoming a NBCT, Tina has been able to move her career forward. Without NB, she doesn’t know if she would have been in this same spot as quickly as she was (I#1, I#2, I#3). “I didn’t necessarily want to leave the teaching field itself, except that I knew I had the potential for impacting many more kids and also impacting many teachers if I left.” She started looking more globally after earning NBC. “I think I would still probably be in the classroom without NB because you know I loved what I did so I think NB just maybe pushed my career a little more quickly, pushed my thinking a little faster.” Tina thinks her name “got out” because of NB, asserting that she obtained her first principal’s job because of NBC. When she achieved NBC there were more responsibilities given to her district-wide. “I think this is sad to say, but I’m not so sure that my expertise would have been noticed as much without NB coming in to help me. I don’t want to say it’s just NB, but it definitely gave me a boost.”

Tina strongly believes that NBC played a role in obtaining the leadership positions in two educational organizations in which she participated. Additionally, she was appointed to serve on committees for her state’s Governor and helped to develop standards for certification status for her state. She has served as a facilitator for NBPTS and helped NBCTs to access opportunities because of it (I#2).

After becoming a NBCT she was in a group of NBCTs who were utilized as regional resources for NBPTS. They went to different schools to share strategies for working with their grade level expectations. She was also hired to be a teacher leader for NB. Several NBCTs worked together and held workshops throughout the United States as teacher leaders for colleges and state officials who were learning more about NBC.
She believes that NB played a role in her career changes (I#1, I#2, I#3). She became the Professional Development Chair for her district, their Salary Welfare Chairperson and served on their Strategic Planning Committee. Serving in those positions gave her the first glimmer of what school was about outside of the classroom. She believes those experiences opened up the business of school to Tina, not just the teaching part. “I got interested in that and I think it’s because I’d been looking for that to broaden me as a teacher. NB certainly developed me as a teacher until these other things came up and interested me in yet another way in education.” After teaching for thirteen years, Tina became a principal.

According to Tina, educators at her school are typically either administrators or they are teachers (I#2). There are not other options with the exception of serving on a few committees. She believes that some teachers are not encouraged to get out there, to share ideas and to be leaders. “As a teacher, I felt like I did my own thing. I don’t think that was the best way at all which is probably why I reached out to NB because it was so much an opportunity to talk with people about education.” Tina stated that as an administrator, more leadership roles are put upon you. “As a teacher with NBC, that happened to me quite a bit. A lot of roles and opportunities came up.”

Tina states she wishes she could say that NB influences teachers to stay in teaching, but she doesn’t feel it does (I#2). “I actually think NBCTs find that the world is bigger and I think it makes some want to learn more and to be more educated about their field, but hopefully it leads them to opportunities within the teaching world.” For Tina, the opportunities just stared coming in. “NB opens up opportunities that may not have been there without it and it’s hard to say what those opportunities are because I think
some of these came up for me because I worked in the state capital of our state and was in a good location.” Tina believes that NBC helps people grow as professionals in the classroom or by expanding beyond the classroom, but still in the field of education.

**NBCT #7 “Julie”** Julie’s career path has changed since becoming a NBCT. Julie taught in five different states and in a variety of subject and grade levels before working in staff development. She believes that NB gives NBCTs a higher profile and that having NB under her belt enhanced her credentials.

After Julie received her NBC, she applied for and obtained a three year position at a university which allowed her to supervise and teach pre-service teachers. She believes being a NBCT might have enhanced her credentials and helped her obtain the position at the university (I#1, I#2). This provided her with the opportunity to network with university faculty. Julie believes that her NBC, along with her relationships with faculty at the university, might have given her an edge on getting that position. “My gut level is that it (NB) may have given me extra points.”

In her current career, Julie is a professional development provider for a school district. She conducts site visits making observations, answering questions and providing training. She provides the professional development sessions, workshops and runs meetings for the literacy program. She is the teacher coordinator, not an administrator.

Julie has had more leadership roles since she became a NBCT; however, Julie would not agree that the sole reason she had leadership positions was because she was a NBCT (I#2, I#3). “It may have played some role, but that is not the only reason.”
NBCT #8 “Rachel” From being a teacher on special assignment to teaching at the college level and becoming involved in administration, Rachel says she has experienced “big changes” in her career which came about from a result of NBC (I#1, I#2, I#3). Rachel believes that being a NBCT served as a launching path for her current position as an Assistant Superintendent. She also believes it grounded her in trying to make better decisions for staff development she is in charge of and for the long term professional growth for the teachers she supervises.

After obtaining her NBC, Rachel was asked to become a teacher on special assignment by the superintendent. She then went on to work as an Assistant Superintendent of Instruction and Staff development and she's in charge of professional development for her district. Having gone through the NBPTS process helps her with her job by helping her to plan and deliver high quality learning experiences for all students, regardless of their ages (Q#2, I#1, I#3).

Rachel's resume boasts a variety of professional experiences including: working as an adjunct faculty member at a college teaching education courses, helping to develop the college's Master's program, leading the district's k-12 literacy initiative, obtaining grant funding and monitoring school achievement data (Q#1). "Certainly all of what I've experienced is from after I received NBC. It is a result of that and I don't think I would be in the position I am now if I hadn't become a NBCT. I might have come to this point eventually, but I think it really spurred the leadership part." Rachel summed up her experience by saying, “It was a catalyst for me taking on some staff development training positions and then ultimately my leadership positions.”
Rachel is in charge of leading her county assistant superintendents’ group. She believes she was originally put in charge of that because of NB. Regardless, it’s been an opportunity for her to continue to learn and to hone her craft though this work. She also works with two local colleges to help plan and put together staff development for local teachers during the summer. “I keep my hands in a lot of different places, from the classroom down the hall to the colleges in the region.”

*NBCT #9 “Jerry”* When Jerry initially attempted NBC, he didn’t know much about NB and what it entailed because his national certification was earned so soon after the implementation; however, he did consider the possibilities of having more opportunities because of being a NBCT if he were successful in obtaining certification. When asked if being a NBCT played a role in obtaining a teaching position with a new district he responded, “Absolutely! That was one of the reasons why I chose that district. When I went to that job fair, there were several opportunities offered to me.” When Jerry was interviewing with the new school district and sharing the things he had done for his Master’s degree and for his NBC attempt, he felt that the new district’s administration talked back intelligently about both of them. He appreciated that the new district even recognized their NBCTs with a stipend and he received about an 80% salary increase by taking that new teaching position.

As soon as Jerry earned his NBC he was assigned to new roles related to his content area such as curriculum committees (I#3). "These were opportunities within the school to provide professional voluntary teachers the time to meet with me. So a lot of stuff like that came up." There wasn't a difference in job titles, but he had more
responsibilities. "NBCTs were expected to be more leaders, just as part of the regular routine." Jerry stated that he absolutely believes his NBC had something to do with the fact he has been asked to do all sorts of new things within the field.

Jerry taught as an adjunct faculty member at two universities in his state, prior to moving to his new state. He believes that he got the job in the new state because they knew he was an NBCT (I#3). He has served on the American Teacher Awards Evaluation Committee (Disney Awards) in Mexico and was also asked to sit on the committee that formed in his previous state to define the qualifications for being a Master Teacher. Additionally, he's served on an accreditation board and served on a state-wide student assessment committee.

According to Jerry, having NBC makes a difference (Q#2, I#1, I#2, I#3). “People who know about this (NBC) give more credit to what you have to say. So if people know you’re a NBCT, and they know what that means, they listen to you a little bit more.” The NBCTs in his previous district also made it a habit of displaying their NBPTS certificates on the wall.

Since obtaining certification, Jerry has been given more responsibility to lead (I#2, I#3). “I think NBC helps get that level of respect that is required to lead.” He believes that other teachers who know he is a NBCT seek him out for collaboration, not as someone who knows everything, but as someone who can help write part of a grant, work on a project or develop a program.

Jerry feels that his professional growth earned from NB carries over to his work today (Q#2, I#1, I#2, I#3). One of the areas he thinks becoming nationally certified helps you with is that you're aware of what your school district is doing compared to others.
When hiring for a new district after earning certification, they were asking him if he would serve on their committees. "I was looked upon with more respect."

\textit{NBCT #10 “Kelsey”} Kelsey learned about NBC when she left the classroom for a year to serve as a teacher-in-residence. She was intrigued by it. The more she learned about NBC, the more excited it about she became. “I didn’t do it to expand my opportunities because I really didn’t know where it would lead.” Reflecting upon how her career has changed since earning certification, Kelsey explained that during the process she developed the skills to analyze and reflect deeply upon her teaching (I#1). "That continues to this day."

According to Kelsey, NBC was a huge professional growth for her (I#1, I#2). The NB process allowed her to improve her teaching and to really think about what she was doing in the classroom. She states, “National Board elevates the teachers, raises bars for the teaching profession and gives teachers something to reach for professionally.”

After obtaining certification, she soon found herself taking on other assignments (I#2, I#3). Kelsey has worked with teachers and taught classes. "Another role that I took on rather quickly was mentoring other teachers going through the NB process. I traveled all around the state because it was relatively new for us at that time." Kelsey stated that it was very demanding, but there was no one else to help. She did that for about five years. Now she's focusing on her new role as a literacy coach instead of seeking leadership opportunities, although she admits she always works with one or two teachers each year who are attempting NBC. Kelsey serves her state on the selection committee for the
Teacher of the Year. She also is a judge for outstanding teachers at the national level (I#1, I#3).

Although it was hard for Kelsey to leave the classroom, she believes as a literacy specialist, she's able to impact many more children and a whole school full of teachers. She finds that rewarding. "I implement our school’s literacy program with the teachers and that is a huge job". She designs the professional development for her district, works to develop curriculum and to positively impact teaching and learning in the schools.

Kelsey feels that being a NBCT has opened doors and enhanced her credentials (I#2). “I think it (NBC) is respected by the right people. The ‘right people’ are those who understand how difficult NB is to attain and they respect teachers who meet those high standards.” She believes people in the business community want teachers to have the credential of national certification. “I think they wonder why we all don’t have it.”

As a result of NB, her perspective has changed for teachers and the teaching profession (I#1). “My respect for that has grown because I think NB sets a standard for teachers and I still think that these teachers represent some of the best of the teaching profession.” Kelsey believes NBC is about empowering teachers and that others should not put teachers down who are trying to better themselves professionally. Kelsey feels that NBCTs are making great contributions. “They are getting out there and doing all kinds of things. They are innovators in education.” She believes NBCTs are the agents of change.

*NBCT #11 Researcher Angela* Angela believes NBC played a tremendous role in her career changes (Q#2, I#2, I#3). “I may have gotten there on my own, eventually, but I believe achieving NBC moved things along rather quickly.”
After obtaining her first certification, a local university sent her a basket of congratulatory flowers to her at school. “My school may not have acknowledged my achievement at that time, or even known what was really entailed in terms of rigor or high quality teaching, but the fact that the university did and immediately sent me flowers was incredibly heartwarming.” Soon after, Angela started working as an Adjunct Instructor of Education at the institution (I#2, I#3). Angela states that achieving NBC validated what she does in the classroom and that what she does indeed makes a difference (I#3).

Angela believes leadership and other opportunities, outside of her school district, came to her because she was a NBCT (I#2). “Soon after achieving NBC, I was appointed to work as a NCATE Board of Examiner. I’m certain that opportunity would not have come about had I not demonstrated the type of teacher I am through NBC.” She also found that it gave her confidence, the confidence needed to seize opportunities.

“When I was interviewing for the doctoral program at a large state university, I felt that even though they didn’t really know or understand what NBC was, I felt that they respected the process and grasped the high level of teaching that is needed in order to certify.” She also states that every grant she has applied for since earning her certification she has obtained. “Now I don’t know if that is because I have NBCT typed after my name on those application forms or not, but I can’t help think it only helped for those who know what it is.”
Summary of New Jobs, Positions and Assignments

An increased respect and recognition from others came through the successful completion of NBC for these participants. They were often designated for new roles and assignments. Six of the participants state that achieving NBC had a direct impact on the change(s) with their career/responsibilities. Their experiences outside of the classroom have been wide ranged. They have taught classes, served on committees and been promoted to special assignments.

The NBCTs have been characterized by their roles and responsibilities. All 11 NBCTs stated they have experienced changes in their jobs since achieving NBC. Some NBCTs willing took on additional roles and responsibilities, some of which were formal roles within their schools while others were informal. For example, “Betty”, “Ellie”, “Lydia”, and Angela serve as mentors to help preservice teachers who are obtaining their teaching degrees and/or new teachers who are just starting off in their careers. “Rachel”, “Jerry”, “Lydia” and Angela serve as adjunct faculty members instructing teachers or preservice teachers in educational courses and soon “Brad” will also be working as a graduate level on-line course instructor.

For some of the NBCTs, certification opened doors for new employment opportunities. “Lydia”, “Brad” and “Jerry” took teaching positions at new schools where they feel NBC was valued by their new districts. “Betty” feels being a NBCT may help her get a new job she is in the running for and Angela believes that being a NBCT was instrumental in receiving a full-time job offer at a university. Five of the 11 study participants left the classroom to pursue other positions in education. Five of the 11 study participants told about an increase of respect from others. While all of these career
changes cannot solely be the result of becoming a NBCT, it appears to have an impact on the career changes of the study participants.

Providing Assistance

This section reports the data that were collected to answer the third research question, “What are NBCTs’ perceptions on the ways they provide assistance to others in the education profession?” All of the eleven participants described responsibilities which involved providing assistance to others including teachers, administrators and those at the university level. All eleven of the NBCTs' new responsibilities include helping others in the field of education.

The NBCTs in this study, for the most part, have a fundamental desire to help others. This sense of responsibility causes them to reach out and assist others. They feel a strong professional obligation to share their expertise with others, like a professional obligation. Six of these NBCTs continue to work as classroom teachers while also helping to improve the profession.

NBCT# 1 “Betty” Betty feels that she should serve the school and she doesn’t mind lending her skills and talents towards that (I#3). She believes there are some teachers who just complain and nothing gets accomplished. “I’d rather just get in there and say what needs to be said, or bring the problem out in the open, or discuss it in a professional way and help solve it.” However, she is cautious about getting in another teacher’s business even if she perceives that teacher to be having trouble or being
ineffective because that’s not her style. “I’m not their supervisor, but you can’t tell somebody who’s at least your age what to do unless you’re in a supervisory position.”

Betty believes that colleagues would say that she is helpful to them by giving them good ideas and gentle advice (I#3). She knows that there are many different ways to help a student with a problem. As her way of role modeling, Betty shares what she does as a way to help a struggling teacher. She tries to respect everybody’s differences and how they approach their problems, as long as it’s positive for the children.

**NBCT #2 “Ellie”**  
Ellie typically receives supportive responses to her offers of help from colleagues and administrators (I#3). For example, with her state’s new Lead Teacher program she automatically qualified as a Lead Teacher because she is a NBCT. Therefore, she offered her help to the administrators to help get the program started for other teachers. They were grateful she agreed to get their new program started.

“Teachers in my hallway could not do what we do every day if we didn’t have the support of each other.” After NBC, Ellie had worked with a mentoring program for new teachers, coordinating the program for her district (Q#2, I#3). She also helps new teachers by working with the principals and also the new teachers to get them the training that they need. Ellie serves as a PRAXIS III assessor for her state which requires her to conduct formal teacher observations and assessments of beginning teachers, outside of her own school district. She uses information she learns conducting her PRAXIS III assessments to better help her student teachers.

**NBCT #3 “Karen”**  
Karen is a Lead Teacher and chair of the math department. She is also a math coach. As a math coach, Karen works directly with the math teachers
(Q#1, I#1). She is the only NBCT in her building and she does not believe that other teachers in her building share her teaching philosophy. She believes in hands-on learning and projects and thinks other teachers do not do this because it takes a lot of work and you have to believe in it to do it. “I think they have to be won over and they can be intimidated if you walk around with National Board on your shoulders.”

**NBCT #4 “Lydia”** Lydia gets involved because she feels that she has an obligation to help (I#1, I#3). Because of NB, she has been asked to speak in front of Congressmen and to visit Congressmen’s offices regarding educational issues (I#2, I#3). “I’m sure that NB is the impetus that has caused all of that to happen.”

Responsibility goes hand-in-hand with being a NBCT, according to Lydia. She thinks NBCTs must always try to model professionalism. She classifies herself as a role model for professionalism for her peers (Q#2, I#3). “The way the public sees us is so important.” Lydia believes NBCTs should always carry and conduct themselves in a professional manner because others look up to NBCTs as being high caliber individuals in the field of teaching. Lydia holds herself to higher standards. As a NBCT, she looks for opportunities to grow professionally because she believes she will never know it all and she can always learn more. Continuing professional development and modeling lifelong learning is really important to Lydia. “I was probably like that before I became nationally certified, but I think being a NBCT carries with it an obligation to continue that.”

Lydia feels that her colleagues respected her when she was a newly certified NBCT as well as now, years later, because she had grown, matured and held a variety of
leadership positions (I#1, I#2, I#3). “People are always looking up to others who have done more and who have achieved things on a higher level.” Lydia shares that her daily work has some correlation with the NBPTS process because of the way she communicates with parents and with the professional community. It also helps with the kind of modeling she does. “You have to model for others what it means and what it looks like to be an accomplished teacher so I think I’m cognizant of the fact.”

When helping others, Lydia believes you must keep in mind that teachers are all at different levels, regardless of how many years they’ve been teaching. “There are some brand new teachers coming in that have more intuitive ability for this career than people who have been teaching for a number of years.” Lydia thinks the end result, when helping teachers, should be the impact on student learning. She believes everyone is an individual with various gifts and talents (I#3). “I think if you keep that in the center, it sort of equalizes everybody.” Lydia believes that there is not one blueprint plan or one success plan. Individualism and humanity take part. When sharing how she works to help other teachers she gave this advice, “Treat people with dignity and respect no matter where or who they are and remember you may be the one needing help tomorrow.”

**NBCT #5 “Brad”** Brad’s colleagues and supervisors treat each other professionally and they get a lot of work done together. While his supervisors are supportive, he feels that when he is outside of his own school, others value him even more and give him more respect (I#2, I#3). “I think within a tight-knit school community the administrators don’t want to put anybody up on a pedestal above anybody else. But outside of my school, when I work on committees, I always hear, ‘Well, he or she, they
are nationally certified teachers. Let’s ask them.’ So that’s why I know being a NBCT gives you a little bit more.” He believes that those outside of his school respect and appreciate his contributions. “They ask you for input and they want to hear your opinion. It makes you feel good as a professional. That’s why I continue to do that extra work.”

He also believes NBCTs should hold themselves to high standards because others look up to NBCTs and learn from them (I#3). “If you’re a NBCT, supposedly you should be considered one of the best of the best.” He does not believe NBCTs should all be put into the same category because they are all different, but he does believe that all NBCTs should work hard and help others along the way because it is the right thing to do. By sharing his knowledge, Brad states he has helped others NBC candidates achieve national certification (Q#2).

Brad believes that the teachers he works with put a lot of time and effort into what they do. His colleagues share a common philosophy (I#3). “We all work very hard to get our students to succeed.” He does not believe they teach just to get a paycheck. One of the reasons he has not left the classroom is because his colleagues are supportive and fun to work with. He also enjoys what he’s doing. “It wouldn’t be as enjoyable if my colleagues and I didn’t see eye-to-eye and of course administrators have a lot to do with that too. All the teacher friends I have worked with have been awesome.” Brad states, “I just want to help people and to be involved and to be heard – to make a difference.”

**NBCT #6 “Tina”** Currently, Tina is helping teachers by working as a role model, serving as an administrator for teachers who are conducting their administrative internships for their Masters programs. Additionally, as a principal for her own teaching
staff, she finds resources to help her faculty with their teaching and the students’ learning. She goes into the classrooms and helps her teachers with projects. Also, once a week, Tina assesses lesson plans and meets with beginning teachers. She also conducts all of their evaluations and assessments.

Tina believes that becoming a NBCT allowed her to be so much wiser in her educational knowledge base and allowed her to learn more about herself and her teaching (I#3). She continues to seek out information to learn about what’s going on in education. “I feel much better informed about things and I’m happy to share that information with others. I don’t know that prior to NBC that I did that as well.” She believes what has affected her most is that she is now more pro-active, finding out what’s going on in the world of education instead of waiting for that information to come to her. Tina mentions that NBCTs could be used to help write textbooks, and to create educational games and technology. “I think a lot of NBCTs figure out they are destined to do other things in education because they’ve accomplished NBC and they can do hard things.”

*NBCT #7 “Julie”* Many aspects of Julie’s current position require her to assist others in the field of education (I#1, I#3). She is a resource teacher for professional development for her district. In this role, she serves as a resource leader by answering teachers’ questions, sharing strategies and presenting workshops. She gives demonstrations and encourages reflection to move teachers to look deeper into their work. Another aspect of her work requires her to facilitate a group of instructional coaches.
Julie gets involved when she sees a need that she can contribute something to (I#3). She also believes that she was nurtured and she wants to help others just as she was assisted. "There was a principal who said, ‘I want to recommend you for a program at the University of X.’ He had faith and confidence in me and in my abilities.”

People have approached Julie to assist them with their teaching (I#3). Her name has been circulated around as being a NBCT and others know they can turn to her for help. Many aspects of Julie’s current position require her to assist others in the field of education.

NBCT #8 “Rachel” Helping others in the field of education is personally rewarding to Rachel and also something she feels the need to do (I#3). “It’s my obligation to give back to the professional community.” She knows that not everyone takes advantage of the NBC program so it’s important for her to share her craft and to tell them about the NBC opportunity.

Rachel shares the impact she now has on students as an administrator by explaining that the sphere of influence is so much greater (I#2). “As a teacher I had direct contact with 120 students every year. As the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, I have the responsibility for over 2,000 students.” She also adds that she still has the opportunity to go in and work with classes as part of her job. She feels that having experienced the NBPTS process (including a renewal of her NBC where she worked with a struggling teacher) helps her with her job.

For Rachel, getting involved and reaching out to help others is useful as well as an area of passion (I#3). Recently, her district was reevaluating its teacher appraisal.
program and she was in charge. "It goes right back to so many of the extra things that you are ask to do as a part of becoming nationally certified. It is something that I love. I’m in charge because I just love it. I think some of wanting to help others is just engrained and some of it I feel because of the things that I’ve been able to do, I need to continue to give back and help others see the possibility."

NBCT #9 “Jerry” After becoming a NBCT, Jerry served as an adjunct faculty member at two different universities (I#1, I#3). “I think being able to go and teach courses to teachers or prospective teachers helps me think and review and know what I truly believe and to make sure I’m doing that in my own classes. I’m able to say, ‘Here is what we should be doing, here is the reason why based on this research’. ” He also believes he has great credibility because his university-level students have an actual classroom teacher teaching them. "It’s good to be able to talk to them in real terms about what they’re learning, what it is like in the real classroom and what kind of teachers they really want to be."

Jerry believes he can reach more kids in more classrooms by helping the teachers become better teachers. His goal, as a supervisor and one of the reasons he decided to leave the classroom, is to have more influence on what happens in more classrooms. He is responsible for inducting all of his district's new teachers each year and he runs the mentoring program for all of their non-tenured teachers (I#1, I#3). He serves as more of a coach and a confidant instead of an evaluator.

As a supervisor, Jerry provides on-line resources for the teachers in his district. He helps them focus on one important topic that he believes they need to take into their
teaching practice each month. Additionally, in his current job, he also provides in-service training for teachers (I#1, I#3). “Opportunities like working with and helping other teachers have been wonderful and I’ve enjoyed them.” He believes that people who know what NBC is understand that NBCTs can contribute and really help others. “I think being a NBCT gives you a new level of respect.”

In one of Jerry’s professional organizations, he reviewed resumes for teachers whenever they were ready to find a job. “I’d help them by making suggestions.” Additionally, he’s on the Legislative and Professional Standards Committee for his state reading association. He works on legislative projects to move the subject area forward. He has also worked on other committees helping to set standards for colleges. He feels like he has a voice and is making a difference while doing this type of work.

As a whole, Jerry believes NBCTs need to advocate for true professional behavior (I#3). “I don’t think that the teachers necessarily do that. If NBC people could stand up and say we need to go above and beyond, I think that’s what we need to do. We need to quit saying, ‘I will work these contract hours and that’s it. I will do nothing extra’.” Jerry believes that as a group of NBCTs, they could get together and start advocating for that professionalism. "I think that would give us a lot of respect.”

**NBCT #10 “Kelsey”** After becoming nationally certified, Kelsey traveled to different counties in her state to work with teachers and to teach classes. She also worked with small groups of teachers going through the NBC process, mentoring them through the process (I#1, I#2, I#3). "I did a lot of that until more and more NBCTs came
on board and then when there were more NBCTs they were able to help each other in their own buildings because NBC grew by leaps and bounds in this state."

As a literacy specialist, Kelsey feels that she is able to impact many children and an entire school’s teachers; she believes that impact is far reaching and very rewarding. Kelsey goes into classrooms on a daily basis to model new practices in literacy for teachers and to help them implement effective strategies and current practices in their own classrooms (I#1, I#3). After her demonstrations, they discuss what she taught and together the teachers work to develop lessons. “I help teachers move towards incorporating good teaching into their own practice.” She explains that when she is helping other teachers she is also helping herself. “I learn about literacy right along with them.”

Additionally, she designs and organizes professional development for her school district, trying to extend the teachers’ thinking. She tries to keep her teachers current on what is happening in literacy and she gathers materials and resources for them because their time is so short. She also helps with assessment.

_NBCT #11 Researcher Angela_ Angela stated, “When I’m gone, I want the world to be a better place because of my work here. That’s why I do what I do.” Angela feels like she has a responsibility to give back to the profession because it has given her so much (I#3). “I was the first person, on either side of my family, to ever go to college. I’ve experienced first-hand the value of a high quality education and great teachers. As a result, my life has been very blessed.”
Additionally, she believes that by becoming a NBCT her career was advanced (Q#2, I#1, I#2). “I feel like I owe it to give back all that I can. I know I can’t pay it back, but I can pay it forward by encouraging, inspiring and motivating others to attempt NBC, or to work toward whatever goals they have set for themselves as educators.”

Angela serves as an Adjunct Instructor of Education at a nearby university teaching one graduate-level education course each semester (I#1, I#2, I#3). As an adjunct Angela tries to demonstrate effective practices. “I believe I must serve as a good role model for these teachers who I think look up to me because I am their instructor.”

She also serves as a cooperating teacher working with preservice teachers (Q#1, I#2, I#3). “Mentoring gives me the opportunity to form the career of others, but also affects my teaching as I analyze and reflect on my practice with these pre-service teachers.” Angela believes when these students share ideas about cutting-edge practices and new research with her, it motivates her to think about changes she should be implementing in her classroom.

*Summary of Providing Assistance*

Obtaining NBC can bring a change in relationships with other professionals such as colleagues, university faculty and administrators. For example, “Betty”, “Ellie” and “Julie” believe their colleagues consider them helpful and they are supportive of their work. “Jerry” and Angela feel that the university students find them to be credible in their instruction as adjunct faculty members. An administrator encouraged Julie to apply for a three year position as a resource teacher at the University of X which she obtained.
The NBCTs in this study exert an influence in their workplaces as help providers. While the extent of this influence may vary, all participants work to help others in the profession. This suggested that providing help is often a role undertaken by NBCTs after earning their certification. This finding demonstrates how NBCTs can exert their accomplished expertise outside of classrooms to help others. This can enhance productive school relations and benefit students beyond those who are directly students of the NBCTs.

The NBCTs have grown professionally since achieving NBC. The study participants shared the work that they do helping others in the profession. Researchers (Patterson & Patterson, 2004) report that teacher leaders “work with colleagues for the purpose of improving teaching and learning, whether in a formal or an informal capacity” (p. 75).

While the extent of their assistance varies, all of the study participants help others as a part of the work they do as professionals. The work they do to improve teaching and learning includes serving as adjunct faculty members, chairing committees, providing demonstrations and providing one-on-one assistance to others. The case study participants have a willingness to share their expertise and ideas with others. Their work indicates they have an intrinsic motivation to help the teaching profession and they are committed to improving education. There also appears to be an increased level of respect from others.

Upon further analysis of the data, participants elaborated about their new responsibilities which include helping others. Two subthemes of helping others emerged: role modeling and obligation. Seven of the 11 participants stated that they serve as role
models. For example, “Tina” serves as a role model to other educators who are working with her for their administration internships. “Lydia” classifies herself as a role model for professionalism for her peers and “Kelsey” demonstrates lessons for teachers at her school modeling how to be effective teachers. “Brad” believes teachers should hold themselves to high standards because others look up to NBCTs. Five of the participants shared that they feel obligated to help others. “Betty” feels it’s her responsibility to serve her school while “Lydia”, “Rachel” and Angela feel obligated to “give back” by helping others.

New Findings

Frustration and Disappointment

Ten of the 11 NBCTs in this study reported being frustrated and/or disappointed after achieving national certification for a variety of reasons. NBC does not guarantee recognition and honor for the accomplishment of earning advanced certification, nor does it ensure invitations to serve in leadership capacities. While some NBCTs believe they have been acknowledged and rewarded for the achievement, recognition may not come from the NBCTs’ own districts.

The NBCTs have experienced changes in dispositions since achieving NBC. Six of the NBCTs reported a lack of recognition for NBCTs, outside of NBPTS, and believe others do not understand what is involved with national certification. They feel that NBCTs have a lot to contribute and should be offered opportunities to serve and to share their expertise with others if they desire.
Three of the participants in this investigation believe NBCTs should not have to renew their certificates after achieving NBC noting renewal is not required to keep one’s board certification in other professions. One of the study participants believes NBCTs should automatically be licensed to teach in any state and another feels non-NBCTs can be resentful or intimidated by those who are NBCTs.

NBCT #1 “Betty” Betty has experienced disappointment in that she has not received the recognition that she thought she would obtain after achieving NBC (Q#1, I#1). Betty comes from a state with one of the largest number of NBCTs. She believes her lack of recognition is perhaps due to the large number of NBCTs in her state. She does not feel that being nationally certified is a "big deal" anymore.

She is frustrated that she has not been invited to share her thoughts with decision makers (Q#2, I#1). She has called state educational officials offering her help, yet no one has taken her up on her offers. It’s not that she doesn’t believe NBC is valued, but because NBC isn’t new or unique anymore. There is a strong sense of disappointment with Betty who wanted to participate in this study because, "Finally, someone is asking for my input."

NBCT #3 “Karen” Karen believes other teachers can be resentful, fearful or intimidated by NBCTs (I#3). She states, “NBCTs can’t walk around with a label of being nationally certified on their shoulders.” Karen believes teachers want to have better classes to teach, but they’re not willing to take a risk to try something new in their teaching to get the desired results. They don’t want to admit they need help. “They feel
like they’ll lose control of the classroom, but they’ve already lost control so why not try something new? It’s frustrating.” Karen tries to justify what she does to other teachers with the research, but most teachers are not interested in that. Regardless, she continues to reach out to try to help other teachers improve their practice.

**NBCT #4 “Lydia”** Lydia’s frustration with NBC includes disappointment with her school district’s current leadership (I#2). She believes they don’t have the energy or don’t take the time to really look at how valuable NB is and nobody seems to really care. NBCTs in her district are not offered any financial incentives and this is why she feels the number of NBCTs in her very large school district is so small. (There are less than 40 NBCTs and hundreds of teachers.) “Not everyone is driven by intrinsic rewards.” She finds it frustrating that people don’t look at NBC in terms of the impact it has on students.

One of the things Lydia loves about going to NB Conferences is that she meets people who are like her in terms of their desires and goals. “There aren’t any egos. It’s not like in the lunch room where egos are involved in conversations there. It’s just a whole different level of professionalism with NBCTs.” She feels the teaching profession needs more professionalism. Lydia finds it frustrating that some NBCTs do not encourage other teachers to attempt NBC (I#2). She believes NBCTs should invite others to watch them teach. They should recruit other teachers for NBC. They are needed to improve the education system. “I don’t think there could ever be such a thing as too many NBCTs.”
NBCT #5 “Brad” Brad believes that over the years, as more and more teachers certify, not as much is available to NBCTs in terms of leadership roles (I#1). “At the beginning it was like ‘the sky is the limit,’ but that is no longer the case.”

NBCT #6 “Tina” Tina, similar to Karen, has a philosophical difference on the renewal required by NBPTS. She does not believe NBCTs should be required to renew their national certification (I#3).

Tina believes more ways of utilizing NBCTs are needed (I#3). NBCTs should be encouraged to help others. For example, NBCTs should be used to mentor other teachers. “I think we’ve got a lot of talent in these NBCTs, but we are not getting that out to the general teaching population and utilizing them like we should.” She believes using NBCTs as mentors would open the pathways for communication about students that would be helpful.

Tina believes the expertise of NBCTs could be recognized and used to develop teachers professionally (I#3). “We don’t always have to go out to the national expert, we have experts right here. We have some top notch people. It’s like we don’t want somebody to get too much praise so we go outside to get someone else, but we are missing out on opportunities.” Tina suggests creating a database where NBCTs and their areas of expertise would be listed so that those who need help in those areas could contact the NBCTs for assistance instead of going far away to an outside expert.

NBCT #7 “Julie” Because she lives in a state the offers a stipend for NBCTs, Julie believes the requirement to renew is an economic as well as professional issue. She
states, “The renewal process is an additional burden because non-renewal erases the fact that one was ever an NBCT, and carries with it a significant salary cut.” Julia believes the renewal does require evidence of professional growth and the impact of one’s work with students. It does not mean the converse is true for those teachers who had not renewed for any of a number of reasons that may have nothing to do with their careers.

Julie has been disappointed with the fact that NBCTs are required to renew their certificate after ten years (I#1). Due to family circumstances, Julie was not able to renew her certificate as she had planned. She wonders why other professions do not have to renew their board certificates, yet teachers do. Julia, similar to Tina, does not agree that NBCTs should have to renew their certificates after ten years (I#2).

*NBCT #8 “Rachel”* “I think NB is an incredibly important program. And I just don’t think and enough folks understand that. We don’t do enough PR around it.” Rachel feels that the teachers associations are really trying to build up NBC, but it is disappointing to her how the administrative associations do not seem to understand the importance of NB (I#1). Rachel says if she becomes a superintendent it would take a lot for her to hire someone who is not a NBCT to be in charge of curriculum.

Rachel explains that it is very disappointing how others don't "get it" (I#1). She states that she had to take a personal day to take her NBC assessment center exercises, but now as an administrator, she makes sure that never happens for other teachers attempting NBC.

Rachel is frustrated that there is a lack of recognition for NBCTs (I#2). “When our students do something really well we get excited, but when teachers do something
really well that will have a positive influence on kids, we don’t blink.” Rachel was disappointed after becoming a NBCT. She expected simple things to be asked of her like the opportunity to be a mentor or to serve on different committees, but that didn’t happen. She had to make those things happen herself.

**NBCT #9 “Jerry”** Jerry finds it troubling that states do not recognize people who are NBCTs as being qualified to teach in their state (I#2). Jerry states, “For example, if you’re a middle childhood generalist according to NBPTS, you should be able to go to any state in the union and teach there without having to prove your expertise.” He believes NBCTs should be qualified to teach in their certificate area nation-wide.

Jerry has been surprised by the many differences with NBC between the two states he has worked in (I#1). He feels there are many differences with NBC in terms of financial incentives, attitudes, and union involvement. In his new state, he does not see opportunities for teachers to advance their careers; however, in his previous state teachers could become “teachers on special assignment” and serve in more of a supervisory role after obtaining NBC.

**NBCT #10 “Kelsey”** Kelsey feels a sense of disappointment because of the lack of leadership opportunities for educators after obtaining NBC (I#1). “I was not so disappointed for myself as I was for other teachers because I already had a lot of leadership opportunities, but I was really disappointed for other teachers and I still am.” She believes that NBCTs could at least be asked to serve on advisory teams at their schools. “To my knowledge, NBCTs are not asked because they’re not labeled as
‘instructional specialist’ even though they’ve done something that nobody has done”.

She believes NBCTs should be involved in curriculum and assessment and professional development in their schools.

Kelsey has experienced a sense of disappointment in that administrators do not really understand what NB means (I#1, I#2). Although, years after she obtained her certification, she believes her school district indicated their value of NB when they began giving additional salary supplements (in addition to the state money) to teachers who obtained their NBC. Although NBCTs earn an additional salary supplement, they are not given any special roles or called upon to serve or help out. “They just get back to their classroom and they do a good job.” Kelsey’s also frustrated that after being a NBCT, she has to go back to performing simple evaluations when she can do so much more. “You just jump through little hoops.”

**NBCT #11 Researcher Angela** Despite a nearby university sending congratulatory flowers, her local school didn’t seem to notice the fact she had become a NBCT (I#1).

“It was a little disheartening, I must admit. Did they not realize how challenging it is to earn NBC? Did they not want to celebrate this accomplishment? I was the first NBCT, and still am the only NBCT in our entire school district.” How her school handled it actually made her start looking for other teaching jobs in other districts, even though she never actually pursued that at that time.

It’s not that Angela didn’t think other teachers at her school were not doing great things in their classrooms; however, she would have appreciated some recognition and she would have liked to have shared her talents with her school district’s students, but she
was never asked to do so (I#2). “I’m so glad that the university soon asked me to begin working as an adjunct because I felt recognized and rewarded that I could reach out and share my teaching with other teachers and soon-to-be teachers at the college level.”

**Summary of Frustration and Disappointment**

After obtaining NBC, ten of the 11 participants in this investigation have experienced a sense of frustration and / or disappointment. They believe NBCTs should be recognized for their accomplishments, yet others including administrators do not seem to understand what is meant by achieving what is commonly referred to as the “teaching profession’s highest honor” (NBPTS, 2003; NBPTS, 2007; NBPTS 2008). From the comments of the study participants, it appears they are disappointed that others do not fully grasp NBC and what NBCTs have to offer schools and the teaching profession.

“Kelsey” feels that administrators really don’t know what NBC means. “Lydia” thinks if administrators truly understood NBC and examined the impact of the national certification on their students then they would realize how valuable it is. “Rachel” thinks unless one has attempted the process themselves, they can never fully understand what is involved and what it means. These NBCTs reported about their feelings regarding recognition and from their comments, it appears that achieving NBC does not mean others understand it, nor appreciate what NBC is all about. They believe NBCTs should be recognized for their efforts.

Four of the NBCTs in this study feel that the expertise of NBCTs should be utilized, yet that is not happening. “Betty” has offered to help serve her state in educational capacities, yet no one has responded to her offers. “Kelsey” is disappointed
that NBCTs have not had leadership opportunities and Angela wants to serve her school’s students in additional ways, but hasn’t been asked. “Ellie” believes teachers should get involved without waiting to be asked.

“Ellie”, NBCT #2, states she has not experienced any frustration or disappointment with NBC. She believes teachers should not sit around and complain about what isn’t happening, but instead they should get involved and work to bring change about.

While some feel that there are too many NBCTs now and leadership opportunities are slim, others feel that there cannot be enough NBCTs. For example, “Betty” has not received the recognition she thought she would after achieving NBC and feels that perhaps this is due to the large number of NBCTs in her state. “Brad” shares that over the years less opportunities are available because of the influx of NBCTs. Both feel because there are now so many NBCTs, opportunities that would exist if there were relatively few NBCTs, no longer are available. On the other hand, “Lydia” and “Jerry” believe there cannot be enough NBCTs. Their expertise is needed to help improve education.

Cross-Case Analysis

As Herriott and Firestone (1983) stated in Yin (1994, p. 45), “The evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust.” While there were similarities in the experiences and careers of these eleven case study participants, each NBCT traveled their own unique journey.
A deeper understanding of the implication of NBC on the lives of the NBCTs was determined through a cross-case comparison of the data between all cases. The cross-case analysis helped the researcher to analyze and reduce the data. The themes of reflection, confidence, new responsibilities and frustration emerged across the cases in this qualitative inquiry of the long term professional implications of NBC on the professional lives of teachers. The four themes overlap all three of the research questions.

Table 4.1 (located on the next page) presents the case studies, themes, and the questions that drew their response regarding professional differences. Questions 2 and 3 elicited responses from each of the case studies regarding new responsibilities. Ten of the eleven case studies responded about new responsibilities when considering Question 1. Ten of the eleven case studies noted the increase in reflection on their practice when responding to Question 1. Ten of the eleven case studies discussed the frustration they felt after achieving NBC. This was a new finding not mentioned in previous research. Question 1, 2 and 3 drew responses about this frustration and the lack of recognition they felt they received. Finally, nine of the eleven case studies mentioned new confidence in their work. The majority of these responses were observed with Question 3. While each case study had unique experiences, the three research questions did draw commonalities in their perceptions of how their professional life had changed following the attainment of NBC.
Table 4.11 Professional Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NBCT</th>
<th>Reflection</th>
<th>Confidence</th>
<th>New Responsibilities</th>
<th>Frustration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #1 “Betty”</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>Q2, Q3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>NBCT #4 “Lydia”</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
<td>Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #5 “Brad”</td>
<td>Q2, Q3</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
<td>Q1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #6 “Tina”</td>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
<td>Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #7 “Julie”</td>
<td>Q1, Q3</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
<td>Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #8 “Rachel”</td>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
<td>Q1, Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #9 “Jerry”</td>
<td>Q1, Q3</td>
<td>Q2, Q3</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
<td>Q1, Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #10 “Kelsey”</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
<td>Q2, Q3</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
<td>Q1, Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCT #11 Angela</td>
<td>Q1, Q3</td>
<td>Q1, Q3</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3</td>
<td>Q1, Q2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

The goal of this research was to examine the long term implications of NBC on the professional lives of the eleven NBCTs in this study. Important findings evolved for the NBCTs in the years following their NBC. The findings from the questionnaires and the interviews are presented through descriptions which highlight the pervading themes. The themes of reflection, confidence, new responsibilities and frustration emerged through an analysis of the data in this investigation. The information is arranged according to the three research questions. These findings show the professional implications NBC has had on the professional lives of the NBCTs.

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Reflection, confidence, new responsibilities and frustrations affect the NBCTs’ careers, dispositions and work habits. This influence also speaks to the new responsibilities and roles in which the NBCTs added to their professional work. The influence that becoming a NBCT has had on these NBCTs’ professional lives has many implications on the future of NBCTs, those considering attempting NBC and for schools and the learners they serve. It also has implications for what school districts can learn about how to improve professional development and how universities and policy makers can utilize NBCTs. These implications are discussed further in Chapter Five. Conclusions based on the data analysis are discussed in Chapter Five as well as suggestions for future research.
Chapter 5

INTRODUCTION

This final chapter includes a summary of this research inquiry. It contains a review of the research questions, the framework, the methodology and the analysis of the data examined in the study. Conclusions will be drawn from the descriptive data and the analyses presented. Issues about the limitations of the study will be addressed. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for further research and information regarding how this study could impact the field of education.

SUMMARY

The goal of this research inquiry was to examine the long term influence of earning NBC on the professional lives of NBCTs. Most of the research conducted on NBC has investigated the impact of national certification on students (Frank, 2002). While examining student achievement has merit, the influence of the NBC on the educators has not been exclusively researched. This study examined the long term effect of being a NBCT from the perspective of the study participants, ten NBCTs who earned their certification ten to fourteen years ago and one NBCT, the researcher, who served as the eleventh participant. She earned her certifications in 2004 and 2007. The NBCTs reported on the impact that NBC has had on their professional lives. This chapter discusses the findings presented in detail in chapter four.
Using an interpretivist approach to qualitative design, the researcher relied on the “participants’ views of the situation being studied” (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). Throughout this investigation, the researcher documented and described and analyzed the ways eleven NBCTs, who achieved their certification ten to fourteen years ago, have been impacted professionally since achieving NBC. This study was based upon three research questions:

1.) What professional differences (if any) are noted since becoming a NBCT and how does this affect their careers?
2.) How does becoming a NBCT influence an individual’s career path over time?
3.) What are NBCTs’ perceptions on the ways they provide assistance to others in the education profession?

A constructivist-interpretive paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) underpinned this inquiry. This paradigm produces theory grounded in the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The grounded theory method was utilized in this investigation. “A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, ‘it discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon’” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23).

All 673 NBCTs who earned their national certification between 1994 and 1998, and who agreed to have their names and school districts made public, were invited to participate via a U. S. Postal Service mailing. There were 101 volunteers for this study. In order to select the participants, purposeful selection was utilized to obtain small,
information-rich cases (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989). In order to select a variety of cases, the ten participants were selected based on demographic data including: careers, certification areas, regions, ethnicity, and school types. A representative sample was sought to include the greatest differences among participants while maintaining the richness case study research offers. The researcher was the 11th participant in this inquiry.

In many forms of qualitative research, most of the data is obtained through interviews (Kvale, 1996a). The researcher determined interviewing would best allow the study participants to share their perceptions and reflections regarding the research questions. Interview questions were designed to address the research questions. The one-on-one interviews conducted in this study were instrumental to understanding the changes that have occurred with these NBCTs over time. During data collection, the NBCTs shared their experiences with the researcher in three phone interviews, each interview lasting approximately 60 minutes.

Member checks were conducted regarding the validity and to clarify any misunderstandings. Following each interview, each study participant received via email their word-for-word transcript and a narrative summary written by the researcher. Participants were encouraged to respond back to the validity or any other matter.

Of the thirty interviews conducted in this study, ten interviewees responded 25 times. Seven of the 25 responses from NBCTs requested corrections be made while 18 of the 25 responses indicated everything was correct. The NBCTs from five of the 30 interviews did not respond to the request for validity and verification. (See Table 5.1 below.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NBCT</th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Interview 2</th>
<th>Interview 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Betty”</td>
<td>Corrections made</td>
<td>“Everything looks fine”</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Ellie”</td>
<td>“It looks good”</td>
<td>“It’s fine”</td>
<td>“Looks good”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Karen”</td>
<td>Corrections made</td>
<td>Corrections made</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Lydia”</td>
<td>“Sounds good”</td>
<td>Corrections made</td>
<td>“Sounds great”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Brad”</td>
<td>“Looks fine”</td>
<td>“Looks good”</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Tina”</td>
<td>Corrections made</td>
<td>“All looks great”</td>
<td>“All looks great”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Julie”</td>
<td>“This is just fine”</td>
<td>Corrections made</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Rachel”</td>
<td>“This looks great”</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>“Looks great”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Jerry”</td>
<td>“No errors or omissions”</td>
<td>“Everything looks good”</td>
<td>“Things look acceptable”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelsey</td>
<td>Corrections made</td>
<td>“Sounds great”</td>
<td>“I think you captured it”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 Member Check Responses

Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) where transcribed interviews were constantly compared and examined to determine which codes fit the concepts suggested by the data. This allowed the researcher to identify patterns in the data by means of thematic codes.
NVivo 8, a qualitative research computer software program, was used to assist with the data organization and management as well as to help with coding.

From the analysis of the data, four themes evolved that supported the findings of the implications of national certification on the profession lives of the 11 NBCTs. Three of the themes have been discussed in previous research. However, in this study, a new theme emerged. When looking at the results of the questionnaires and interviews, it is clear that obtaining NBC influenced the careers of the NBCTs bringing about changes in their professional work in terms of reflection, confidence, new responsibilities and frustration.

Reflection

All of the NBCTs participating in this investigation stated the influence of reflection upon their work. The study participants integrate reflection into their work in important ways. Reflection is a natural part of their daily professional lives. Minor themes of reflection include increased awareness and integration which support the theme of reflection. For example, “Betty”, “Ellie”, “Brad”, “Karen”, “Lydia”, “Julie”, “Jerry” and Angela state they reflect much more frequently than they did before attempting NBC. “Betty” and “Kelsey” believe NBC intensified how deeply they reflect upon their work. “Julie” thinks NBC got her into the habit of reflecting. These study participants appeared to model the call of A Nation Prepared for Lead Teachers to “take mutual responsibility for the curriculum and instruction on the basis of thinking together and individually about the substance of their work – children’s learning – and how to make themselves better at
Confidence

The NBCTs reported on the influence of confidence that increased after achieving NBC. The participants in this study felt that they now have the confidence to try new things and that achieving NBC validated their work. Minor themes include empowerment, validation and the willingness to try new things. Research by Iovacchini (1998) indicated achieving NBC increases the NBCTs’ confidence in their professional judgment. Participants in this study agree with this finding. For example, “Betty”, “Karen,” “Brad”, “Tina”, “Julie,” “Rachel”, “Jerry”, “Kelsey” and Angela believe that achieving NBC gave them an increased sense of professional confidence. “Betty”, “Jerry” and Angela feel qualified to question unsound practices. “Kelsey” shares achieving NBC validated her work while “Julie” explains that achieving NBC gave her the confidence to try to accomplish additional things.

New Responsibilities

Themes from the data identified new responsibilities which include assisting others in the field of education. For example, “Betty”, “Ellie”, “Brad”, “Tina”, “Lydia” and “Kelsey” have shared their knowledge of teaching by mentoring other teachers. “Ellie”, “Lydia” and Angela have served as cooperating teachers for preservice teachers. “Karen”, “Kelsey”, “Julie” and “Jerry” provide teaching demonstrations and trainings to help others improve their practice. The NBCTs participating in this study indicated
having NBC had an influence in their work and they participate in activities that go above and beyond their direct responsibilities. All of the study participants described opportunities for new professional responsibilities since obtaining NBC.

The NBCTs have been involved with a variety of educational activities since obtaining their certification, serving in many leadership and advisory roles while helping others. Eight of them have experienced new employment. Researchers Patterson & Patterson (2004) describe NBCTs as master teachers with expertise that benefited the whole school. Furthermore, they define teacher leaders as those who “work with colleagues for the purpose of improving teaching and learning, whether in a formal or an informal capacity” (p. 25). These NBCTs have shared their expertise with others.

Frustration

In this theme, not identified in previous research, the study participants expressed their frustration and disappointment regarding the lack of recognition and lack of offers to share their expertise. The study participants do not believe that others understand what is involved with NBC. They also feel they have a lot to contribute and should be offered the chance to share their work. For example, “Betty” has made offers to assist others, by contacting officials at the state level of governmental educational organizations, yet she’s not been taken upon those offers. She states, “I do appreciate and value your study because it allows me to vent my disappointments. I’m not seeking any glory; I just have a lot I think I can share.” “Lydia” and “Tina” feel that their school’s administrators don’t value or know the value of the NBCTs’ talents and skills. Karen believes non-NBCTs are intimidated by NBCTs. “Brad”, “Kelsey” and “Betty” believe there is a lack of
leadership opportunities for NBCTs. “Rachel” and “Jerry’s” disappointment is because others don’t really know or understand what NBC is all about.

DISCUSSION

Information from interviews and questionnaires was collected and organized in an effort to understand the long term influence of NBC on the professional lives of NBCTs. The research questions and resulting themes indicate many interesting findings that define the study participants’ experiences years after earning national certification. The purpose of this study was to determine what implications, if any, achieving NBC had on the NBCTs’ professional lives. This was in question because previous research conducted on NBC has focused on students, not on teachers.

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of research on NBPTS and share how NBC impacts NBCTs long term. These findings indicate achieving NBC enhances the growth of NBCTs by incorporating reflection into their daily work. It builds their confidence and offers new responsibilities within their careers. The researcher of this study suggests it is a result of reflection and confidence that these NBCTs take on the challenge of new responsibilities which include career changes and other leadership advancement helping others in education. By taking advantage of opportunities that come their way, NBCTs are meeting the vision of *A Nation Prepared* that “by vesting responsibility for instruction in Lead Teachers, schools will capitalize on the knowledge and skills of its most capable staff and create a career path worth pursuing” (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986, p. 60).
The results of this inquiry indicate that there is a long term impact on NBCTs. They are reflective, have confidence and obtain new responsibilities over the years. Descriptions from the 11 study participants support previous research on NBC. NBCTs are reflective practitioners (Clehouse, 2000; Tracz, Daughtry, & Henderson-Sparks; 2005). This study confirms previous literature (Iovacchini, 1998) which states achieving NBC increases the NBCTs’ confidence. Findings in this study also confirm with the studies of Kelley & Kimball (2001) and Sato, Hyler & Monte-Sano (2002) which found NBCTs have other opportunities available to them after becoming nationally certified.

This study found a new theme to the long term impact of NBC, frustration. The results of this inquiry indicate, regardless of the new responsibilities, NBCTs would like to be recognized and utilized to help serve others. The fact that many of the NBCTs have experienced frustration and disappointment was a surprise finding in the data. It is disheartening to learn of the NBCT’s willingness to share their expertise, yet not being asked to help by others. Ellie pointed out NBCTs should not sit around and wait to be asked, but should instead get involved. On the other hand, Betty has offered her help, yet no one has taken her up on those offers.

IMPLICATIONS

The research on NBC is limited in the area of how it affects NBCTs. The findings of this study indicate there are potential benefits NBCTs can provide schools, teachers and students. This study will assist teachers, administrators, school districts, universities, the NBPTS and policy makers to better understand the implications of NBC and the role it plays on the professional lives of NBCTs.
The NBCTs in this study have internalized the skill of reflection and have an increased sense of confidence. They take on new responsibilities and experience frustration after becoming nationally certified because they feel they are not recognized and they want to have more opportunities to serve. The findings of this inquiry may help other NBCTs realize they are not alone in their thinking, feelings and beliefs. Implications from the findings suggest school districts, policy makers and universities should recognize and celebrate the NBCTs and consider tapping into their expertise because they have advanced skills and a desire to help others.

While all of the NBCTs in this study have all taken on new responsibilities, a sense of frustration has been felt because they want to be recognized and they want to serve others. After teachers achieve NBC, they have other opportunities available to them and emerge with new skills and dispositions. NBCTs could be used to enhance professional development experiences in schools and universities that would allow the NBCTs to receive recognition while sharing their advanced knowledge with others in the field of education who could benefit from the NBCTs’ help.

The long term implications of NBC include the NBCTs’ helping others in the field of education as a sense of responsibility with includes feelings of obligation and a desire to “give back.” With an increased sense of confidence, the NBCTs in this study are willing to reach out and share their expertise and knowledge with other educators. Going through the NBC process allowed these NBCTs to learn and to internalize the skill of reflection. True professional development guides teachers to critical reflection (NBPTS, 2007; Smith et al., 2005). Through mentoring experiences, role modeling opportunities and professional development trainings, NBCTs can share the skill of
reflection with other educators to help them examine their own learning as well as student learning. The NBCTs feel obligated to help.

Others need to take a critical look at how these teachers could be utilized to advance education and the teaching profession. NBCTs could be involved in improving teaching and learning in the teaching profession. In order to retain NBCTs, administrators and policy makers should recognize, utilize and support them. The findings of this investigation have implications for educators.

When considering the possible implications of this study, William Glasser’s Choice Theory (1998) appears to provide one explanation of the responses of the eleven case studies. Glasser argues that people are internally, not externally, motivated. What drives behavior are internally developed notions of what is most important and satisfying. The participants in this study stated that it is not the financial rewards that encourage them to continue with their work. They have a strong desire to help others. This desire could be tapped into to help others while allowing the needs of the NBCTs to be met. Glasser (1992) believes creating and sustaining warm, supportive relationships among all staff and between staff and students achieves quality learning. Glasser (1998) informs us of four psychological needs for basic survival: recognition, responsibility, enjoyment and belonging. These basic needs could be met for the NBCTs by implementing the suggestions listed below which would also help others in the field of education in the areas of professional development and teacher leadership. Implications for school administrators, school districts, universities, the NBPTS, and policy makers are suggested.
School Administrators

Administrators in the NBCTs’ schools could recognize the NBCTs and utilize their expertise by inviting interested NBCTs to serve as Lead Teachers or to serve in leadership roles. According to research conducted by Stokes et al. (2003), 30% of NBCTs reported the potential for leadership opportunities as reason for attempting NBC. The NBCTs could have leadership opportunities offered directly to them by school administrators. Yet not all of the teachers in this study had opportunities for leadership.

According to research conducted by Koppich et al., (2007) nearly half of the 1,136 NBCTs they surveyed stated that their principals were not at all supportive of their leadership roles outside of the classroom. Koppich et al. believe this is due to the principals’ lack of understand about NBC. Their research found that most principals are not aware of what is involved in NBC, nor what achieving it means.

Providing leadership opportunities would allow the NBCTs to remain in the classroom while also providing help as Lead Teachers, mentors, department chairs and community outreach leaders. Lead Teachers and mentor teachers could provide model lessons and demonstrations; they could meet with individuals or in small groups to share ideas and to help determine teaching resources. They could assist new or struggling teachers by sharing successful techniques, methods and resources. NBCTs could share their leadership skills by serving in community outreach positions which would allow them to share their knowledge of education with those outside of the school system. NBCTs could serve in many capacities on advisory committees. As “Ellie” shared during the data collection, NBCTs need to step up and make offers of help available to administrators so that they can be utilized. At the same time, administrators need to
capitalize on the talents NBCTs bring to such offers. For example, Lydia states that people don’t have the energy or take the time to really look at how valuable NB is and nobody seems to really care. According to research conducted by Darling-Hammond (2003), teachers leave the profession because of a lack of administrative support. By making offers of assistance available to administrators, and by being taken up on those offers, the NBCT may be more likely to remain teaching.

School Districts

School districts could recognize and share their NBCTs as resources with other districts. Districts who do not have any NBCTs, or who have few, could benefit from the help of NBCTs in nearby school districts. As “Karen” shared in the data collection, other non-NBCTs may be resentful, fearful or intimidated by NBCTs. This may especially be the case for teachers who attempted NBC, but who did not score high enough to certify. Additionally, with so few teachers involved with NBCT (Rotberg et. al, 1998) schools do not have large numbers of NBCTs. Therefore, NBCTs could be offered the opportunity to serve as a network/resource provider in a consortium where schools would pull together and share their NBCTs. In this way, the NBCTs would not be working directly with their own colleagues, but with teachers in nearby schools. The NBCTs could be released from their own school’s responsibilities to provide training and assistance for other schools and teachers in need. A reciprocating program would allow school districts to exchange NBCTS and for all to benefit. The NBCTs could be used as mentors and professional development providers.
Universities

Study participants have experienced frustration and disappointed after becoming NBCTs; they have a desire to be recognized and to help others. Universities could utilize NBCTs as Adjunct Faculty members and Guest Speakers. As “Jerry”, “Lydia”, “Rachel” and Angela in this study shared, they feel they are valued, contributing partners in education serving as adjunct faculty members at universities. With permission from the school administration, the NBCTs could open up their classrooms to provide observation experiences for university students majoring in teaching. Additionally, NBCTs’ classrooms could be used for student teaching placements which would allow for the recognition and utilization of NBCTs while providing placements with accomplished practitioners. University professors and NBCTs could participate in “swap programs” where the NBCTs could teach university students for a day while the k-12 students could benefit by learning from a university professor.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)

According to the findings in this inquiry, the NBPTS should better promote NBC. The NBCTs in this study want others to understand what NBC is all about and they do not believe others really know and truly comprehend what is involved and what NBCTs can do. As “Kelsey” shared in this study, administrators do not really understand what NB means.

The NBPTS has commissioned many research studies. This information could be used to promote NBC and to share what NBCTs can do and what they can offer others. Utilizing public advertisement campaigns would allow the public to learn more about
NBC. As “Rachel” in this study explained, others do not seem to know the importance of
NBC. An advertising campaign would help provide the understanding these NBCTs
desire.

Additionally, “Tina” suggested creating a database with skills NBCTs have and
would like to share with others. This could help the NBCTs’ meet their desires of
recognition and responsibility while also allowing others to get the help they need. While
the NBPTS could reach out and contact all NBCTs now to learn of this interest, a
systematic way to gather this information would be at the time when they announce the
achievement of candidacy to each newly certified NBCT. Although NBPTS currently
has a website a directory of NBCTs, the information is not updated after the candidate
earns certification.

Based on the experience of “Jerry”, a study participant who moved to a new state
as a NBCT where he was not initially licensed to teach, NBPTS could encourage state
and national policy makers to examine their licensing/certification requirements and
consider if successfully obtaining NBC could serve as a license to teach in all states.
According to the U.S. Department of Education, NBCTs meet the definition of “Highly
Qualified”.

The NBPTS could not only inform the candidates of successful attainment of
NBC, but they could also notify the NBCTs’ school administrators and suggest ways to
incorporate the NBCTs’ leadership and skills in their school districts to help improve
education. Additionally, upon notification of successful completion, the NBPTS should
ask newly certified NBCTs if they are willing to share their expertise with others and if
so how. This data could be complied and shared with others. Even if the school districts,
administrators and universities do not take the NBCTs up on their offers of help, the
NBCTs would at least be provided with a connection which would allow them to contact
each other. This would help with the feelings of frustration that the case studies voiced.

Policy Makers

Focus groups of NBCTs could provide nationally certified teachers a voice in
policy making at the state level. This would provide desired recognition and important
responsibilities for which the NBCTs in this study are looking. It would also help others,
outside of the profession, make informed educational decisions based on knowledge of
those who work in schools. Using NBCTs to inform policy makers would allow the
politicians to gain valuable input from those identified as accomplished practitioners.
The NBCTs could help guide policy makers who typically do not come from an
educational background. For example, NBCTs could share their personal experiences
and insight with those making educational decisions regarding student achievement
testing and academic standards. The focus groups could help recognize and promote
NBCTs as valuable and worthwhile resources and have a far reaching impact on students
and education.

LIMITATIONS

While the researcher involved in this study believes the research tools and
findings offer significant contributions to our understanding about the relationship
between NBC and NBCTs’ professional lives, she also knows that this single study is
limited in scope. She recognizes the researcher in qualitative research is considered the
primary instrument for data collection and analysis and therefore, “must be aware of any personal biases and how they may influence the investigation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 21). Because the researcher is also a NBCT, bias may have influenced this investigation. Due to the researcher’s experiences with NBC, she sought to listen carefully to the case studies of this inquiry. A strength of NBCTs is the power of reflection. This researcher relied on her ability to encourage discussion during the phone interviews, to probe for clarification, to check with the participants for accuracy and to correctly represent the case studies’ experiences. While these eleven case studies may not represent every NBCT’s experience, the researcher believes her attempts to listen and carefully reflect on their responses provided accurate profiles of these NBCTs.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

New areas of research raised during the inquiry indicate a need for future study. It will be important to consider the effects that being a NBCT has on the relationships among teachers and also to determine the best ways in which NBCTs can be used to share their knowledge and skills with others. While these issues were beyond the scope of this investigation, they warrant further scrutiny. The data in this investigation supported that NBCTs internalize reflection, gain confidence, accept new responsibilities and experience frustration. Further research is recommended to better understand the following questions:

1.) How can school districts, universities, the NBPTS, policy makers, and other educational bodies best utilize NBCTs?
2.) How can additional support for NBCTs to provide high quality professional development for teachers be obtained?

3.) How does requiring NBCTs to renew their certificate align with other professions’ board certification? What impact does this have on NBCTs and the students and schools they serve?

4.) What can be done to increase the recognition of NBCTs and of the NBPTS?

5.) How can additional awareness be raised so that NBCTs are better recognized and utilized?

6.) What are the effects of being an NBCT on the relationships among teachers particularly when the peers are non-NBCTs?

7.) How might NBCTs find ways to utilize the professional development gained in the process of becoming certified?

CONCLUSIONS

This study was a multiple case study regarding the professional implications of NBC on NBCTs. This investigation collected data through questionnaires and one-on-one phone interviews. Throughout the report of this research inquiry, descriptive analysis and conclusions have been drawn regarding the implications of NBC. Conclusions include how the NBCTs’ work has been impacted by becoming nationally certified. The eleven NBCTs reported an increased use of reflection, increased confidence, new responsibilities and frustration.

Through a review of the literature, questionnaires and interviews with eleven NBCTs, conclusions and recommendations regarding the implications of NBC were made. The general conclusions from this investigation found an influence of reflection, confidence, new responsibilities and frustration on the professional lives of NBCTs. The conclusions were drawn from a combination of the transcribed interviews, questionnaires,
review of the related literature and the completed analysis of data. The specific findings were organized around the research questions of this study. For each of the three research questions, specific findings were noted.

The case study participants want to seize opportunities for greater influence. They desire to reach the vision of *A Nation Prepared* that “what is central is that, by vesting responsibility for instruction in Lead Teachers, schools will capitalize on the knowledge and skills of its most capable staff and create a career path worth pursing” (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986, p. 60). In order to do so, the NBCTs must be recognized and allowed to serve. The NBCTs are disappointed their expertise and knowledge are not capitalized on, yet they have the desire to help others so they reach out and work on their own to make these educational opportunities happen. Lawmakers, school administrators, universities and school districts could better utilize these valuable resources and make greater contributions to students as a result. The NBPTS could better advocate on the behalf of NBCTs. This study concluded there are professional implications of obtaining NBC which influence the professional lives of NBCTs years after obtaining NBC. They include reflection, confidence, new responsibilities and frustration.
APPENDIX A

INQUIRY LETTER TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS
I am writing to you because of the important role which you play within the field of education. As a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT), you have demonstrated your advanced knowledge and teaching skills. Because of your contributions to the field, I am asking you to take a few minutes to consider participating in a research study I am conducting as part of my doctoral work at the Ohio State University.

Currently, I am a full time language arts teacher at Seneca East and an Adjunct Faculty member at Heidelberg College. Additionally, I am a Ph.D. candidate at the Ohio State University pursuing my dissertation research in the area of National Board Certification (NBC). I earned my first certification as an Early Childhood Generalist in 2004. In 2007, I earned my second certification while teaching as an Early Adolescence English/Language Arts teacher.

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to learn more about the impact NBC has had (or not had) on NBCTs’ education-related experiences, including career paths, and to investigate how NBCTs are utilized (or not) by sharing their expertise and knowledge with other educational professionals. The investigation will examine the perceptions of the professional implications of NBC on NBCTs, ten to fourteen years after obtaining their national certification.

This data will be gathered from the NBCTs via three one-on-one telephone interviews, lasting approximately one hour each. The participants will receive a toll free number to call me for the interviews so that no one will incur any long distance phone charges. All information gathered will remain confidential. I am the only one who will review the material. The data will be reported without names or other personal identifiers. Following each interview, the participants will receive the verbatim transcript of their interview via email. Each will also receive my drafts of narrative analyses. Each participant will be asked to verify the information and to comment regarding the data and the interpretation following each interview.
I know first hand the hard work you put in to obtaining your certification. I also know that your time is valuable and that you already have too many things to do; however, I am convinced that this study will provide data that ultimate can benefit many in the field. This study will contribute to the field of education by identifying facets that contribute to the likelihood that a NBCT will remain in the classroom and/or will have leadership opportunities available, typically not presented to all teachers. The study will add to the knowledge base about the professional experiences of NBCTs 10-14 years after obtaining NBC.

If you are interested in being a potential participant in this study, please return the enclosed questionnaire in the self-addressed, postage paid envelope by January 16th. I will then review all questionnaires and use criterion sampling to identify and select the group who will serve as the participants and the alternates. The selected participants will be notified in late January.

If you would like additional information, contact me via email at zzartset@bright.net, or call me at (419) 443-1019. You may also call my Advisor, Dr. Mary Jo Fresch, at (740) 725-6237. Thank you very much for your consideration of serving as a participant!

Sincerely,

Angela Thomas, NBCT

Enclosures
APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of NBCT___________________________________  ____Male, ___Female
Address_____________________________________________   Year of Birth_____
Phone_________________________________________ Email______________________________
Highest Level of Higher Education________________________ Ethnicty__________
Number of Years of Teaching (including this year) ____
Are you currently teaching? _______  Have you renewed your NBC? ______
If you are not currently teaching, what are you doing?____________________________
School Type (public, parochial, chart, private, other)__________________________
Percentage of Free and Reduced Lunch_____
School Setting (urban, rural, suburban)______________________
Where and what are you currently teaching? (grade level, school district, subject area(s). _________________________________________________________________

NB Certificate Area________________________________ Year Earned__________

#1.) In what leadership roles do you serve in the field of education? (Committees, Professional Organizations, school Groups, etc.) Use the back of this questionnaire if you need additional space.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

#2.) What do you believe has been the most profound implication to your professional life as a result of being an NBCT and why?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Please return this questionnaire back to the researcher at: Angela Thomas, 2259 TR 159, Tiffin, OH 44883 no later than January 16th. Thank you!
APPENDIX C

LETTER TO SELECTED PARTICIPANTS
Dear National Board Certified Teacher,

Thank you for demonstrating an interest in my study regarding National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs). I am pleased to inform you, after reviewing your questionnaire, that you were selected to be a participant in this independent study of the professional implications of National Board Certification (NBC) on NBCTs. I invite you to consider this professional and worthwhile experience.

For the data collection, I will interview you, as a participant in this investigation, over the telephone three times. Each of the three interviews will last approximately one hour. I will provide you with a toll free number for these interviews so that there will be no cost to you. The digitally recorded interviews will then be analyzed as I work to identify perceptions, ideas and practices in relation to the influence of NBC on the NBCTs’ professional experiences. Following each interview, you will receive the verbatim transcript of your interview via email. You will also receive my drafts of emerging concepts and categories. I will then ask to verify the information and to comment regarding the data and the interpretation.

Please read the enclosed Consent Form. If you agree to participate, please return the Consent Form by January 31, 2009 in the postage paid envelope. I will then contact you to set up our first interview. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate at all or you may discontinue the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address, or via phone (419) 443-1019, or email at zzartset@bright.net. You may also contact my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Mary Jo Fresch, at (740) 725-6237. Thank you so very much for your kind offer of consideration! I look forward to hearing back from you soon!

Sincerely,
Angela Thomas, NBCT

Enclosures
APPENDIX D

LETTER TO SELECTED ALTERNATES
Dear National Board Certified Teacher,

Thank you for demonstrating an interest in my study regarding National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs). I am pleased to inform you, after reviewing your questionnaire, that you were selected to be an alternate in this independent study of the professional implications of National Board Certification (NBC) on NBCTs.

If any of the selected participants are not able or willing to continue with this study, I will contact you to participate. If you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address, or via phone (419) 443-1019, or email at zzartset@bright.net. You may also contact my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Mary Jo Fresch, at (740) 725-6237. Thank you so very much for your kind offer of consideration! I wish you the very best!

Sincerely,

Angela Thomas, NBCT
APPENDIX E

LETTER TO VOLUNTEERS NOT SELECTED FOR THE STUDY
Dear National Board Certified Teacher,

It is with regret that I write to inform you that you were not selected to be a participant in my research study. Your willingness to help the teaching profession with your volunteerism indicates your commitment to the field of education and to the teaching profession. You are to be commended! Thank you for your interest and I wish you the very best!

Sincerely,

Angela Thomas, NBCT
APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
**Research Question 1** What professional differences (if any) are noted since becoming a NBCT and how does this affect the teachers’ careers?

**Questions for Interview #1:**

1) Describe the phase of your career when you pursued NBC.

2) Describe your experience with your NBC attempt in terms of professional growth and how it affected you? Were colleagues and administrators supportive of your attempt?

3) Describe the roles and responsibilities you have experienced as a teacher since obtaining NBC. What is different than before you were an NBCT?

4) Have you had other leadership opportunities since you became a NBCT?

5) What type of leadership activities are you involved in? How and why do you get involved? Do all teachers have these opportunities or just you, as an NBCT?

6) What professional experiences do you believe came about because of NBC?

7) Did you expect more to be available to you after becoming a NBCT?

**Research Question 2** How does becoming a NBCT influence a teacher’s career path?

**Questions for Interview #2:**

1) Describe your current career stage. What has been your professional career path?

2) Why did you attempt NBC? Did you consider it as a way to expand your career path?

3) What changes have you experienced in your career (if any) since achieving NBC?

4) Do you believe becoming a NBCT played a role in those changes?

5) Why have you remained in the classroom as a teacher or why did you leave?

6) How long do you think you’ll continue to teach? (if applicable)
7) Do/did the financial incentives discourage you from leaving teaching?

8) If you were offered a different leadership opportunity in the field of education, but had to leave the classroom in order to pursue it, why would you, or would you not consider leaving the classroom? (if applicable)

9) What opportunities for career advancement exist?

Research Question 3 What are NBCTs perceptions on the ways they provide assistance to others in the education profession?

Questions for Interview #3:

1) How has being a NBCT affected your professional work?

2) How is/was it to work with other teachers in your building? Did you find that they were similar to you and your teaching philosophy? Did they have any impact in your decision to go for NBC?

3) How does your daily professional work incorporate the NBPTS process? (if applicable)

4) What are the changes you’ve experienced in your work since obtaining NBC and how do they affect your career now?

5) Do you seek more leadership roles as a result of being a NBCT? If so, what response do you receive from your supervisors and colleagues?

6) Do you provide assistance to others in the field of education? If so, how?
APPENDIX G

CONSENT FORM
The Ohio State University Statement of Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: The Professional Implications of National Board Certification

Researcher: Dr. Mary Jo Fresch (PI)

Sponsor: The Ohio State University

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and you will receive a copy of the form for your records.

Purpose: You are being asked to participate in this study of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) in order to help the researcher more accurately describe the impact National Board Certification has had on your professional life.

Procedures / Tasks: The researcher will interview the NBCT via the telephone on three separate occasions. Interviews will be digitally recorded in order to aid the researcher in recording and transcribing the data. The data will be coded and analyzed. The research will be written up in the form of narrative case studies. Member checking will involve participants verifying the data.

Duration: Each of the three interviews will last approximately one hour. You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with the Ohio State University.

Risk and Benefits: There are no risks involved in taking part in this study. Benefits include helping to further research in the field of education. There is no direct benefit by participating in this study. Participants will not be paid to participate in the study.
Confidentiality: The focus of the study is on National Board Certified Teachers and their perceptions about the impact National Board Certification has had on their career. Pseudonyms will be utilized. Efforts will be made to keep your information confidential. Data will be stored in computer files at the researcher’s home. Upon conclusion of this study, the records will remain in confidential storage for use in potential future writings and for research data.

Participant Rights: You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status. If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board (IRB) responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions: For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you may contact: Angela Thomas at 419-443-1019 or by email at zzartset@bright.net. You may also contact the researcher’s Faculty Advisor, Dr. Mary Jo Fresch, at (740)725-6237.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Signing the Consent Form: I have read this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I have voluntarily agreed to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

_____________________________  ______________________________
Printed name of subject         Signature of subject

_______________________________ AM/PM
Date and time
APPENDIX H

EMAIL TO SET UP FIRST INTERVIEW
February 6, 2009

Dear X,

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in my dissertation research study! I really appreciate your help and I’m anxious to learn from you!

Attached you will find the interview questions, focusing on my first research question: **What professional differences (if any) are noted since becoming a NBCT and how does this affect the teachers’ careers?** I wanted you to have these questions in advance of our interview so that you can reflect upon them and be informed about the areas to be discussed.

Depending upon our schedules, I’m hoping to be able to conduct this first interview with you the week of **Saturday, Feb. 21st to Saturday, Feb. 28th. Please let me know what times would be convenient for you.** Evenings or weekends will probably be best for me, but I’m happy to work my schedule around yours. Our interview will last approximately one hour. Email is probably the best way to get a hold of me. My address is: zzartset@bright.net. If you prefer to call instead of email, please use my cell at (419) 618-2820.

When it is time for our interview to take place, I will first telephone you to make certain you are still ready for the interview. I will also give you a private access code. If everything is still a go, we will both hang up and call this toll free number: 1-800-511-7985. You will then be prompted to enter the access code so that our conversation will occur. Permission will be asked, via a computer system, to have the interview recorded. After you agree, we will be connected and we can begin your recorded interview. If you don't agree, we will be disconnected.

With gratitude and appreciation,
Angela
Angela Thomas, NBCT, PHD (ABD, Ohio State)
"Those who love teaching teach others to love learning" (Angela Thomas)
Teacher – Seneca East Schools
Adjunct Faculty – Heidelberg University
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