**Project 2: Job Demands and Burnout Increase Teacher Turnover Rates in Charter Schools**

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Job Demands and Burnout Increase Teacher Turnover Rates in Charter Schools

**Chapter One: Introduction**

**Introduction**

Public charter schools offer tuition-free options to all families. David and Hesla (2018) claim that more than 7,000 charter schools were recorded, serving nearly 3.2 million students. Despite offering educational options to families in low socio-economic communities, charter schools experience many adversities. One significant challenge is the job demands placed on teachers. As charter schools struggle to retain teachers from year to year, teacher turnover rates have been attributed to dissatisfaction, low salary, workload, and extended work hours (Roch & Sai, 2018). Also, teacher turnover rates are increasing due to high accountability standards and pressure to enhance student outcomes.

The charter schools’ expectation on teachers is to drive students to surpass the academic performance of three traditional public schools (TPSs) by employing a “no excuses” approach (Sawchuk, 2015). Aykanat (2018) explains that charter school staff encounter greater workloads requiring them to manage multiple roles. Consequently, the result is a downward shift in charter school teacher satisfaction and retention. This qualitative, descriptive study will explore how charter school teachers describe their experiences with job demands, teacher burnout, and contributing factors that influence their intent to leave the charter school sector in K-12 Charter Schools in Northern New Jersey.

**Statement of the Problem**

It is known that charter schools experience challenges retaining skilled teachers because of high job demands and other contributing factors. Given the multi-faceted roles and responsibilities of charter school teachers and the increased pressure of producing high academic results, retention of this human capital is necessary. Teacher burnout, lack of resources, compensation, and mental health are also pressing concerns causing high quality teachers to leave the charter school sector (Green & Munoz, 2016). Griffith and Fordham Institute (2019) rationalize that charter schools boast higher student improvement ratings than traditional public schools. However, there is a reason to explore the experiences of teachers who struggle to stay or leave their charter school employment.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to explore how charter school teachers define their experiences with job demands, teacher burnout, and the contributing factors for their intent to leave the charter school sector in Charter Schools in Northern New Jersey. The central phenomenon for exploration is the perception of charter school teachers regarding the job demands that influence their intent to leave the charter schools. This study will also examine work-related stressors that are associated with teacher turnover rates in Charter Schools.

**Research Questions**

This study's theoretical foundations include the job demands, burnout, and contributing factors that increase teacher turnover rates in charter schools in Northern New Jersey. Three research questions guided the study;

* RQ1: How do charter school teachers describe their experiences with the job demands influencing their intent to leave the charter school sector?
* RQ2: How do charter school teachers describe their experiences with teacher burnout influencing their intent to leave the charter school sector?
* RQ3: How do charter school teachers describe their mental health, well-being, and compensation? Do these contributing factors influence their intent to leave the charter school sector?

**Limitations**

The limitations in this qualitative study are due to the social distancing regulations of Covid-19. Therefore, face-to-face interviews and focus groups will be difficult. Thus, telephone or zoom interviews will be conducted based on the participant's request. The consent form will be distributed through email. Online sampling is chosen because K-12 schools in the United States have been closed since April 2020 for remote learning as a strategy to slow the spread of Covid-19. Some K-12 school districts have started utilizing several instructional models, including virtual and hybrid learning. However, telephone or zoom interviews and online sampling will be the fastest and safest for all stakeholders.

**Delimitations**

           The delimitations within this study are the setting and sampling of participants. The setting is in Northern New Jersey solely. To be considered for this study, participants must also meet the following criteria: (a) the sample size is comprised of charter school teachers in K-12 education, and the research study examines (b) experiences of individuals in the teaching profession in charter schools; (c) characteristics of charter schools linked to teacher retention rates; (d) other characteristics or factors that are related to teacher retention and attrition, such as compensation, lack of resources, and extended work hours.

**Assumptions**

There are common assumptions that can be made from this qualitative study. The first belief is that it can be presumed that teachers are truthful in sharing their experiences through the interview. Secondly, it can be assumed that the teachers are truthful in the discussions during the focus groups with no motives attached. Lastly, the basic assumption that can be made from this research study is the genuine concerns and controversies that influence teacher burnout in charter schools.

**Chapter Two: Literature Review**

**Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to explore how charter school teachers define their experiences with job demands, teacher burnout, and the contributing factors for their intent to leave the charter school sector in Northern New Jersey.Compared to traditional public schools (TPS), teacher turnover rates in charter schools are significantly higher. These choice schools are state and federally funded and primarily located in urban communities throughout the United States (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS), 2017). This research study sheds light on teachers' experiences and the contributing factors for leaving the charter school sector. Chapter two reviews the current literature on the significant challenges charter school teachers experience that influence teacher turnover rates.

**Teacher Turnover**

Literature on charter schools tends to have a pessimistic outlook on teacher turnover. Naslund and Ponomariov (2019) explain that high-quality teachers' turnover harms student performance and school district financial capabilities. They also find that turnover is higher for schools that educate more significant minority and low-income students. Aykanat (2018) conducted a study that explored the factors linked to the retention of high-quality charter school teachers. He recommended further research to determine the connection between working conditions, compensation, recognition, work responsibilities, and turnover rates. Torres and Oluwole (2015) justify that charter schools observe as many as one in four teachers leave annually, and recent evidence attributes much of this turnover to state laws such as salary, benefits, job security, and working hours. They further explain that charter school teachers are 90% more likely to leave the profession than traditional public education. Torres (2016) explains that a third of new teachers remain employed in their starting charter school by the end of their third year.

Sparks (2018) clarifies that a quarter of teachers do not last until the end of their first year. More teachers are exiting the education field than those who are entering the profession. Challenges experienced involve funding due to high turnover rates with costs for recruitment and professional development exceeding two billion dollars (Scott, 2017). The shifts in human capital affect student and school performance and the overall dynamic of the school's ability to function smoothly. With growing demands and concerns around student proficiency, there is a great need to secure quality teachers. School leaders must understand teacher turnover factors and support teachers' professional growth (Patel et al., 2014).

**Factors Influencing Teacher Turnover**

Educators across charter schools reveal the rewards attached to providing knowledge to their students, yet they experience many documented struggles as well. Novice teachers encounter challenges in urban districts related to job satisfaction and work conditions. As a result, teacher turnover and human capital management are impacted (Green & Munoz, 2016). Dupriez et al. (2016) explain how working environments influence teachers’ decision in remaining in their current employment to resolve teacher retention rates. He further stressed that educational stakeholders must understand how working environments influence teacher’s decisions to leave. Various research has directly connected teacher retention and turnover to specific factors such as administrative support, workload, and teacher well-being (Aykanat, 2018).

***Leadership Influence and Support***

Feelings of support to staff from leadership were indicated along with the support from leadership and mentor support was indicated as limitations in a study performed by Wright (2017). Because of the high, implicit expectations school leaders have for teachers, the trust level between teacher-principal relationships is often affected, leading to teacher turnover (Torres, 2016). Torres (2016) suggests that solid leaders that form expectations to meet goals can foster a positive learning climate and culture. He examined administrative support, teacher workload, and teacher cohesiveness as environmental work factors and found that administrative support was the strongest predictor of teacher retention. He justifies that administrative support is frequently associated with teacher anxiety and well-being. It is suggested that these two variables were concurrent and directly related. This information means that administrative support levels should directly influence satisfaction within their current professions. Thus, charter school administrators must communicate, offer instructional feedback, and provide a sense of value, especially in hard-to-staff schools, to decrease teacher turnover in charter schools. (Hughes et al., 2015).

***Teacher Burnout***

Teacher burnout is defined as emotional exhaustion caused by work-related stress and is attributed to the physical, emotional, and social strains associated with the job (Wong et al., 2017). It is noted that significant work responsibilities, excessive classes per day, and high student numbers in classrooms negatively impact teacher performance. Richards et al. (2016) suggest resilience could diminish feelings of stress and burnout with the exercise of strategic school policies. Research indicates that burnout was influenced by gender, marital status, subject matter, school type, educational status, and seniority (Gray et al., 2017). Approximately 40% of teachers may experience burnout; thus, these teachers are at higher risk for leaving the profession (Wong et al., 2017). Wong et al. (2017) recommend that school administrators pay attention to teacher stress and job satisfaction because both influence teachers' decisions to remain or leave the profession. Men in the education field have higher levels of burnout than females, and marital status also plays a significant part in teacher burnout, with single teachers experiencing higher burnout concerning helplessness, while teachers with more children have high levels of burnout (Gray et al., 2017). Research also indicates that female educators are more emotionally exhausted than male educators, though men experience more depersonalization and fewer feelings of accomplishment (Gray et al., 2017).

           In charter schools, the high work demands drive teachers to deficiency (Fusco, 2017). Demanding schedules and lack of discipline creates a taxing toll on teachers and causes notable burnout. These factors increase teacher stress levels, including disrespect and inattentiveness from students, excessive workload, inadequate compensation, and large class sizes (Gray et al., 2017). Consequently, it was discovered that pressure from leadership, perceptions of connectedness, safety, self-efficacy, and staff demographics contribute to teacher burnout. Findings suggest resilience should be built to diminish feelings of stress and burnout with strategic school policies. The solutions offered consist of realistic time allocation for task completion, professional development, ample resources, collaborative experiences, decision-making opportunities, and high expectations.

           Educators work effortlessly to meet their unique learners' needs in a high-demand field resulting in stress and burnout. Gray et al. (2017) combined pertinent literature on teacher burnout. The teachers' mental health is greatly affected, as climate and culture in the school environment have also been identified as contributing factors. The effects of teacher's mental health and well-being, culture and climate, and their relation to student performance were examined. Prominent burnout causes, including disrespect and inattentiveness from students, excessive workload, inadequate compensation, and large class sizes, were factors increasing teacher stress levels.

**Job Demands.**

There is a need to explore further how charter school teachers describe their experiences with the job demands influencing their intent to leave the charter school sector. The themes of job demand, workload, mental health, and leadership all play a role in job demands contributing to teachers' intent to leave. Each theme provides a starting point for understanding how teachers' decision to leave manifests. The overarching concept of job demands encompasses many varying topics adding to the strain and physical burden associated with teaching (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Gray et al. (2017) claim that while educators labor to support their students in a high-demand field, the result is stress and burnout.

Also, the pressure to manage and maintain a high volume of work can harm the teacher's threshold and their ability to manage difficult situations. In cases where teachers are tasked with attaining student proficiency while being met with disruptive behaviors, cultural disparities, and poor climate and culture, the responsibility of preventing loss of human capital is on school leadership. Ni (2017) explains that the charter school movement relies on teachers as critical components. Teacher commitment is an essential aspect of teachers' lives because it is an internal force for teachers to grow as professionals. It is also considered one of the crucial factors in influencing various educational outcomes, including teacher effectiveness, teacher retention, and student learning.

**Mental Health and Well-being.**

The emphasis on well-being and good mental health of teachers is linked to an array of job-related factors. To ensure that a balanced level of happiness and satisfaction is maintained, charter school educators must focus on their well-being. Acknowledgment of teachers' well-being can decrease the desire to leave the charter school sector. Green and Munoz (2016) attribute stress and morale to work complexity. Teachers encounter pressure to increase state test scores through quality instruction, increased data analysis, and building connections with high standards for responsibility and accountability. Resilience to the stresses of the expectations affects mental health and the ability to cope with all that must be achieved (Gray et al., 2017). Educators' mental health concerns are increasing, and turnover rates in charter schools continue to rise. Without balance and acknowledging the link between values and emotion, teachers encountering challenges with well-being contemplate the intent to leave. Well-being and the associated sub-themes of teacher burnout, the role of relationships, and the importance of balanced mental health are relevant to the proposed research and methodology. Each stressor's contributions and ability to cope leads to the need to understand how charter school teachers describe their experiences with the job demands and resources influencing their intent to leave the charter school sector.

**Compensation.**

Edwards and Hall (2018) defend that the importance of recognition and compensation should be acknowledged in charter schools. Inadequate compensation leads to teacher turnover rates and increases teacher stress levels, which in return affects their well-being and mental health. Gray et al. (2017) explain that teacher attrition is impacted by low income in some school districts. Preventing the dissatisfaction of high-quality teachers is required in maintaining a successful school. Competitive salary with additional stipends and bonuses were factors linked to high-quality teachers' retention (Aykanat, 2018). Organizational and contextual factors present significant education issues, especially when funding and budgetary constraints come into play. Gulosino et al. (2016) claim that salary concerns contribute to teacher attrition and retention. Compared to the neighboring public-school teachers, the minimal pay is an influencer leading to turnover in charter schools.

Research emphasizes how teacher satisfaction and turnover in charter schools were closely linked. Torres and Oluwole (2015) note that these factors were specific to conditions negotiated during the collective bargaining process, including salary, benefits, working hours, and job security. Due to these convincing observed ties, the researchers contended numerous charter schools would benefit from any form of collective bargaining, as it could lessen teachers' anxiety and increase teacher satisfaction. As it stands, as many as one in four teachers leave charter school sectors on average annually (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future-NCTAF, 2018). Based on teacher burnout's outlined factors, compensation should be competitive with additional stipends and bonuses to prevent teacher dissatisfaction and turnover rates in charter school sectors.

**Summary**

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2019), more than three million students are enrolled in charter schools across the United States. Each year, the teacher turnover rate of a third leaving the profession creates a problem for school leaders (Aykanat, 2018; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2018). The informed research studies and literature examined the factors of teacher burnout and additional factors, such as job demands, mental health, well-being, and compensation, which influenced highly qualified teachers to leave the charter school sector. The themes of job demand, workload, mental health, and leadership all play a role in job demands contributing to teachers' intent to leave. Each theme provides a starting point for understanding how teachers' decision to leave manifests.

Research indicates that burnout was influenced by gender, marital status, subject matter, school type, educational status, and seniority (Gray et al., 2017). To ensure that a balanced level of happiness and satisfaction is maintained, charter school educators must focus on their well-being. Acknowledgment of teachers' well-being can decrease the desire to leave the charter school sector. The importance of recognition and compensation should be acknowledged in charter schools. Inadequate compensation leads to teacher turnover rates and increases teacher stress levels, which in return affects their well-being and mental health. In short, research stresses the importance of understanding the perceptions of teachers and the contributing factors linked to their intent to remain employed with charter schools or seek public school employment (Torres & Oluwole, 2015).

**Chapter Three: Methodology**

**Introduction**

The researcher will conduct a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze charter school teachers' experiences with job demands and teacher burnout and determine the influencers in teacher turnover rates. The researcher's methodological framework, procedures, and rationale will be conducted to hold quality teachers in charter school sectors. Unlike quantitative research, phenomenology provides insights into a group's lived experiences or person (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Social phenomenon and participants' reflections are the focal points in qualitative research marking this approach most appropriate to address the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As the perception described by the participants is based on their accounts, the qualitative approach will most successfully explain the "how" of each research question (Morse, 2015). From this methodology, themes and trends will emerge from the connection between participants' experiences and the commonalities in themes materializing (Padgett, 2016).

Qualitative research encourages exploring the phenomena when participants are observed in their natural environment (Torres & Oluwole, 2015). This qualitative descriptive design serves as a detailed explanation of the phenomenon disclosed by employing interviews and focus groups. Utilizing semi-structured interviews relating to the research questions will produce the desired data. Sohn et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of understanding the participants' experiences from their perceived interpretations. As such, a qualitative descriptive approach is most appropriate for this study, unlike quantitative research that addresses statistical or numerical data analysis (Yin, 2018). The experiences of the individual participants and the phenomenon outlined would not be answered. Educators in charter schools are, overall, less satisfied with teaching than public school teachers. Aykanat's (2018) phenomenological study reveals compensation, recognition, favorable working conditions, and positive leadership were among the teacher retention factors in charter schools.

The research questions outlined for this study were constructed to develop a description of how charter school teachers describe their experiences with the job demands and teacher burnout influencing their intent to leave the charter school sector. Responses will be obtained during interview sessions to expound on how the participants describe their experiences that led to their intended departure from the charter school sector. This study will employ semi-structured interviews and a focus group to investigate this qualitative descriptive study's phenomena. Interview participants include charter school teachers from Northern New Jersey. The research questions guiding this study are RQ1: How do charter school teachers describe their experiences with the job demands influencing their intent to leave the charter school sector? RQ2: How do charter school teachers describe their experiences with teacher burnout influencing their intent to leave the charter school sector? RQ3: How do charter school teachers describe their mental health, well-being, and compensation? Do these contributing factors influence their intent to leave the charter school sector?

**Research Design**

This qualitative research study featured a descriptive design. Descriptive research answers "what" and "how" questions about a situation or phenomena rather than answer "why" questions (Morse, 2015). This research sought to explore and understand the participants' experiences with job demands and teacher burnout influencing their intent to leave the charter school sector. In a qualitative descriptive design, an examination of attitudes, reflections, beliefs, and opinions will occur (Percy et al., 2015). These accounts will be subjective as participants will provide reports based on a recollection of their experiences. The participants will have at least one year of experience teaching in the charter school sector. Conclusions will be drawn utilizing an inductive approach (inductive reasoning) based on a qualitative descriptive design to satisfy the research questions. An inductive approach begins with the observations and theories proposed towards the end of the research process as a result of researcher observations (Liu, 2016). Because the participants have first-hand knowledge of their perceptions, the questions will garden the detailed data if responded truthfully and with fidelity. Through in-depth interviews and a focus group, the researcher will develop a summary of accounts described by the charter school teachers. In short, the qualitative descriptive design will produce a comprehensive set of descriptions of the phenomena and causation for the perceptions materializing. The unit of analysis is the individual participants for this study, and the unit of observation is the current school teachers holding a standard teaching certificate with at least one year of experience in a charter school.

**Population and Sample Size**

The general population for this study will include teachers employed in charter schools within Northern New Jersey. The target population selected for this proposed study includes teachers with at least one year of experience working in charter schools in Northern New Jersey. The unit of analysis will be the individual participants for this study. The participants will serve as the following: instructional staff, general education, special education teachers, specials' or elective teachers, English as a second language (ESL), and bilingual teachers. These teachers will be selected because students lose out on a quality education without the suitably credentialed teachers assigned to teach in these high stakes charter schools. The sample size will include 100 participants for semi-structured interviews and 60 participants for focus groups. The researcher will utilize convenience and snowball sampling to recruit participants. Convenience sampling or non-probability sampling will allow participants to be recruited since teacher availability is difficult, especially during remote or hybrid learning, depending on the charter schools' location. Utilizing convenience sampling also allows the participants to deliberately self-select based on their experience with the phenomena, serving the researchers convenience (Acharya et al., 2013). While convenience sampling presents the advantage of a cost-efficient option to acquire the necessary sampling, the researcher's goal is to acquire a diversified sample of charter school teachers based on their years of experience and subjects taught.

**Researchers’ Position and Procedures**

The researcher will utilize screening questions to determine eligibility after the recruited teachers agree to participate in the study. The screening questions that will be asked are: Are you a teacher at a charter school in Northern New Jersey? Have you taught for at least one year within a charter school sector? Do you hold a standard teaching certification? Do you currently hold a charter school teaching position? The snowball sampling, which will be the second approach for data collection, will allow individuals with connections to the population to meet the inclusion criteria and share information about the study. This process will continue in order to encourage interest and participation in the study. If needed, the researcher will utilize the snowball sampling technique.

New Jersey City University first acquires initial approval for the researches study. Site authorization will not be required for this research study, as the contact information for participants is a public record. The researcher will retrieve email addresses from public websites of various charter schools in Northern New Jersey. From there, the researcher will access the staff directory for each school, if available, and email contact with charter school teachers via recruitment letter explaining the purpose of the study. Interested, potential participants will be directed to contact the researcher and be screened for inclusion or exclusion. Informed consent reports will be acquired to abide by the ethical standards to protect the study sample's rights and well-being (Koç & Fidan, 2020). Each interview will take place in a natural and comfortable environment utilizing a video conferencing platform. During this time, the informed consent form, signed by the participant, will be obtained and reviewed. Participants will be informed of their right to terminate participating in the research study. The researcher will ensure confidentiality and that there are no personal ties to the participants. The findings from this research study will add to the literature by addressing how charter school teachers describe their experiences with the job demands and burnout influencing their intent to leave the charter school sector.

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**Appendix A**

Consent and Verification Questions

Each interview will commence with the researcher making an introduction. “Please allow me to introduce myself, my name is Deniz Ismailoff, and I am a doctoral student from New Jersey University.” The purpose of the study will be shared: “I am conducting a study focused on the job demands and contributing factors that may influence your intent to leave charter schools. I want to thank you for consenting to engage in this study.” The informed consent form will be presented to the participant to allow for thorough reading, ask questions, and signatures.

1. Is this your signature on the consent form?
2. Have you read and understood the items outlined in this consent form?
3. Do you have any questions regarding the consent form?
4. Do you have any concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study?

Reminders: “I would also like to remind you of the privacy and confidentiality clause. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. To maintain the confidentiality of your records, I, Deniz Ismailoff, will keep your name confidential. This information will be secured in a locked filing cabinet in my home. Only I, Deniz Ismailoff, will have access to your confidential information.” “Additionally, please know that you have the right to withdraw from this study at any time. Remember to answer each question thoroughly and feel free to elaborate on your thoughts.” The location, time, and date will be announced after the audio device will be turned on. Interviewer:

Years at Charter School:

Position:

Time:

Date:

Location:

* RQ1: How do charter school teachers describe their experiences with the job demands influencing their intent to leave the charter school sector?
* RQ2: How do charter school teachers describe their experiences with teacher burnout influencing their intent to leave the charter school sector?
* RQ3: How do charter school teachers describe their mental health, well-being, and compensation? Do these contributing factors influence their intent to leave the charter school sector?

**Appendix B**

Interview Questions

*(Ask if the participant has any questions before we begin).*

1. How would you describe your experiences with the job demands you are tasked with completing?
2. How would you describe your experiences with daily responsibilities as a teacher?
3. How would you describe experiences you had with job resources? (Professional development? Coaching? Mentoring? Compensation? Growth opportunities?)
4. How would you describe your experiences with the flexibility permitted to execute your job responsibilities fully?
5. How would you describe your views on compensation in relation to your daily workload and experience?
6. How would you describe the support or lack of support you receive from your colleagues and administrative team when in the work environment?
7. How would you describe the indicators that allowed you to feel stakeholders valued you?
8. How would you describe the professional learning opportunities offered to enhance your teaching practice?
9. Think about the factors that trigger the contemplation to leave or stay with your charter school. How would you describe your experiences with these factors?
10. How would you describe your experience with the decision-making process with regard to staying with or leaving your charter school?

**Appendix C**

Focus Group Questions

Interviewer:

Participant Number:

Years at Charter School:

Position:

Time:

Date:

Location:

Thank you all for agreeing to participate in this focus group. I want to remind you of the privacy and confidentiality clause. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. To maintain the confidentiality of your records, I will keep your names confidential. Instead, we will address each other by your alphanumeric codes to anonymize each of your identities. The information gathered from this session will be secured in a locked filing cabinet in my home. Only I, the researcher, will have access to the confidential information. Let us go around the room and talk about our time with charter schools. I will begin by introducing myself; my name is Deniz Ismailoff, and I am a doctoral student at New Jersey City University. I have worked with charter schools for ten years. Participant DI says, tell us about your years of experience at the charter school (continues with each participant).

1. Please think about one or two demands that you experienced involving your school leadership team or colleagues that influenced your decision to leave.
2. Think back to an occasion when you were tasked with completing time-sensitive assignments. How would you describe your experience with this situation when working within a deadline outside of the preparation time?
3. How would you describe the opportunities you were given to develop yourself as a classroom teacher?
4. As a classroom teacher, how would you depict the situations you dealt with where students struggled academically? How did you utilize the available resources, if any?
5. Think of a vivid memory of a moment when you thought, “I don’t have the resources to handle this situation.” How would you describe the resources that were or were not available to help you come to a desirable outcome?
6. How would you depict your encounters with the various support systems in your school and district? Can you elaborate on that encounter?
7. Please think about compensation and your thoughts about salary, stipends, and performance bonuses for teachers. How do you determine whether the compensation is sufficient in your decision-making process?
8. Describe a vivid memory of a moment when you thought I should leave. Why do you believe that you were faced with this decision?
9. How will you decide when it was time to leave the charter school? Could you please elaborate?
10. Is there anything I did not ask that I should have asked, or would you like to discuss anything else further in detail?