

Factors Affecting Teacher Retention in Mainstream Schools in Kazakhstan

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

in

Educational Leadership

Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education

April 22, 2024

Word Count: 23 723

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Factors Affecting Teacher Retention: Analysis of a Mainstream School in Kazakhstan

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to people who supported me throughout my research journey. First, I would like to thank NU GSE for considering my application and providing me with the opportunity to take this unforgettable and rich experience to be a Master of Science student and obtain valuable knowledge and skills.

Particularly, my endless appreciation and respect to Professor Munyaradzi Hwami whose knowledge and professionalism were invaluable in conducting this study. My research journey in writing this thesis was a challenging experience but thanks to Professor Munyaradzi's support, guidance, and persistence I could complete every chapter of the thesis on time.

I would like to thank our Academic English Instructor, Jeremy Richard Spring, for dedicating his time and expertise to our education and acquiring valuable knowledge and skills. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all GSE professors and my groupmates for creating a great environment for me during these two years.

I am also grateful for my family, my parents, my husband and my children for their constant support and help. I could not have finished this research study without their beliefs in me.

ABSTRACT

Factors Affecting Teacher Retention: Analysis of Mainstream Schools in Kazakhstan

Researchers and policymakers have emphasized the significant shortages that affect schools, dramatically increasing the demand for teachers provoking school systems to lower their standards for teacher quality (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Teacher retention has emerged as a critical concern in Kazakhstan's education system. Trying to increase the supply of teachers in the school system, the Kazakhstan government adopted the Law About the Teacher Status in 2019. While some strategies of the Law have displayed positive results, the problem still exists. Moreover, there have been relatively few studies on the issue of teacher retention in Kazakhstan. This qualitative study aimed to explore the factors that affect teacher retention in mainstream schools in Kazakhstan. Overall, the study sample included ten teachers, five experienced working for more than five years, and five young teachers who worked for less than five years. The purposeful sampling technique was used to select participants. The data were derived from semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The study findings indicated that teacher retention is multifaced and emphasized the complex interplay of factors shaping the retention of teachers in Kazakhstan's school system. Specifically, teacher retention increases with the extent to which they use professional development opportunities and receive favorable salaries, and their achievements are acknowledged and financially induced. Furthermore, teachers are satisfied with their jobs when they feel the support of effectively trained leaders and with controlled mentoring programs. Additionally, the working environment and facilities are improved, and administrative burden is reduced by assigning appropriate people to those duties. The importance of mental and physical well-being is recognized. In conclusion, the study addressed the research purpose and filled several gaps in the existing research, valuably contributing to its advancement.

Keywords: teacher retention factors, job satisfaction, Law About the Teacher Status, mainstream school, Kazakhstan

Андапта

Мұғалімдерді ұстауға әсер ететін факторлар: Қазақстандағы жалпы білім беретін мектептерді талдау

Зерттеушілер мен саясаткерлер мектептердегі айтарлықтай тапшылықты атап өтті, бұл мұғалімдерге сұранысты күрт арттырды, бұл мектеп жүйелерін оқыту сапасының стандарттарын төмендетуге итермеледі (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Ұстаздарды ұстау Қазақстанның білім беру жүйесіндегі маңызды мәселеге айналды. Мектеп жүйесіндегі мұғалімдер санын көбейту мақсатында Қазақстан Үкіметі 2019 жылы Педагог мәртебесі туралы заң қабылдады. Заңның кейбір стратегиялары оң нәтиже көрсеткенімен, мәселе әлі де бар. Сонымен қатар, Қазақстанда мұғалімдерді ұстап қалу мәселесі бойынша салыстырмалы түрде аз зерттеулер жүргізілді. Бұл сапалы зерттеу Қазақстанның жалпы білім беретін мектептерінде мұғалімдерді ұстап қалуға әсер ететін факторларды зерттеуге бағытталған. Зерттеу үлгісіне барлығы он мұғалім, бес жылдан астам жұмыс өтілі бар бес мұғалім және бес жылдан аз жұмыс өтілі бар бес жас мұғалім кірді. Қатысушыларды іріктеу үшін мақсатты іріктеу әдісі қолданылды. Деректер жартылай құрылымдалған сұхбаттардан алынды және тақырыптық талдау арқылы талданды. Зерттеу нәтижелері мұғалімдерді ұстау көп қырлы процесс екенін көрсетті және қазақстандық мектеп жүйесінде мұғалімдерді ұстап қалуды қалыптастыратын факторлардың күрделі өзара іс-қимылын атап өтті.

Атап айтқанда, мұғалімдерді ұстап қалу олардың кәсіби даму мүмкіндіктерін пайдаланып, лайықты жалақы алған сайын артады, олардың жетістіктері қаржылық тұрғыдан танылады және көтермеленеді. Сонымен қатар, мұғалімдер тиімді дайындалған басшылар мен тәлімгерлік бағдарламаларының қолдауын сезінген кезде өз жұмысына қанағаттанады. Сонымен қатар, жұмыс ортасы мен еңбек жағдайлары жақсарып, осы міндеттерді орындау үшін тиісті қызметкерлерді тағайындау арқылы

әкімшілік жүктеме азаяды. Мектеп әкімшілігі мұғалімдердің психикалық және физикалық әл-ауқатының маңыздылығын мойындайды. Қорытындылай келе, зерттеу зерттеу мақсатына жетуге бағытталғанын және қолданыстағы зерттеулердегі бірнеше олқылықтардың орнын толтырғанын атап өткен жөн, бұл олардың алға жылжуына айтарлықтай ықпал етті.

Түйін сөздер : мұғалімдерді ұстап қалу факторлары, жұмысқа қанағаттану, Мұғалімнің Мәртебесі Туралы Заң, жалпы білім беретін мектеп, Қазақстан

Аннотация

Факторы, влияющие на удержание учителей: анализ общеобразовательных школ Казахстана

Исследователи и политики отмечают значительный дефицит в школах, который резко повысил спрос на учителей, что побудило школьные системы снизить стандарты качества обучения (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Удержание учителей стало важной проблемой в системе образования Казахстана. В попытке увеличить число учителей в школьной системе правительство Казахстана в 2019 году приняло закон о статусе педагога. Хотя некоторые стратегии закона показали положительные результаты, проблема все еще существует. В то же время, в Казахстане было проведено относительно немного исследований по проблеме удержания учителей. Это качественное исследование направлено на изучение факторов, влияющих на удержание учителей в общеобразовательных школах Казахстана. В общей сложности в выборку исследования вошли десять учителей, пять учителей со стажем работы более пяти лет и пять молодых учителей со стажем работы менее пяти лет. Для отбора участников использовался метод целевого отбора. Данные были получены из полуструктурированных интервью и проанализированы с использованием тематического анализа. Результаты исследования показали, что удержание учителей является многогранным процессом, и отметили сложное взаимодействие факторов, которые формируют удержание учителей в казахстанской школьной системе. В частности, удержание учителей увеличивается по мере того, как они используют свои возможности для профессионального развития и получают достойную заработную плату, их достижения признаются и поощряются финансово. Кроме того, учителя более удовлетворены своей работой, когда чувствуют поддержку со стороны эффективно подготовленных руководителей и программ наставничества под

наблюдением. Более того, улучшены рабочая среда и условия труда, а административная нагрузка снижена за счет назначения соответствующих сотрудников для выполнения этих задач. Администрация школы признает важность психического и физического благополучия учителей. В заключение следует отметить, что исследование было направлено на достижение цели исследования и восполнило несколько пробелов в существующих исследованиях, что в значительной степени способствовало их продвижению.

Ключевые слова: факторы удержания учителей, удовлетворенность работой, Закон о статусе педагога, общеобразовательная школа, Казахстан

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUTHOR AGREEMENT	ii
DECLARATION.....	iii
ETHICAL APPROVAL	iv
CITI Training Certificate	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
Андапта	ix
Аннотация.....	xi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	xiii
LIST OF TABLES	xvi
Introduction to the Study	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background to the Study	2
1.3 Statement of the Problem	6
1.4 Purpose of the Study and Research Question.....	7
1.5 Significance of the Study	7
1.6 Outline of the Thesis	9
1.7 Summary	9
Literature Review.....	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 Teacher Retention and Factors That Influence Teacher Retention	12
2.2.1 The Main Factors Contributing to Teacher Retention.....	14
2.3 Teacher Challenges	15
2.3.1 Challenges in Job Satisfaction.....	15
2.3.2. Challenges in Professional Development	17
2.4 Organizational Factors	20
2.4.1 Leadership	20
2.4.2 School Environment and Culture	21
2.4.3 Support and Personal factors influencing attrition/retention.....	21
2.5. Gap Between Teacher Needs and Government Approach.....	23
2.6. Research Gap.....	23
2.7 Summary	25

Methodology	26
3.1 Introduction	26
3.2 Research Design	26
3.3 Research Site and Sample	28
3.4 Methods of Data Collection	29
3.5 Data Collection Instruments	31
3.6 Data Collection Procedures	31
3.7 Data Analysis	32
3.8 Ethical Issues	42
3.8.1 Informed Consent	42
3.8.2 Confidentiality	43
3.8.3 Anonymity	44
3.8.4 Risks and Benefits	44
3.9 Summary	45
Findings	47
4.1 Introduction	47
4.2 Research Participants	47
4.3 The Nature of Job Satisfaction and Professional Development	48
4.3.1 The Perception of Professional Growth Opportunities	49
4.3.2 Compensation and Benefits	50
4.3.3 Career Opportunities and Responsibilities	52
4.4 Perception of Organizational Factors	53
4.4.1 Leadership Influence on Teacher Retention (Effectiveness of Administrative Leadership, Teacher Perception of Leadership Support)	54
4.4.2 School Culture and Its Impact: Aligning School Values with Teacher Values	55
4.4.3 Teacher Support Systems and Work-Life Balance: Mentoring Programs for Teacher Support, Emotional and Well-being Support (Work-life Balance, Support System)	56
4.5. The influence of the Law About the Teacher Status on Working Conditions	59
4.5.1 Perception of the Law About the Teacher Status	60
4.5.2 Factors That Need Further Consideration	61
4.6 Conclusion	64
Discussion	66
5.1 Introduction	66
5.2 Factors that Affect Teacher Retention in Mainstream School in Kazakhstan	66
5.2.1 Perceptions (impact) of the Law About the Teacher Status	67

5.2.2 Human Capital Themes Influencing Teacher Retention	70
5.3 Job Satisfaction and Professional Development that Affect Retention.....	71
5.3.1 Professional development.....	71
5.3.2 Compensation and Benefits	73
5.3.3 Career opportunities and responsibilities	73
5.4 Organizational Factors that Impact Retention in Kazakhstani Schools	75
5.4.1 Positive Administrative Leadership.....	75
5.4.2 School culture and Teacher Values	75
5.4.3 Support System and Work-Life Balance	76
5.5 Summary	78
Conclusion	81
6.1 Introduction	81
6.2 Major Findings	81
6.3 Limitations	83
6.4 Implications and Recommendations	84
6.4.1. Implications for policymakers and school administration.....	84
6.4.2. Recommendations for further research.....	85
6.5 Personal Reflections.....	86
References.....	88
Appendices.....	94
Appendix A.....	94
Appendix B	95
Appendix C	97
Appendix D.....	101

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.....	33
Table 2.....	34
Table 3.....	38
Table 4.....	48
Table 5.....	61

Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introduction

The education system in Kazakhstan is currently facing a significant challenge in the recruitment and retention of teachers, which has a detrimental impact on the quality of education. Courtney et al. (2022) state that due to some factors, it has become crucial to attract and retain highly qualified teachers. These factors include an unbalanced population pyramid with over 25% of the population being under 15 years old, a growing number of school-aged children, a low rate of graduates choosing teaching as a profession, and a high turnover rate among newly qualified teachers. The situation was made worse by the fact that according to Presidential instruction, starting in 2021, new schools were built, and this reform demanded the recruitment of teaching staff in Kazakhstan.

The Kazakhstan government introduced a law to address the status of teachers called the Law About the Status of a Teacher (The Law About the Status of a Teacher, 2019) as the first endeavour to improve education and teaching. The law addresses the increasing authority and social protection of teachers, improving the financial well-being of teachers, attracting young people to the teaching profession as well as improving the quality of education. Despite this policy intervention, many schools still experience teacher attrition and turnover (Information Analytical Center, 2021). According to the Ministry of Education, in 2022, the teaching staff numbered more than 337 975 teachers, and in this regard, more than 56 647 young educators and about 19,000 young technical and professional educators have graduated (KazInform, 2022). The provided data indicate that there is a substantial number of teachers and new graduates in the education sector. However, the shortage of teachers persists.

Stressful working conditions and challenging working environments force teachers to find other prospective careers. Thus, attrition and retention are two factors that significantly impact the stability and quality of the education system in Kazakhstan. Attrition refers to the rate at which teachers leave the profession, while retention refers to the ability to keep qualified teachers in the system for an extended period (Kelchtermans, 2017, p. 962). However, Kelchtermans (2017) asserts that attrition and retention are two sides of the same coin. Hence, it is crucial to understand the factors affecting the attrition and retention of teachers. Consequently, this chapter presents the background regarding the attrition of teachers and teacher retention in Kazakhstan's educational system. The chapter also presents the statement of the problem, the research questions, and the significance of the study.

1.2 Background to the Study

The profession of a teacher has always been considered a noble one. This might be one of the reasons that motivates people to enter the career. Another major motivation to join teaching is the opportunity to influence learners' development and contribute to the improvement of society (OECD, 2019). The data from the OECD (2018) state that society and the school system expect a lot from teachers. Teachers are supposed to be experts in teaching, child education development, classroom management, administration and even psychology. The data further shows that even with the enormous responsibility bestowed upon teachers, only 26% of them feel that society values their work. However, according to the State Program of Education and Science Development (2021), 35% of teachers in Kazakhstan leave their positions to find jobs in other different spheres. In comparison, in the USA, 9 per cent of new teachers do not complete their first year, and 14 per cent leave after their first year (Ingersoll, 2002). Thus, teacher attrition, teacher recruitment and retention continue to be critical issues in Kazakhstan and across the world as this impacts the provision of the best educational opportunities for children and youth (Gordon, 2020). Guarino et al.

(2006) state that in the burdens of growing education improvement reforms, schools are challenged to maintain standards for teaching quality. Schools continuously recruit new teachers and search for ways to retain qualified teachers. In this sense, Kelchtermans (2017) identifies teacher attrition and retention as the initial concerns that bring together various practical and theoretical aspects in education. These include professional and career development, job motivation, self-identity, working conditions, societal perception of teaching, policy demands, institutional pressures, and personal life choices.

The importance of teachers has never changed (Kasapoglu, 2020). This importance is recognized through their multidimensional role. Kasapoglu (2020) asserts that the teacher's role in education requires teaching, social, cultural, and technological dimensions, seeking expertise, knowledge, and skills in the sphere that demands academic work and professional dedication. All the named facets define the professional status. The importance of teachers' status is a central aspect in discussions about the professionalization of teaching (Mezza, 2022). Kasapoglu (2020) refers to the definition of teacher status by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNESCO, which encompasses their position, working conditions, wages, and benefits compared to other professions. It emphasizes that teachers' status should align with the needs and goals of education and that they should receive fair recognition and respect from society (Gulmez, 2010, p.38, as cited in Kasapoglu, 2020).

The professional status of teachers is influenced by various factors, some of which directly impact their status, while others play supporting roles (Mezza, 2022). Due to the rapid expansion of global knowledge and changes in lifestyles, technology, and perspectives on life, the teaching profession has assumed a different dimension in the social framework (Azar, 2011, as cited in Kasapoglu, 2020). In Turkey, research on the status of the teaching profession provided curious findings. In a study by the Turkish Statistical Institute in 2014, titled 'The status of working life and professions in Turkey' the teaching profession ranked

the fourth, following medical doctors, university professors, and judges (Kasapoglu, 2020). On the other hand, Kasapoglu (2020) asserts that while some studies rank teaching highly among professions, others suggest that educators feel undervalued and perceive a decline in their status.

Many efforts have been undertaken in the United States to address teacher shortages, including the implementation of strategies like induction programs, recruitment incentives, alternative teacher certification, and resident teacher programs (Klimek, 2019). However, despite the endeavors to mitigate the shortage, there has been limited focus on policies and research aimed at enhancing the status, prestige, and esteem of the teaching profession in the United States (Klimek, 2019). Whereas professions that are widely seen as prestigious tend to attract skilled individuals, thus raising their status (Klimek, 2019), this is not the case with teaching. However, in countries like Singapore and South Korea, where society treats teaching as an important profession (Lim, 2014; Seongja, 2008, as cited in Klimek, 2019), there is a substantial inflow of highly talented individuals choosing teaching as a career (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Increasing the status of teaching can result in how teachers see themselves and their profession, inspiring them to enhance their skills and performance. Therefore, to enhance the quality of education and to increase the professional enthusiasm among teachers, it is necessary to undertake measures aimed at raising the status of the teaching profession and develop educational policies that align with this goal (Kasapoglu, 2020). Therefore, many factors influence teacher attrition; some of them are stress as a result of the teacher evaluation process, school administration inconsistency, and paperwork overload that begets a lack of time to lesson planning (Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). Guarino et al. (2006) highlight the fundamental principle underlying the supply of teachers:

Individuals will become or remain teachers if teaching represents the most attractive activity to pursue among all activities available to them. By attractive, we mean desirable in terms of ease of entry and overall compensation (salary, benefits, working conditions, and personal satisfaction). (p. 175)

These components of desirability serve as the policy mechanisms that can be adjusted at the school or government levels to align the availability of teachers with the demand for them. Moreover, recruiting and retaining effective teachers are often difficult to realize because of insufficient and dwindling resources.

On the other hand, with the implementation of new educational reforms in Kazakhstan to improve and develop the system of education, there has become a great demand for highly qualified teachers who can bring up a new competitive generation of Kazakhstani students (Koroleva, 2017). Teachers have undergone various professional development courses and have been motivated. Nevertheless, all these measures have not been enough as the issue of attrition turnover or migration of qualified educators also takes place, and in some schools, highly qualified and experienced teachers are still overloaded as they are required to fulfil the strategic performance of a school. Also, many teachers feel undervalued by the administration staff that does not provide enough support, and many educators start to seek better jobs in more lucrative spheres and/or leave school (Koroleva, 2017).

Furthermore, in Kazakhstan the most recent step to retain and attract teachers was the introduction of the Law About the Teacher Status (Commonwealth of Independent States [CIS], Legislation 2019, as cited in Courtney et al., 2023) The Law About the Status of the Teacher, adopted in 2019 and entered into force on January 1, 2021, is aimed at increasing the authority and social protection of teachers, improving the financial well-being of teachers, preventing teachers from any extra activities outside their duties and responsibilities, attracting young people to the teaching profession as well as improving the quality of

education (Law About the Status of Teacher, 2019). Assyllova (2020), the former vice-minister of Education and Science, asserts that the realization and impact of the Law positively impact the issue of teacher recruitment and retention. Furthermore, to address the issue of a growing shortage of teachers, the government took substantial measures by raising state scholarships and grants, in addition to increasing the number of monthly stipends specifically designated for pedagogical fields (Polovnikova & Qanay, 2023). Despite all these investments, it is still an ongoing process and has not resolved teacher attrition and turnover completely. Therefore, there are key challenges that the education system still needs to address in Kazakhstan, namely recruitment and retention of new teachers, and attrition and retention of qualified teachers.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Teacher turnover, migrating to different schools or leaving the teaching profession, exceeds in comparison with other professions (Hughes, 2012). The staffing issues faced by public schools cannot be solely accounted for by the factors of teacher retirement and the rise in student enrollment (Ingersoll, 2001). Kelchtermans (2017) highlighted that the importance of teacher attrition and retention is "an educational issue ...that constitutes both a problem and a challenge... and deserves to be the central theme" (p. 962).

Guarino et al. (2006) assert that the issue of teacher retention is intricately linked to attrition, which refers to the rate at which teachers leave the profession. In this way, understanding the reasons behind teacher attrition can provide valuable insights into the factors that impact teacher retention. Previous research examined factors contributing to attrition, such as low salaries, challenging working conditions, lack of professional development opportunities, or limited career advancement prospects, school administration, credentialing, and alternative certification requirements. Examining these areas could help design targeted strategies to enhance teacher retention.

Furthermore, investigating the factors that influence teacher retention can also uncover successful practices and initiatives that have proven effective in retaining teachers. For instance, supportive work environments, mentorship programs, competitive compensation packages, opportunities for professional growth, and a strong sense of job satisfaction have been found to positively influence teacher retention rates (Borman & Dowling, 2008). By addressing these identified factors and implementing policies that promote teacher job satisfaction and professional development, schools can create an environment that encourages teachers to remain in the profession. This, could in turn help to stabilize the teaching workforce, maintain continuity in education, and ultimately improve student outcomes.

After implementing the Law About the Status of a Teacher as the tool to attract and retain teachers the educational system still witnesses the problem of teacher turnover. Therefore, exploring the factors associated with attrition and retention in the teaching profession in the Kazakhstani context is crucial for devising effective strategies that will enhance teacher retention and address the challenges of teacher shortages and turnover.

1.4 Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that influence teacher retention in Kazakhstan by examining mainstream schools. The study will utilize teachers' perspectives. In this regard, the following research questions will be addressed:

- 1) What are the factors that influence teacher retention in mainstream schools?
- 2) What are the challenges faced by teachers that influence attrition in mainstream schools?

1.5 Significance of the Study

By examining teachers' perceptions regarding the factors that influence their decision to stay in the profession and the impact of the Law About the Teacher Status , this research

contributes to the existing literature on teacher attrition and retention factors in mainstream schools by providing the insights into the multifaceted nature of teacher retention issue within the education system of Kazakhstan (Courtney et al., 2023; Tastanbekova, 2020; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Hughes, 2012).

As a result, the study contributes to the expansion of our understanding of the holistic nature of teacher retention factors beyond economic considerations. By aligning with previous research that emphasizes the importance of non-monetary factors such as job satisfaction, professional development opportunities, and working conditions, the findings highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing teacher retention issues. Furthermore, the study provides valuable context-specific insights that can inform stakeholders and policy reforms aimed at improving teacher retention rates in Kazakhstan.

Another contribution of this study is its exploration of the impact of the Law About the Teacher Status on teacher retention in Kazakhstan. By examining teachers' perceptions of this legislative measure and its effectiveness in addressing retention challenges, the research fills a gap in the literature regarding the efficacy of policy in improving teacher retention.

Furthermore, the research offers prospective teachers a deeper understanding of the realities they may encounter in their professional journey. Specifically, prospective teachers may gain the knowledge and insights they need to make informed decisions about their careers in the teaching profession. By understanding the factors influencing teacher retention and the policy context in which they will work, prospective teachers can better prepare themselves for the challenges and opportunities they may encounter in their future profession.

In that way, this study would have contributed to improving practice. By investigating the multifaceted aspects of teacher retention, the research expands our understanding of the complex dynamics that influence educators' decisions to remain in the profession. Through

in-depth interviews and analysis, the research uncovers the importance of various elements such as job satisfaction, professional development opportunities, compensation, school culture, and organizational support systems. By delineating these factors and their interplay, the study provides a nuanced understanding of the drivers of teacher retention in mainstream schools.

Gained knowledge is valuable not only for policymakers but also for educators and stakeholders involved in shaping educational policies and practices.

1.6 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter is the introduction that has given background information on the study topic and the statement of the research problem. It introduced the purpose and the questions that guided the research and how it could contribute significantly to knowledge and practice. Chapter 2 reviews the related literature and identifies the gap in the literature for further research. The theoretical framework is also provided. In the third chapter, the methodology employed to collect and analyze the data to find the answers to the research questions is presented. The chapter specifically discusses the research design, research site, sample, tools, and procedures used for data collecting and analysis. Furthermore, Chapter 3 covers the study's potential risks and benefits and ethical considerations, including confidentiality and anonymity. The study findings are discussed in Chapter 4 and arranged in accordance with the research questions. The discussion chapter includes the interpretation of the findings considering prior research. Chapter 6 concludes the study by restating its key findings, reviewing its limitations and implications, and offering suggestions for further research.

1.7 Summary

To summarize, focusing on the challenges in teacher shortage and recruitment faced by the educational system of Kazakhstan, the government implemented the Law about the Status of the Teacher. The chapter discussed the background of the problem, highlighting the understanding of teacher attrition factors and the importance of teacher retention, especially among qualified educators. Furthermore, it identified the growing demand for highly qualified teachers in Kazakhstan due to educational reforms and the challenges associated with retaining high-quality teachers. The chapter acknowledged the positive impact of the Law but emphasised the need for continued efforts to address teacher retention. Therefore, there is a need to evaluate whether the Law adequately addresses all factors to provide sufficient and comfortable conditions for educators. The next chapter reviews related literature.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The most common solution to address the shortage of teachers is to increase recruitment into the teaching profession. Consequently, in recent times various strategies aimed at attracting young people into teaching have been initiated. In several countries, recruitment strategies incorporating incentives like loan subsidy schemes, signing bonuses, or higher salaries have been implemented as policy responses to this issue (OECD, 2005, as cited in Lindqvist et al., 2014). According to Lindqvist et al. (2014), governments globally are prioritizing alternative routes into teaching, with initiatives like Teach for America and Teach First in England serving as examples of efforts to expand the global pool of potential teachers. Overall, in the context of Kazakhstan, Courtney et al.(2023) in their study propose enhancing teacher retention in Kazakhstan through initial teacher education (ITE) programs by aligning curricula with the reformed secondary education curriculum, prioritizing practical skills and professional competence, balancing content and pedagogical knowledge development, and implementing a stepwise approach to capacity-building in areas such as behavioural management, pedagogical knowledge, formative assessment, and differentiation. Another research, Polovnikova and Qanay (2023) highlighted the importance of investing in the education workforce and effective teacher preparation programs. Moreover, as one step to address the teacher retention problem in Kazakhstan, the government passed a Law About the Teacher of the Teacher (Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), 2019, as cited in Courtney et al., 2023) as an attempt to solve the turnover and shortage of teachers in the educational system of Kazakhstan. They argue that the status of a teacher could be raised by

making the teacher professional and addressing the issues of low pay, onerous duties, and lack of community recognition for teachers.

Therefore, the present chapter provides an in-depth review of existing literature on the critical topic of teacher retention. It explains the factors affecting teacher retention and the challenges for teachers in job satisfaction and professional development. Furthermore, the section covers prior studies that examine organizational factors such as leadership, school culture, and support. In addition, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of this study are discussed. The gap in the existing literature is also addressed.

2.2 Teacher Retention and Factors That Influence Teacher Retention

To understand the concept of teacher retention and its factors, it is vital to understand the phenomenon of retention. In the existing literature discussing teacher retention, there is no common definition provided for this phenomenon. According to Kelchtermans (2017), retention pertains to keeping educators within the teaching profession. Levin (2008) clarifies retention in detail as keeping valuable teachers in the profession by providing them with interesting and challenging work, favourable working environments, and showing them respect.

Many researchers discuss effective practices to retain teachers in the profession and the significance of encouraging them to stay in the profession without diving into the term to understand the sense and the way it relates to the context (Perryman & Calvert, 2020; Kelchtermans, 2017). Therefore, deducing the general understanding of teacher retention refers to the ability of schools and the education system to retain teachers within the profession, which entails positive consequences for the educational process. Teacher retention involves implementing strategies and practices that encourage educators to remain in their teaching positions over the long term. On the one hand, teacher retention is essential for

maintaining a stable and experienced teacher workforce, which has a positive impact on student learning and overall school performance. On the other hand, Kelchtermans, 2017 rightly raises the question of whether supporting all teachers to remain in their jobs is inherently beneficial. The author suggests that some teachers may have inferior educational practices, and it might be preferable for them to pursue other professional fields outside of education. To assess the relevance of retaining or allowing qualified teachers to leave, the author emphasizes the need for clear criteria. Kelchtermans (2017) doubts whether the supporting of all teachers to stay in the job is inherently beneficial and is a matter worth considering. Moreover, Levin, 2008 supports the argument stating that attracting good teachers into the profession (recruitment) is significant, and it is essential to consider how to attract skilled individuals to become teachers and to retain them. However, relying solely on improved recruitment cannot fully address the issue of teacher quality due to the sheer size of the teaching profession. The primary objectives are to continuously develop teachers' skills throughout their careers and to ensure only the retention of talented individuals in the teaching profession (Levin, 2008).

Referring to an Educational Policy White Paper published by The National Academy of Education, Oke et al. (2016) state that the presence of effective and capable teachers who are dedicated to teaching a diverse student body is crucial for the success of a school and has the potential to positively impact the lives of every student. The statement is based on the evidence that if students coming from economically disadvantaged families received instructions from exceptionally skilled teachers during their elementary school years for three consecutive years, they could achieve passing scores in middle school-level standardized tests (Eton, 1984; Baike, 2002; AEE, 2008 as cited in Oke et al., 2016). Conversely, research shows that poor teaching over the same duration negatively affects the academic progress of all students, regardless of their background.

What has been captured above means that ensuring the retention of talented teachers in the profession remains the primary challenge, demanding thoughtful strategies and practices that encourage teachers to remain in their teaching positions in a way that enhances the educational process. This involves creating a conducive and supportive work environment, providing opportunities for professional growth and development, recognizing and valuing teachers' contributions, and addressing any concerns that may lead to attrition.

2.2.1 The Main Factors Contributing to Teacher Retention

The literature shows that the problem of teacher retention appears to be growing worldwide. A significant number of teachers leave their profession early in their careers and this situation is exacerbated by a high attrition rate (Perryman & Calvert, 2020; Gunn & McRae, 2021). In this connection, Kelchtermans (2017) highlights that the phenomenon of retention is fundamentally a prime issue where various practical and theoretical aspects of education intersect. These encompass areas such as professional growth, advancement in one's career, job motivation, identity or self-understanding, institutional environment in which one works (working conditions), the social status of the teaching profession, as well as requirements from policies, pressures from school administration, and personal life choices. All these reasons are likely the same in all reported literature. Gunn & McRae (2021) identify that most research findings on retention can be classified into individual/personal (family life, resiliency) and/or contextual /professional (salary, student discipline). Although certain factors might be more prevalent than others, it is crucial to thoroughly explore and understand all potential reasons to retain and sustain teaching quality and student learning outcomes. Thus, contextual/professional factors that are the most commonly identified include pre-service teacher education, induction and mentoring, administrative support and school context, teaching discipline and salary, and student and parent issues (Gunn & McRae, 2021).

Interestingly, Tehseen and Hadi (2015) connect retention with motivation. The study asserts that the motivation and retention of teachers in schools are influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivation comes from aspects such as satisfaction from teaching, recognition, career development, and control, leading to job satisfaction and reduced turnover intentions. Accordingly, extrinsic motivation, including external rewards like salary, accommodation, and medical assistance, also impact teacher satisfaction and performance positively. Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors are crucial for teachers' effectiveness and emphasize the importance of managing both types of motivation for teacher retention and performance in schools. These findings show that teacher retention is achieved through a balance and holistic approach to facilitate teacher retention by creating positive environment that address intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

2.3 Teacher Challenges

After reviewing the challenges that significantly influence teachers' decisions on whether to stay in the profession or to leave, this study focuses on the factors that affect teacher retention. The literature suggests several categories of challenges teachers face that significantly influence their job satisfaction and retention.

2.3.1 Challenges in Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is associated with both the work environment and the nature of the job profession itself (Kang, 2023). According to OECD data, job satisfaction was found to be regarded as multilayered. Factors such as pay (salary and benefits), hours of work, future prospects (promotion and job security) and professional development, how hard or difficult the job is, job content (interest, prestige and independence), and interpersonal relationships (with co-workers and management) and teacher-student relationship, teacher efficacy and well-prepared pedagogical content knowledge, and principal leadership (Clark, 1998; Kang,

2023) impacted job satisfaction. More specifically, the previous research revealed that teacher job satisfaction is achievable when teachers receive adequate salaries for their livelihood.

Kang's (2023) study states that fair rewards, including salary, benefits, and social recognition are crucial factors for fostering job satisfaction among Korean teachers.

Studies conducted mainly in the UK, USA, and Australia regarding factors impacting teachers' continuity in the profession suggest that the primary reason for leaving the profession is often a lack of job satisfaction resulting from heavy workloads and various pressures rather than a deficiency in professional development opportunities (Coldwell, 2017 as cited in De Nobile & McCormick, 2008; DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Hobson et al., 2007; Ladd, 2007). Poor working conditions, such as lack of administrative support, student discipline problems, inadequate student motivation, and limited autonomy in decision-making processes regarding classroom management, have been identified as major sources of job dissatisfaction and reasons for teachers leaving their jobs (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). These conditions overshadow even salary concerns in some cases, highlighting the critical role that the school environment plays in teacher retention (Tehseen & Hadi, 2015).

In line with OECD publications, some studies have shown that compensation is a significant factor affecting teacher job satisfaction and retention. For example, Tehseen and Hadi (2015) state that low salaries are a primary predictor of teacher attrition and turnover. Similarly, Ingersoll and Smith (2003) assert that competitive or increased compensation can reduce turnover intentions, as there is a positive relationship between salary and job satisfaction among teachers. Thus, it appears there is unanimity in literature that compensation is an important factor.

Another study proves that teachers' salaries and working conditions significantly contribute to staff turnover. In their research, Borman and Dowling (2018) argue that higher

salaries and better working conditions are among the preferences that encourage teachers to move to other schools for teaching positions where they are paid more or work outside of teaching that has these characteristics. Along with other retention-related factors such as teacher collaboration and networking and administrative support, these factors stand out as modifiable factors, with the salary teachers receive being a very significant predictor of attrition outcomes. These findings highlight the importance of increasing wages and working conditions to address teacher retention. Such a conclusion is internationally observed.

2.3.2. Challenges in Professional Development

Moreover, other research studies shows that supporting teachers starting careers, especially through mentoring, can positively influence teachers' intentions to continue teaching (Coldwell, 2017 as cited in Cameron, Lovett, & Berger, 2007; Day & Gu, 2007; Hobson & Ashby, 2012). According to existing studies, professional development has been identified as a significant factor influencing teacher retention. Several studies suggest that effective professional development programs can positively impact teachers' knowledge, practice, student outcomes, and their sense of efficacy, which can enhance their commitment to the profession and reduce turnover (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Smet, 2021; Coldwell, 2017; Luesse et al., 2022). Specifically, Latham and Wogt (2007), as cited in Smet (2021) found evidence suggesting that professional development schools, which focus on comprehensive professional development, can reduce teacher attrition, indicating that well-structured professional development opportunities are crucial for retaining teachers in the profession. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that these programmes are widely carried out.

However, access to professional development and the perceived need for such programs have multifaceted effects on teacher job satisfaction (Smet, 2021). Research typically indicates a positive correlation between professional development opportunities and job satisfaction among teachers. This suggests that when teachers have access to professional

development activities and they actively engage in them, it tends to enhance their overall satisfaction with their job. This positive association underscores the significance of offering teachers opportunities for continuous professional growth and learning experiences.

On the other hand, Smet (2021) in his study states that the need for professional development shows a positive relationship with job satisfaction for teachers who have not participated in any professional development activities. This relationship becomes less positive with increasing participation in professional development. This could indicate that the available professional development opportunities may not effectively address the challenges teachers face in these areas or that increased awareness of these challenges through professional development may highlight gaps in teachers' skills or resources, leading to decreased satisfaction (Smet, 2021).

However, Coldwell (2017) concluded in his study that while the previous study showed that even though professional development (PD) was considered less important than other factors, such as school pressures and policies affecting teachers' intentions to stay in the profession, the secondary school teachers, felt a positive impact on their likelihood of staying in teaching. Qualitative data showed that this influence was associated with an increase in the level of professional knowledge of teachers, increased self-confidence as teachers, as well as increased motivation and job satisfaction.

The most important challenges in the professional development of teachers were highlighted in the study of Darling-Hammond (2017) conducted in Australia, Canada, Finland, and Singapore in the context of recruitment, preparation, induction and ongoing professional development and collective improvement of practice and comparing them with the practices in the USA. The qualitative/quantitative study found that the main challenge in professional development opportunities is not just one-time workshops or seminars but the activities that are embedded in the job through coaching, mentoring, and other strategies that

promote sustained learning and improvement. Another significant challenge is creating a system that supports quality teaching in all schools and classrooms, as efforts to improve teacher development are often tackled as stepwise rather than through a systemic approach (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Similar to these international observations, in Kazakhstan, the teaching profession faces a number of problems. Polovnikova and Qanay (2023) enumerated a plethora of challenges including insufficient training of young teachers, a centralized and bureaucratic education system, neglect of teacher training before starting work as part of the reform of the system, difficulties with recruitment and retention of staff, as well as outdated curricula. These factors have contributed to the perception among teachers that they are not sufficiently prepared for effective teaching, which hinders professional development within the educational system.

Closely related to the above, a Kazakhstani quantitative study by Courtney et al. (2023) describing the challenges in professional development of teachers in Kazakhstan mentioned the noted resistance among more senior teachers to adopting new methodologies. This resistance is partly caused by experiences of the Soviet system, where deviation from sanctioned curricula and teaching methods could lead to job loss and humiliation, fostering a fear-based approach to professional development and innovation in teaching practices (Courtney et al., 2023). Moreover, the alignment of initial teacher education (ITE) programs with the needs of the reformed secondary education curriculum is limited, with a study finding only 7% of ITE curricula correspond to the reformed school curriculum. Therefore, it becomes clear that there is a gap in preparing teachers with practical skills and competencies necessary for the teaching practice in the classroom, which emphasizes that young teachers may feel incompetent and, without support or mentoring, can result in attrition (Polovnikova & Qanay, 2023; Courtney et al., 2023).

Yakavets et al. (2017) also highlighted that teachers in Kazakhstan are facing a series of challenges amidst ongoing educational reforms, notably arising from the disparity between traditional Soviet-style pedagogical patterns and newer international approaches. Moreover, the prevailing professional culture in Kazakhstan, which historically has not prioritized ongoing professional development beyond initial training, facilitates certain challenges in adapting to new roles and practices (Yakavets et al., 2017). Thus, although locally presented as unique challenges, one observes that the challenges facing Kazakhstani teachers are common globally.

2.4 Organizational Factors

Organizational factors within schools play a significant role in teacher retention. Lack of support from administrators, student discipline issues, and lack of input and decision-making power are organizational factors that cause teachers to leave the profession (Borman & Dowling, 2008). These factors underscore the importance of school organizational characteristics and the characteristics of teachers' work conditions. In literature, the environments in which teachers work, such as teacher collaboration and networking, and administrative support, instructional resources, other organizational attributes of schools, and the characteristics of schools' student bodies, are significant predictors of attrition.

2.4.1 Leadership

Leadership plays a significant role in retaining teachers in the profession through various means. Principals of schools contribute to retention by recognizing and supporting teachers, facilitating collaboration to meet curriculum standards, and fostering a professional environment conducive to growth (Boyd et al., 2008 as cited in Shuls & Flores, 2020). Furthermore, Shuls and Flores (2020) found that supportive leadership, especially in the early stages of a teacher's career, significantly reduces the likelihood of teachers leaving the

profession. Apart from that, Shuls and Flores (2020) state that leadership is essential in developing a culture of trust, openness, and academic freedom, where teachers feel valued and have a say in decision-making processes. Schools with higher levels of faculty decision-making and autonomy see reduced attrition rates. Additionally, according to Perryman and Calvert, (2020) leadership also plays a role in providing opportunities for professional development and career advancement. Overall, effective leadership that supports, recognizes, and empowers teachers is key to retaining them.

2.4.2 School Environment and Culture

Research shows that the key factor that directly influences teacher retention is the school environment. The main concerns raised are about workload, salaries, and accountability pressures (Borman & Dowling, 2008, Ingersoll, 2002, Kelchtermans, 2017, Perryman & Calvert, 2020). The accountability pressures and the performativity culture in education are the major factors that influence teachers' decision to leave the profession. This trend, often described as 'box-ticking,' means that teachers are increasingly focused on tasks related to assessments, exams, progress monitoring, and inspection preparation, detracting from the more individualistic and creative aspects of the job (Perryman & Calvert, 2020). Teachers want to work in schools that offer increased autonomy, strong administrative support, and clearly defined expectations (Hughes, 2012).

2.4.3 Support and Personal factors influencing attrition/retention

One of the common characteristics that relate to retention is age, and the matter is that younger teachers tend to leave the profession within a five-year period (Gunn & McRae, 2021; Hughes, 2012). The significant contributor to this factor is dissatisfaction with teaching and stress (Hughes, 2012). Teaching carries a substantial emotional load, which is intensified by such factors as heavy workloads, extra-curricular teaching obligations, diverse student

needs and behaviours, resource constraints, and a lack of professional recognition (status) (Gunn &McRae, 2021). Unfortunately, as Gunn and McRae (2021) state, new teachers often assume their roles and responsibilities right from the start of the school year, and even when the external conditions are favourable, if beginning teachers feel emotionally and psychologically unprepared, stress and burnout become an inevitable consequence. Mediating factors like self-efficacy and professional identity play a significant role in mitigating stress and emotional burnout among teachers (Hughes, 2012; Gunn &McRae, 2021; Kelchtermans, 2017). High self-efficacy individuals are more open to new ideas and strategies while teachers with low self-efficacy are more likely to leave the profession early and display characteristics such as work avoidance, burnout, and heightened emotional distress (Gunn &McRae, 2021). The fact that teachers remain in or leave the profession is not primarily determined by the challenges they face or their individual characteristics. Instead, it depends upon the structure of the social and professional support system (Kelchtermans, 2017). This perspective aligns with the argument that the effectiveness of mentoring and support arrangements for early career teachers significantly depends on their ability to adapt the social environment within the school society (Gunn &McRae, 2021; Kelchtermans, 2017; Sabina, et al., 2023). According to Polovnikova and Qanay (2023) teacher preparation in Kazakhstan is conducted in 55 universities with 5 specialized pedagogical universities which focus only on teacher training. However, research shows that a significant percentage of teachers in Kazakhstan believe that they are not sufficiently trained to teach effectively in schools (Polovnikova & Qanay, 2023). The preparation of young teachers for the profession in Kazakhstan is associated with problems related to traditional Soviet-style teacher training, the emphasis on teaching subject knowledge rather than teaching skills, and the gap between theory and practice in teacher education programs (Yakavets et al., 2017). These findings raise the concern that there is a need for ongoing evaluation and enhancement of teacher

preparation programs in Kazakhstan to ensure that pre-service teachers are equipped with appropriate skills and competencies so they are confident and effective in their teaching practice. Moreover, Tastanbekova (2020) asserts that teacher profession in Kazakhstan is the lowest paying sector which lack of popularity of teaching profession among youth which harm prestige and esteem of teachers due to low salaries, overburdening work without adequate compensation and benefits, and widespread corruption across all levels of education.

2.5. Gap Between Teacher Needs and Government Approach

The literature shows that studies that provide insights into the factors influencing teachers' decisions to stay or leave their positions demonstrate the diverse nature of retention (Borman & Dowling, 2008;). After the implementation of the Law About the Teacher Status in Kazakhstan, which includes measures to increase salaries and reduce workload for teachers, there is a mismatch between the practical needs of teachers in the school system's day-to-day realities and the measures taken by the government to address teacher issues. This indicates that while salary increases and reduced workloads may address some factors influencing teacher retention, there are likely other significant issues at play within mainstream schools that contribute to retention and are not adequately addressed. Courtney et al. (2023) assert that while the government has taken steps to improve the status of teachers in Kazakhstan, there is still a need for further reforms aimed at attracting high-quality candidates to teacher profession and ensuring that pre-service teachers are well prepared for the profession. Identifying and addressing these additional factors is crucial for improving teacher retention rates in mainstream schools.

2.6. Research Gap

A significant gap in research on teacher retention in the Kazakhstani context emphasizes the lack of existing studies on the aspects. Therefore, Courtney et al. (2022) highlight the importance of research on attrition and retention to understand the phenomena in Kazakhstan. Due to the updated educational reforms in the school system, teachers faced significant pressure and demands. A new curriculum implies a more skills-focused approach to teaching and learning. However, “the roles of teachers and the methods employed in initial teacher education (ITE) have remained unchanged” (Courtney et al., 2022, p.2). This discrepancy raises questions about the adequacy of professional preparation for teachers, which can impact their perception of the profession and their decision to remain in the field. A recent law, "About the Status of the Teacher" (Commonwealth of Independent States, 2019, as cited in Courtney et al., 2023), was undertaken as the first attempt to solve the turnover and shortage of teachers in the educational system of Kazakhstan by raising the status of a teacher and making attractive the teacher profession (raising the salary, decreasing the workload). Nevertheless, despite the positive stride in tackling this matter, there are critical challenges that still need to be addressed. These challenges include teacher recruitment and retention issues, as well as the need to update academic programs in initial teacher education in Kazakhstan (Polovnikova & Qanay, 2023). Although the government holds the responsibility for the status of teachers, and this is not the primary focus of initial teacher education (ITE), there exists a connection between the two (Courtney et al., 2022). Moreover, enhancing comprehension of the professional identity of pre-service teachers can contribute to generating suggestions and tackling challenges related to teacher recruitment and retention not only in Kazakhstan but also on a broader scale (Polovnikova & Qanay, 2023). Only about a third of young teachers under 30 plan to continue in the profession until retirement, with just over a third wanting to leave the education sector entirely due to the lack of support, poor mentorship system, and hard adaptation (Polovnikova & Qanay, 2023).

Without additional reforms, the ability to draw the most qualified candidates will be challenging.

2.7 Summary

The chapter underpins the critical importance of teacher retention in education, both globally and in the specific context of Kazakhstan. Several evidence from the previous studies within the global context, as well as in Kazakhstan, witness collectively the pivotal role that the retention of qualified and experienced educators plays in shaping the quality of education and the overall success of educational systems. These studies provide the evidence that the challenges associated with teacher retention are multifaceted and require holistic strategies and policies to address the issue effectively. Specifically, in Kazakhstan, despite recent efforts to improve the status of teachers and attract talent individuals through legislative changes, significant challenges related to teacher recruitment and retention persist. The evidence from these studies highlights the need for further reforms and comprehensive support for pre-service teachers.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The current study aimed to bridge the gap regarding teachers' expectations for favourable job conditions by identifying the appropriateness of the measures taken by the government in addressing, attracting, and retaining teachers in the profession. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that influence teacher retention in mainstream schools in Kazakhstan. Specifically, the study sought to address the following two research questions:

- 1) What are the factors that influence teacher retention in mainstream schools?
- 2) What are the challenges faced by teachers that influence attrition in mainstream schools?

This chapter discusses the research methodology for the study. It presents and justifies the study's research design. The research site is described, and the sample and sampling procedure are discussed. Moreover, there is an explanation of the data collection methods, instruments, and procedures that were employed in the present study. The chapter also discusses the methods for data analysis, ethical concerns, benefits, and potential risks of the research study.

3.2 Research Design

According to Johnson and Christensen (2019), research design is defined as “the section that details the plan or approach employed to investigate the research issue” (p. 347). Therefore, the design exploited in the study is a qualitative research design. Researchers employ this method to “to explore; to robustly investigate and learn about social phenomenon; to unpack the meanings people ascribe to activities, situations, events, or

artifacts; or to build a depth of understanding about some dimension of social life” (Leavy, 2022, p. 9). Specifically, the research aimed to fill the gap in understanding the perception of teachers regarding the reasons they want to leave the profession and schools, as well as identifying the factors necessary to retain them in the teaching profession.

The election of the research design was determined by its extent to address the research purposes, objectives, and questions (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 175). This research aimed to explore the cause that facilitates teacher retention in a mainstream school in Kazakhstan. Therefore, the issue of teacher retention in mainstream schools in Kazakhstan was explored using the narrative research design. It was selected because a narrative research design endeavors to "gather data through the collection of stories, reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual" (Creswell, 2012, p. 502), “investigate a phenomenon via practical, specific insights” (Creswell, 2012, p. 502) and “consider the impact of social, cultural, and institutional narratives that shaped and expressed those experiences” (Johnson & Christensen, 2019, p.1089). Therefore, the phenomenon of teacher retention was investigated in an open-ended manner. The researcher didn’t construct any prejudiced ideas before the data collection. Thus, factors of teacher retention were communicated in their entirety. The theoretical explanations were built based on the interpretations of the dataset obtained.

Teachers (experienced and young teachers) who had experience working at school for less and more than five years were examined to generate a theoretical explanation of what factors can contribute to their decision to pursue a teaching career. Defining the type of narrative research from the narrative interviews was considered as the participants were asked questions. These interviews served as a central component of the research, as the participants shared their personal stories, experiences, and perspectives. Moreover, the questions that were posed during interviews played a crucial role in shaping the narrative research form.

The formulation of questions was designed to elicit detailed narratives from participants. Open-ended inquiries that encouraged participants to share their stories and reflections were essential in this regard.

3.3 Research Site and Sample

An initial contact email was sent to the school administration with the request to get access to the interview. Moreover, as Creswell (2012) argues, the depth and frequency of interviews with participants and employing a gatekeeper can be advantageous. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), a gatekeeper is “an individual who has an official or unofficial role at the site, provides entrance to a site, helps researchers locate people, and assists in the identification of place to study” (as cited in Creswell, 2012). Thus, the access to the teachers was granted.

Since this research focused on teacher retention factors in Kazakhstan, the participants and sites cannot be selected randomly as they need to meet specific criteria: age, teachers who left the profession, teachers who are considering leaving the school, and teachers who remain in the profession. Therefore, for this research, the non-probability purposive sampling strategy was appropriate for a specific group of people (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 217) who possessed particular information (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell, 2012). According to Creswell (2012), purposeful sampling implies that “researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (p. 206), gaining information about the central phenomenon from information-rich participants. This type of sampling does not intend to generalize the findings; rather, it seeks to obtain detailed information from the participants to investigate the phenomenon in greater depth (Cohen et al., 2018). Qualitative data were obtained by selecting participants with specific characteristics that addressed the research questions.

Following this, the population of the study is teachers from mainstream schools in Kazakhstan who had experience working at school for more than five years, experienced teachers, as well as teachers who were in the profession for less than five years, and young teachers. Initially, five participants responded positively to be involved in the study: three experienced teachers and two newly come teachers. The rest of the teachers refused to participate as they were afraid to share their experiences, possibly due to concerns about discussing sensitive topics. While simultaneously collecting and analyzing the data from participants, the researcher realized the necessity to enlarge the number of participants. Furthermore, Creswell (2012) suggests that an optimal number of interviews for qualitative research typically is around ten. Therefore, the researcher sent the invitation letter to more teachers and another five eligible participants from the school agreed to participate. Having ten participants enabled the researcher to have the required respondents. In order to get multiple perspectives on the phenomenon the representatives of experienced teachers and those with less than five years teaching experience were selected to explore the challenges in the profession of a teacher. The research was undertaken at a mainstream school in Kazakhstan. This research site was selected for several reasons. First, the mainstream school as opposed to a specialized one, directly experiences the impact of the Law About a Teacher Status. This choice was crucial for assessing the perceptions and job satisfaction of teachers within the context of this legislation. Exploring mainstream schools is preferable as they allocate resources in accordance with the requirements of the law, such as funding for teacher salaries, professional development, and support services, to assess the noticeable effects of policy implementation.

3.4 Methods of Data Collection

Considering the nature of the research purpose and research questions, this is an interview-based study in which semi-structured interviews with ten participants were

conducted. Kvale (1996) regards the interview “as an inter-view, an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data” (as cited in Mashuri et al., 2022). Unlike structured interviews, they provide a certain degree of flexibility that allows the researcher to modify the focus of a significant topic in case an important issue of particular interest to the researcher emerges (Creswell, 2012, p. 218). Moreover, semi-structured interviews enable asking additional questions to clarify ambiguous responses and gain in-depth information from the participants. According to Johnson and Christensen (2019), qualitative interviews allow the collection of in-depth details about participants’ thoughts, opinions, understanding, justifications, motivation and feelings regarding a particular subject. Therefore, interviews could reveal the extensive data about factors that affect teacher retention at school.

Generally, interview techniques use conversation as a means of acquiring knowledge (Leavy, 2017). Since people naturally engage in conversation, interview methods leverage a familiar activity, even if it's not typically conducted in formal settings (Brinkmann, 2012, 2013, as cited in Leavy, 2017). Moreover, following Creswell (2012) one-on-one interviews were conducted with each of the participants in a welcoming atmosphere so that the participant could give unprincipled and uninfluenced answers. The interview utilized the open-ended questions to ensure that participants' responses were not influenced by the researcher's perspectives or previous research findings. See Appendix C

However, there were some disadvantages in the semi-structured interview-based study. First of all, one potential drawback was the risk of bias and subjectivity in the participants’ interpretation of responses. To avoid inconsistencies the researcher developed standardized questions and were pilot tested before conducting the study. Secondly, conducting interviews was a time-consuming process; therefore, to avoid unnecessary

discussions that might prolong the duration of the interview, the researcher focused on prioritizing specific research objectives that address key areas of research inquiry.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

As stated by Johnson and Christensen (2019), a research instrument is a tool that helps researchers collect essential variables such as opinions, attitudes, and others. This research utilised semi-structured interviews as the data collection tool. Therefore, the researcher developed a list of questions and themes to be explored, but precise wording and the order in which they were asked were predefined.

The interview questions were aligned with the research questions, providing the researcher with the necessary information to collect data for the study. The interview protocol comprised four sections. The first section of the interview protocol consisted of general questions concerning their motivation to become a teacher and their current role and responsibilities. The second focused on job satisfaction and professional development. The third section addressed the organizational factors such as leadership of the school, support and the school culture. The concluding section was about perception of the Law About the Teacher Status and suggestions to improve the retention system. The entire Interview Protocol is Appendix D.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The procedure of data collection began after gaining the Ethic Committee Approval from the GSE Ethics Research Committee and afterwards gaining permission for access to the site via a gatekeeper. The gatekeeper who granted the access to the school was identified. That person was contacted a week prior to the data collection procedure and informed about the purpose of the study to get permission to conduct research engaging the teachers at that school. All participants were contacted by sending an email and were requested to take part in

the interview and share their experience of working as a teacher for so many years and share their experience within a short period of time. The participants who agreed to participate in the research were sent the electronic version of the consent form three days before the day of the interview, and they also got it when they arrived at the interview. The informed consent form described the purpose of the research study, the risks and benefits of the study, and the information that if the participants were willing to quit the interview, they would be able to do it any time. Finally, the participants who took part in the research signed an informed consent form and returned it to the interviewer. Informed consent is important in research because it ensures respect for the participants' rights (Cohen et al., 2018). Moreover, all the interviewees gave permission to audio-record the interview. The time for the interview was chosen by the participants. All information obtained during the interview was de-identified to ensure privacy and anonymity.

3.7 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis encompasses making sense of the text to create new meaningful data combinations, summaries, and syntheses (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 644). Hence, "qualitative data analysis is not straightforward," and the researcher selects one based on how well the approach aligns with the intended purpose (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 643).

Therefore, once the interviews were recorded, all the data was transcribed (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 671) to form the categories of information about the phenomenon. As per Johnson and Christensen (2019), coding involves assigning descriptive terms or category names to textual data to identify patterns and themes related to key competencies. To preserve the accurate record of the conversation, the researcher manually transcribed every recorded interview as part of the data collection process. Each transcript of the interviews was reviewed and coded.

The researcher carefully reviewed each transcript, writing down words and brief phrases in the margins to summarize the content, thereby creating a comprehensive list of factors discussed in the transcript. Some codes were elected from the literature review, while others emerged from the interview data collected. An example of the initial coding framework used in the collected data is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

An example of an initial coding framework

Interview transcript	Initial coding framework
<p>Interviewer:</p> <p>What opportunities for professional development does the school provide for its teachers?</p>	
<p>Participant 2:</p> <p>I think it is training courses, but the reality of it is tied to the quality, that is, if once in 5 years you have taken a course, then the rest of 5 years you can do nothing. The main thing is that you have a course. You have passed it.</p> <p>If there are any seminars, master classes, most often paid, we have to attend them.</p> <p>For example, they are conducted by university professors, for example, we do not need it, for example, they send us.</p> <p>That is, we have to bring the school a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training course importance • Poor quality of professional development • Frequency of course training (not often) • Seminars and master classes, often paid by teachers. • Attendance obligations, “certificate disease” • Lack of other direct professional development opportunity

<p>certificate that we participated there.</p> <p>There are no other such direct courses that</p> <p>I would say that somehow during this period they have developed me professionally, I think there is no such thing...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpful during attestation
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In the second stage, the researcher collected all the codes and phrases from all the interviews derived from the initial coding, reviewed them over, and crossed out any repetitions. Subsequently, a shorter list of codes was created, and the researcher identified overlapping or similar codes. Based on the researcher's analytical and theoretical concepts developed during the literature review, these codes were further refined and reduced in number and were grouped into categories (refer to Table 2).

Table 2

A category coding framework after the reduction of the codes in the initial coding framework

Category coding	Initial coding
Work climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of unity, common goals • Immature team, double game of administration • Considering teachers 'private life, human factor • Lack of sense of community and collaboration • Stressful work environment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of supportive environment • Challenges in work environment
Professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training course importance, especially for young teachers • Lack of professional development opportunities and limited resources • Individual responsibility for professional growth • Collaborative learning with colleagues • Personal initiative for additional trainings • Rejection of administrative roles • Workload vs. Salary • Lack of job fulfillment • Vague criteria for attending ORLEU courses
Administrative support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perception of administration • Importance of loyal school administration • Ongoing systematic support from administration
Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to showcase creativity and autonomy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom in choosing teaching methods • Teacher attestation more accessible • Improve pedagogical ethics. • Acknowledge psychological and emotional toll. • Constructive feedback and support instead of unnecessary criticism • Preventing psychological pressure on teachers • Eliminate hierarchical structure, where administration dominates, consider teacher's voice in decision making
Compensation and Bonus Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of bonus system in school system • Pleasant but insignificant • Sign of recognition • Measurable instruments for bonus payment
Comfortable Working Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited number of classrooms • Overcrowded classrooms • Classroom equipment and facilities
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of effective leader • Cares about their teachers, especially new ones • Foster a positive environment

School culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of aligning school culture with teachers' professional values • Lack of communication of school culture and goals
Mentorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack or absence of support, especially for young teachers • Strong, methodologically savvy, emotionally intelligent, and empathetic support • Importance of mentoring support • Lack of consistency of mentoring support • Monitoring the mentoring support in schools
Work-life balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible work schedule • Sending information and documents via messages (not corporate e-mail) • Teachers work does not finish after the bell • Absence of effective measures to address work-life balance • Workload of teachers is not reflected by the official teaching hours. • Imbalanced and inconvenient schedules

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and work-related activities after 6 p.m through Whats App
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After arranging these categories, three final coding headings were formulated, accounting for all the data. This reduced list formed the final theme coding framework. The theme coding framework is demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Theme Coding Framework

Theme coding	Category coding	Initial coding
Reduced administrative burden Regulate working conditions Importance of	Work climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of unity, common goals • Immature team, double game of administration • Considering teachers 'private life, human factor • Lack of sense of community and collaboration • Stressful work environment • Lack of supportive environment • Challenges in work environment

<p>mental and physical well-being</p>	<p>Work-life balance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible work schedule • Sending information and documents via messages (not corporate e-mail) • Teachers work does not finish after the bell • Absence of effective measures to address work-life balance • Workload of teachers is not reflected by the official teaching hours. • Imbalanced and inconvenient schedules <p>Communication and work-related activities after 6 p.m through Whats App</p>
<p>Continuous Professional Development</p>	<p>Professional development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training course importance, especially for young teachers • Lack of professional development opportunities and limited resources • Individual responsibility for professional growth • Collaborative learning with colleagues • Personal initiative for additional trainings • Rejection of administrative roles

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of job fulfillment • Vague criteria for attending ORLEU courses
Leadership training for administration	Administrative support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perception of administration • Importance of loyal school administration • Ongoing systematic support from administration
	Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of effective leader • Cares about their teachers, especially new ones • Foster a positive environment
Acknowledgement of achievements Value of teachers and prestige of teaching	Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to showcase creativity and autonomy • Freedom in choosing teaching methods • Teacher attestation more accessible • Improve pedagogical ethics. • Acknowledge psychological and emotional toll. • Constructive feedback and support instead of unnecessary criticism • Preventing psychological pressure on teachers • Eliminate hierarchical structure, where

		administration dominates, consider teacher's voice in decision making
Competitive salaries and bonus system	Compensation and Bonus Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of bonus system in school system • Pleasant but insignificant • Sign of recognition • Measurable instruments for bonus payment • Workload vs. Salary
Work environment and facilities	Comfortable Working Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited number of classrooms • Overcrowded classrooms • Classroom equipment and facilities
School culture	School culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of aligning school culture with teachers' professional values • Lack of communication of school culture and goals
Controlled mentoring approach	Mentorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack or absence of support, especially for young teachers • Strong, methodologically savvy, emotionally intelligent, and empathetic support • Importance of mentoring support • Lack of consistency of mentoring support • Monitoring the mentoring support in

		schools
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Using the final coding structure, all the interviews were defined into segments. Each transcript was reviewed, and the data that fit into a certain category was assigned.

3.8 Ethical Issues

As a qualitative researcher seeks an in-depth description of a phenomenon, participants can be asked some private details of their life experiences (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, ethical issues should be anticipated when conducting qualitative research to be careful of the potential risks a participant may experience. Moreover, initiating research involving human participants, the researcher must carefully assess any potential effect such research might have on participants and, thus, protect them and "their dignity as human beings" by all reasonable means (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 112). To address the ethical standards, the researcher followed the requirements and standards of the NUGSE Ethics Research Committee. Therefore, after getting the approval of the Graduate School of Education Research Ethics Committee, data collection started.

The participants were provided with comprehensive details about research-related information, including the purpose of the study, its significance, as well as possible benefits and risks. The ethical concerns were guaranteed throughout the whole research investigation, including recruiting, data collection, analysis, storage, and reporting. To achieve this goal several steps were undertaken in this study.

3.8.1 Informed Consent

An informed consent form is a document that participants sign before they participate in research that outlines the rights guaranteed to them and by signing it, they agree to participate in the study and acknowledge the protection of their rights (Creswell, 2012).

Therefore, the next important step was sending an invitation letter to take part in the study with the informed consent form with the details about the research study sent via email to the targeted sample (see Appendix C). Specifically, the participants were informed that the interviews were on a voluntary basis and that they had the right to stop at any moment or decide not to answer any of the questions that they consider inappropriate or feel uncomfortable to continue, and that they could opt out if necessary. Informed consent typically includes a concise overview of the overall aim of the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2019), the length of the interview, the details of the data storage and further usage of the information. Before the interviews, all the participants were asked to sign the consent form authorizing the audio recording of the interview. All the participants agreed to record the interview. The study was determined to have no more than minimal risk, as according to Johnson and Christensen (2019), the level of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research does not exceed what individuals commonly face daily, and the study does not involve participants under 18 years old/or vulnerable populations.

3.8.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to the protection of the information shared by participants in a trusting relationship, ensuring that it remains undisclosed to others without permission and always preserving the participant's identity (Rudestam & Newton, 2014). Following the ethical standards, the researcher maintained the confidentiality of both participants and data (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). More specifically, strict confidentiality measures were implemented during the research. Electronic research-related materials were securely stored on my private password-protected laptop. Physical documents like signed consent forms and interview transcripts were held in a securely locked drawer. Access to this data was restricted only to me as the researcher and my research supervisor. At the end of the study, all the

information related to the participants or somehow revealing the identity of any participant was immediately removed to make the data de-identifiable.

3.8.3 Anonymity

Anonymity is the most effective way to protect privacy as it ensures that the identity of the participants is not known to the researcher (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). However, since the participants in the study were chosen via purposeful sampling and all the participants were interviewed, it was difficult to ensure complete anonymity. Specifically, in the present study, the researcher spoke with each participant individually and learned the information about their jobs and some personal background information. Therefore, the principle of anonymity is violated. In this regard, during the research process, the following measures were implemented to ensure the anonymity of research participants. Firstly, all data related to the interviews was de-identified with personal identifiers such as names replaced by numbers. Secondly, the study results were discussed in a generalized manner without revealing the participants but referring to them as “Participant 1”, “Participant 2”, etc.

3.8.4 Risks and Benefits

Despite all the best efforts to foresee potential risks and benefits it is impossible to predict every possible way a participant might be affected nor every way in which potential impact on the researcher be fully anticipated (Leavy, 2022). Therefore, there were no risks greater than minimal with the possibility of psychological and social harm. Some of participants could have experienced discomfort in answering certain questions because they might have reminded them of uncomfortable past experiences. To reduce any associated risks, participants had the right to leave the study at any time. Another concern was that the interviewees might feel tired or bored during the study. To address this risk, respondents were interviewed at a comfortable time and place that did not conflict with their schedule and

activities. Furthermore, as participation was entirely voluntary, each participant had the interest to participate in the interview and share their experience and opinion on the subject of the study. Additionally, to respect participants' time and commitments, the interviews lasted no longer than 30-40 minutes.

Regarding the benefits of the study, there were some potential benefits for different stakeholders. Firstly, the results of the study were beneficial for teachers since they were able to self-reflect on their own experience as teachers who work in a mainstream school. Secondly, this might be beneficial for the whole school administration, as the research adds more data to the existing knowledge in terms of nature and factors that influence teachers' decision to work in the teacher profession. The findings of the study can guide school administrators in implementing effective support systems and strategies to enhance teacher well-being and job satisfaction, fostering a more positive work environment. Finally, the policymakers can benefit from the information presented in the study by identifying the areas of challenge for teachers in mainstream schools. So, according to Tastanbekova (2020) to identify the areas of challenge for teachers in mainstream schools, research should focus on conducting a nationwide in-depth social survey among teachers which provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by teachers and facilitate the development of targeted interventions to address these challenges effectively.

3.9 Summary

To sum up, this chapter provided a detailed description of the methodology that was employed in the study and the reasoning behind its selection. Specifically, the chapter presented the research design, site, and sampling approaches. Furthermore, it has revealed the steps that were taken for collecting and analyzing data, which were the most appropriate for addressing the research question. Additionally, the ethical considerations, along with the

possible risks and benefits of the research, were addressed. The next chapter presents the findings of the study.

Chapter 4

Findings

4.1 Introduction

This research study addressed two key research questions: 1) What are the factors that influence teacher retention in mainstream schools? and 2) What are the challenges faced by teachers that influence attrition in mainstream schools? in this chapter, I present the findings of the study. The research study aims to explore the factors that affect teacher retention in Kazakhstan. The study emphasizes how implementing the Law About the Teacher Status is the first attempt at teacher retention initiatives. In this chapter, the perspectives of participants will be presented in themes (1) job satisfaction and opportunities for professional development, (2) the perception of organizational factors. Obtaining the data from these three perspectives was beneficial for this study as it fully reveals the understanding of the retention issue. In the chapter, the perspectives of two groups of participants will be presented: (1) teachers from mainstream schools who have been engaged in the profession for more than 5 years, (2) teachers from mainstream schools whose work experience is less than 3-5 years. Gaining and considering the data from two different working experience groups provided the information to understand the teacher retention problem. The chapter presents the key findings gained from semi-structured interviews which are compiled in accordance with the research questions. The findings are divided into three main parts that address the research questions. The first part addresses factors that influence teacher retention in mainstream schools. The second part addresses specific challenges and difficulties in terms of job satisfaction and professional development. Finally, the third part addresses perspectives of organizational factors such as leadership, school culture and support systems.

4.2 Research Participants

The data collection and analysis revealed that the job satisfaction and expectations vary depending upon the work experience of the teachers. Accordingly, it was essential to define the teaching experience in presenting the research findings. Therefore, the research participants were divided into two groups to present the research results. The first group was those who had worked at school for more than five years and were called experienced teachers. The second group composed of those with three to five years. This category of teachers is the major part of the research and was mentioned as young teachers (refer to Table 1).

Table 4

Division of teachers depending on their working experience

Experienced Teachers	Young Teachers
Had the working experience more than 5 years, three teachers previously worked as a Head Teacher at school	Worked as teachers. One teacher had left the job in mainstream school
Participants 1,2,3,4	Participants 5,6,7,8,9,10

4.3 The Nature of Job Satisfaction and Professional Development

To answer the first research question, the representatives of the two groups (experienced teachers and new teachers) were interviewed to investigate the perception of job satisfaction. Several themes were developed from the analysis of the data as follows:

- The perception of professional growth opportunities
- Compensation and benefits
- Career opportunities and responsibilities

Data for each category are presented in the subsections below.

4.3.1 The Perception of Professional Growth Opportunities

To learn what professional opportunities schools give for their teachers and understand the quality and effectiveness of Professional growth opportunities in mainstream schools, the participants were asked about their experience regarding professional development. All ten participants claimed that the school provided the courses by the National Center for Advanced Training “ORLEU” and CPE (Center of Pedagogical Excellence). Participant 8 and Participant 9, who are young teachers, claimed that they were pretty satisfied with the courses as "...these kinds of courses or opportunities, they can motivate the teacher a little bit" and "...they [courses] are useful". However, some of the participants found these opportunities as limited. Young teachers supposed that maybe due to financial constraints or maybe it is important for schools to prioritize teachers who undergo Teaching Attestation, but the number of teachers to attend the courses are restricted and the transparent criteria for selecting participants were not provided. According to Participant 7 who was a young teacher, "... well, for some reason I was not sent there [ORLEU courses] for some reason, and my colleagues, who were also young specialists, spoke well about these courses. There, most likely, it was a financial problem, perhaps a certain part was sent, but somehow it passed me by." Participant 4, a young teacher who attended the courses added, "...I don't think it's very useful for my career development. The only thing is, yes, thanks to them, if I take them, the more I take these the courses, seminars, get certificates, it will help in getting the next category. For me to be satisfied with such seminars, honestly, no."

Nevertheless, most of the participants answered that they consider the courses important. The following is the comment of Participant 5 that clearly illustrate the recognition of the importance of professional development:

A teacher always needs to develop continuously, as if improving his qualifications and advanced training does not mean that he has just received some category, this is first

of all studying, that is, you need to constantly work on yourself, be life-long learner. Because the world does not stand still, and it is constantly changing, and how to teach children using the old methods and not develop, it is almost not advisable, so I think it is very, very important.

Among experienced teachers the perception of the professional development revolves around other concepts and the courses ORLEU and CPE are already more the concerns of obtaining certificates as proof of participation for applying during the Attestation of Teachers. So, Participant 1 is an experienced teacher treated the courses like the following: “they [courses] are helpful in Teacher Attestation. That's one of the necessary criteria.” In addition, Participant 3 stated:

I would like to have the opportunity to develop much wider in terms of courses abroad, to receive new knowledge from foreign colleagues, because we always work within the framework of the school itself and within the framework, that is, again, the general education program, that is, we do not learn anything new.

The findings show that despite the existing problems and limitations, there is a general recognition among the majority of participants of the importance of continuous professional development. The data highlight the continuing need for schools to adapt and expand their opportunities in the sphere of professional development, creating in such a way an environment that truly supports teachers in their pursuit of knowledge, growth and effective pedagogy and directly impact the satisfaction of their teaching career.

4.3.2 Compensation and Benefits

Another factor in considering job satisfaction is compensation and benefits. When the participants were asked whether they were offered by the school any compensation and benefits and whether they found them competitive and satisfying, some of the respondents

considered this question amusing (surprising). This can be explained by the fact that several participants had never received any compensation and bonuses, whereas other participants stated that the bonuses were quite small. Participant 9 elaborated:

The question is quite like this, well, it makes me smile [compensation and benefits satisfying], yes, and they are not competitive bonuses, because the amount (figures) that generally go as bonuses, are quite small. In general, of course, the award is given at the discretion of the school itself, as it is, as if we know and can hear a number of schools where they receive a bonus in the amount of their salary.

Moreover, in answering the question about the significance of compensation in retaining teachers, almost all the participants claimed that compensation and benefits were very valuable for every teacher for several reasons. Participant 5 indicated that "... this [compensation and benefits] is also an important factor, because the topic of salaries for teachers is also quite relevant to this day, and therefore any form of encouragement is material, they are very effective, as practice shows." In terms of retainment Participant 7 asserted that: "If there were some benefits or some kind of encouragement for at least some achievements of the students, then maybe I would have thought of staying, but nothing like that was planned in principle." Participant 1 believed that "when teachers receive bonuses for certain services, it encourages other teachers to work too". The answers from the Participants illustrate the crucial role of compensation and bonuses. However, while some participants expressed surprise, others expressed concern about the inadequacy of bonuses, giving examples of miserable amounts that do not match the effort and dedication required in the teaching profession. As a reply on this statement Participant 6 critiqued the question of compensation and bonuses for teachers. The following is the comment which illustrates that sometimes the calculation for bonuses should be performance-based:

I would honestly like to support this [compensation and bonuses]. But there were so many examples of my colleagues who didn't really work—how should I tell you—very low-quality teachers who just walked around. And I think it would be stupid to give a bonus just because the teacher goes to work as if on holiday. I think it should be a very competent calculation.

These examples illustrate that all participants prefer compensation and bonuses in the school system as they can serve as a motivation factor, encouraging teachers to work effectively and contribute to the educational process. However, criticism draws attention to the need for a sophisticated approach to compensation and bonus allocation—one that takes into account performance-based criteria rather than a universal model.

4.3.3 Career Opportunities and Responsibilities

The questions about career growth opportunities and whether teachers benefit from them elicited some responses from the participants. Some participants consider the career growth within the school like a question difficult to give a certain answer as they believe that first, the career advancement is the administrative way when a teacher due to certain achievement or mindset are advanced to the Head Teacher position, and then School Principal. Participant 7 replied:

... if you look from the perspective of moving up the hierarchy, then we can yes, [teacher] be the Head of the Department, yes, and then Head Teachers becomes the Director. Yes, but this is basically all the possibilities that a simple teacher has.

Participant 3 believed that career paths are in the framework of the school administration:

I believe that the maximum career growth that a teacher can afford is to get into the school administration, that is, the only way, and there are no clear paths. Many

teachers have been working for more than 40 years in the position of one teacher himself, not assuming any kind of growth, but in the school itself, somehow.

Secondly, many teachers expressed the opinion about limited career advancement and emphasized the preference for teaching role expressing that many people prefer to remain in teaching roles rather than pursuing career advancement. Participant 6 said:

Many people very much like, prefer to be just teachers than to go up the career ladder, because it is very limited and there is no job fulfilment as such because many people choose a good salary as a subject.

Another Participant expressed reluctance towards career progression, acknowledging that being a teacher is considered more valuable, and the interviewee expressed a preference for this role. Participant 2 gave a following response:

Now I consider more valuable the role of a teacher. Working as a teacher, I like more work with children, communicating with children, the realization of myself as a teacher interests me more than an administrative position.

The opinions expressed by the participants emphasizing the lack of clear paths and the dominance of administrative functions for career growth raises important issues of teacher retention. Overall, almost all the participants concluded that due to avoidance of additional responsibility, they experience a lack of desire for career growth opportunities and therefore it cannot retain teachers. Participant 10 replied:

I think not [career opportunities affect teacher retention] , because the more responsibility, for example, to become not a head teacher in a school, on the contrary, a person will be repelled, that is, not everyone wants to go to such a position, even knowing that there will be more, let's say, payment, but I think it does not justify it.

4.4 Perception of Organizational Factors

The second question was addressed to mainstream school teachers in Kazakhstan and was aimed to find out the factors that influence teacher retention in terms of leadership, school culture and support provided at schools. Based on the participants' answers the perception of several organizational factors were considered through such aspects like leadership, school culture and support as influencing teacher retention. The following themes emerged from the data analysis:

- Leadership influence on teacher retention (effectiveness of administrative leadership, teacher perception of leadership support)
- School culture and its impact: Aligning school values with teacher values.
- Teacher support systems: Mentoring programs for teacher support, emotional and well-being support.

4.4.1 Leadership Influence on Teacher Retention (Effectiveness of Administrative Leadership, Teacher Perception of Leadership Support)

The findings regarding the effectiveness of positive administrative leadership are very common in a diverse literature that focused on teacher retention. This study supports these findings. All interviewed teachers emphasized the significant role of school administration and effective leadership in shaping and developing teachers that can impact the work environment and teacher retention issue. For instance, Participant 4 reported that,

School administration plays a big role in the formation of a simple teacher in general, that is, a young teacher as a specialist in his field, because if such support is good, then in this case, of course, it is easier for the teacher to cultivate young minds and it will also be easier to cultivate himself, so This is a very important point.

Another strong argument concerning the importance of having a strong administrative team with qualities like methodological expertise, emotional intelligence, and empathy at school, such as attendance monitoring and paperwork preparation was also mentioned by Participant 2:

If the administrative team in a school is strong, if they are methodologically savvy, if they have emotional intelligence, if they have a well-developed sense of empathy, then the teacher will always feel protected in such a team.

In this sense a supportive administrative team positively influences teacher feelings of protection and confidence.

4.4.2 School Culture and Its Impact: Aligning School Values with Teacher Values

Aligning school values with teacher values was another factor to consider, as it is usually deemed that the core values of the school are centered around quality education, and it is utterly important for teachers to support and reinforce these values (Participants, 2, 5, 6, 9). The data analysis revealed that if the school's values and culture are not explicitly outlined, that causes a lack of clarity for young teachers regarding the school's culture and core values. Participant 5 stated:

Values are very important at school today, because the educational process should be based on values. But today you [new teacher] will come to school, and you won't even understand what the [school's] value really is, because, well, a young teacher comes, no one even instructs him.

From this response, it became clear that the participant recognized the importance of school culture and values in education. However, it is also highlighted that there was a deficiency in the school's effort to actively promote and integrate the culture and values into the daily work process.

The positive findings from another participant's response revealed that there is a recognition of the impact of school culture on teachers that demonstrates the alignment with the participant's professional values. According to Participant 6,

I have a lot to compare it [values and culture of school] with. I worked in schools, without this [culture and values], I worked in a school with this [culture and values]. I feel a very strong difference when they have a common idea in the school and there is a common culture in the school and when there is not.

From this perspective, it is clear that the staff of the school emphasizes the importance of having a common idea and culture in a school. Nevertheless, Participant 1 mentioned the need for a balance in school culture suggesting that extreme rigidity or strict adherence to a certain culture can lead to difficulties in integration:

It seems to me, there should be a balance, there should be a certain culture, but it should not be at odds with the daily reality that they [students] will see after graduation. And as an employee, well I've made that philosophy for myself even if I don't agree, if I'm working, I adhere to that school's philosophy.

This perspective underscores the understanding among teachers of the need to align with school culture and values while also acknowledging the importance of considering real world experiences and individuality.

4.4.3 Teacher Support Systems and Work-Life Balance: Mentoring Programs for Teacher Support, Emotional and Well-being Support (Work-life Balance, Support System)

Much research has demonstrated that support systems and mentoring programs in the first years of teaching have a significant impact on teacher retention, providing a comfortable microclimate at school. Typically, the findings revealed some challenges within the work environment that potentially lead to a stressful climate at school. Insufficient resources,

limited gathering space and competition for classrooms, lack of unity and common goals among the teachers, ageism, and work-life balance were identified as factors contributing to an uncomfortable working atmosphere. Participant 1 explained:

The thing is that the number of classrooms, for example, is limited here, and there is only one English classroom for the whole school. At the same time, the number of English teachers is 10, that is, it is obvious that English teachers have to go to different rooms. The problems that the other teachers, they were reluctant to give their class.

The lack of personal space and resources, coupled with reluctance from senior colleagues to share classrooms, can be discouraging for newer colleagues, potentially leading to demotivation. The absence of unity and a sense of hostility among the teachers, especially towards newly arrived teachers, were also expressed (Participant 1, 4). Furthermore, Participant 10 emphasized this by stating that:

There was no such feeling that, as a team, we have a common goal there, educational, for example, and we are going to it, everyone worked there in their own way the bullying was very obvious so far, especially in relation to the newly arrived teachers, that is, they were not involved in the team at all and did not want to, and everyone basically did not care and somehow there was a feeling of hostility towards you, as if you were not coming to work, but for some kind of war.

These findings underscore the absence of a support system and mentorship program within the school. Participant 4 criticized the mentoring system, stating that it is often nominal, with mentors receiving payment but not actively providing guidance or creating reporting documents:

This republican system of mentoring, which is now in all its schools, is very often

nominal, that is, they get money for it, but they do not, in fact, keep, create reporting documents. So, this case has been repeated with my other colleagues, young ones my age.

However, some participants shared the positive experience with the existing issues at school due to effective mentoring program. Participant 9 shared the benefit of mentoring due to the active involvement and support of the assigned mentor.

I was more fortunate because I was assigned a teacher who was responsible, and she guided me through the documentation and the methodology, and she attended my lessons and gave me quality feedback. But if you look just by word of mouth around my friends who have graduated also pedagogically, they have a problem with it because they've just been doused with water saying, you swim out and that's it. Even though nominally they all have mentors.

For some participants one of the main concerns is a work-life balance. Some participants underscored that teachers' responsibilities and work are not restricted only by lesson conducting. On the contrary, teachers continue to work after school hours for lesson preparation, communication with parents and students, additional classes, and other responsibilities and that extra time is not paid. Participant 2 elaborated:

It seems to me that today's modern school does not solve the problem of balancing work and family in any way, but modern school requires that a teacher should be here the whole working day. Because the first half of the day we are busy with conducting lessons, and then there are various activities to prepare competitions for the Olympiads, work on projects for the preparation and conduct of extracurricular activities, participation of children in various sports competitions, class events outside the walls of the school and even the same preparation for the lesson.

The participant expressed the view that the modern school does not effectively address the challenge of balancing work and family life for teachers. Participant 1 mentioned that the school requests the completion of reference documents even late at night, which they believed disrupts the personal and professional life balance: “And at the same time there is such a moment, when the school asks to fill out some reference documents to send something, and it can be late at night at 21:00 at 22:00, they say I will urgently call until you do not send, do not fill out. And another point, when all work correspondence is conducted in WhatsApp, there is no corporate mail.”

Most participants (9 out of 10) claimed that their experience the challenges in achieving work-life balance due to an intense workload, including preparing for lessons, checking and assessing student work, attending potential pedagogical councils, and the need to continue working at home emphasizes the lack of balance in their professional and personal lives.

The following is the comment of Participant 2 that illustrates that the climate at school is fully depends upon the team of the school in shaping the overall work environment:

Specific problems in the working environment that affect staff turnover can arise, perhaps, in an immature team where the administration is playing a double game, where there are double standards, where there is a biased assessment of the performance of teachers, where there are favorites of the administration, yes.

Acknowledging the impact of these factors on work environment is crucial for providing a supportive climate at school increasing the teacher job satisfaction and overall success of the educational process at school.

4.5. The influence of the Law About the Teacher Status on Working Conditions

The third perspective was targeted to investigate the perception of the Law About the Teacher Status and its influence on their decision to pursue teaching career. Based on the participants' answers the revealed factors were grouped into two categories: (1) Perception of the Law About the Teacher Status, and (2) Factors that need further consideration. This section is aimed to describe the findings within each category.

4.5.1 Perception of the Law About the Teacher Status

The findings concerning the awareness of the Law revealed that teachers know the essential points of the Law that significantly impacted teachers, including aspects like salary increases, categories of teachers, implementing mentoring support for young teachers, exemptions from military service for teachers highlighting a unique benefit that distinguishes them from other groups. Participant 9 stated: "I would only say that it has a positive impact. First of all, it is the status of the teacher. Before, when they [people] used to say that you are a teacher, and it was like, well, it will go, and now they [people] wow, a teacher well. Because I think it all depends on the money, your salary. So, they [teachers] start getting a good salary."

However, there are some aspects like vague pedagogical concepts and administrative manipulating policies which arise the contradictions between the school charter and the new law. Some participants even observe a lack of positive changes or active use of the law by individuals, indicating a perceived gap between the law's intentions and its real-world impact. For instance, Participant 1: "It seems to me that this law does not work, I do not know why it was invented, I do not know, to be honest, there are no positive changes, except salary raise." The similar response gave Participant 8: "From my point of view, the law on the status of a teacher has influenced the hiring of teachers at the place of work. They started to do it on a competitive basis. And so, in general, it is as if what was there is still there." Overall, most participants mentioned that the law has not significantly altered the existing conditions for

teachers, implying that the fundamental aspects of the teaching environment have remained the same. Participants 2 stated:

We are no longer chasing endless folders; we are not trying to fill them with various contents. We have freed up some time and opportunities to do what we love, to devote time to teaching, to study some new methods, tools and so on. We felt an increase in salary. But still, the teacher is still involved in various events, well, probably, we can't get away from it, because the society has got used to involve the teacher in various speeches, conferences, duties and so on.

Participant 2 acknowledged that teachers are still involved in various events, conferences, and duties, indicating that societal expectations often extend beyond legal requirements.

4.5.2 Factors That Need Further Consideration

The perception of the influence of the Law did not meet the expectations of most participants. Several challenges still exist in school environment. Therefore, in order to get a clear picture all the findings regarding factors that would contribute teacher retention are illustrated in the Table 2.

Table 5

Main findings on Factors Influencing Teacher Retention in Mainstream School in Kazakhstan

Themes	Categories	Description
Work Climate	Supportive Environment	Create a positive and supportive work environment with effective trained leaders and supportive colleagues to increase job satisfaction.

Professional Development	Continuous Learning	Offer opportunities for continuous professional development beyond mandatory courses. This could include workshops, conferences, or online courses to keep all teachers engaged and motivated (not on a selective and restricted method).
Administrative Support	Reduced Administrative Burden	Simplify the administrative processes and paperwork to allow teachers to focus more on teaching and less on bureaucracy leading to increased job satisfaction.
Recognition	Acknowledgment of Achievements	Acknowledge teachers' achievements. This could include recognizing milestones, innovative teaching approaches, or academic successes among students.
Compensation and Bonuses Evaluation	Competitive Salaries and Bonus system (good work award) Evaluation of Achievements and Contributions	Continue to evaluate and adjust salaries to remain competitive. Establish a system to evaluate and appreciate teachers' achievements and contributions (Introduce bonus system as a good work award). Financial stability is a key factor in retaining teachers, especially in rural areas where options might be limited.
Comfortable Working	Regulate Working Conditions (school	Implement regulations addressing working hours, working environment and equipment,

Conditions	resources and facilities)	workload, and tasks to ensure that teachers are not burdened with unrelated responsibilities.
Leadership	Leadership Training for Administration	Provide leadership training for administrators and principals with a focus on people management, human resources, and mental health, maintaining a positive and supportive work culture. Equip head teachers and principals with the skills necessary to support and manage their teaching staff effectively.
School Culture	Promotion of Positive School Culture	Foster a school culture that emphasizes support, collaboration, and positive interactions to maintain a healthy work environment.
Mentorship	Controlled Mentoring Approach	Shift from a punitive approach to a mentoring approach, providing guidance and assistance to help teachers overcome challenges, especially new ones.
Work-Life Balance	Promote Professional and Personal Life Balance	Encourage a healthy work-life balance by recognizing and respecting teachers' personal lives, fostering well-being outside the school environment.
Decision-making	Inclusive Decision-Making	Involve teachers in decision-making processes, seeking input on school policies, curriculum development, and other relevant matters.

The table reflects the findings that the majority of interviewed teachers claimed as the core aspects that should be addressed in the Law About the Teacher Status. It is important to highlight the statement of Participant 2:

It seems to me that no special tools are needed to keep a teacher in school. The salary that a teacher receives today, of course, we cannot say that it is high, but nevertheless it has allowed us to feel more confident financially. To keep a teacher at school, it is necessary to give him/her the opportunity to show his/her creativity, not to limit him/her in his/her actions, in the issues of children's education, to give the teacher the opportunity to work with their favourite children in their favourite school. Then they will try to give certain results, reach certain peaks.

The findings obtained from the interviewed teachers provide a deep understanding of the main factors that should be taken into account in the Law About the Status of Teacher. Although financial stability remains a major concern, most participants highlighted the importance of non-monetary factors for teacher retention.

4.6 Conclusion

The main purpose of this chapter was to present the major findings obtained from the interviews with the teachers from a school in Kazakhstan. The findings were collected from one-to-one semi-structured interviews with two categories of participants: teachers with more than 5-years experience and those with less than 5 years' experience. The findings were presented as themes directly related to study's research questions.

The first part of this chapter included the findings related to the investigation of job satisfaction among teachers with a focus on both experienced and less experienced teachers. Through the interviews with the teachers, the research aimed to understand the perception of

job satisfaction and identify key factors influencing it. The findings revealed that there is a demand for a more comprehensive approach to professional development, fair compensation practices and reevaluation of career growth opportunities to address the needs and expectations of teachers.

The second part of the chapter aimed to present the organizational factors that influence teacher retention, again from the experiences and perspectives of the teachers. The focus was on leadership effectiveness, alignment of school culture with teacher values, and support systems such as mentoring programs and support. The study highlighted the need for schools to promote a positive school culture, create effective support systems, and monitor the work of mentorship programs. Recognizing problems in the work environment is crucial to solving teacher retention problems.

The final section of the chapter addressed mainly the effectiveness of the Law About the Teacher Status in Kazakhstan. Moreover, the section focused on the perception of the Law and its influence on a teacher's decision to pursue a teaching career. The findings revealed that teachers are aware of essential points in the law that have a significant impact, like salary increases, teacher categories, mentoring support for young teachers, and exemptions from military service. Almost all the participants recognized the positive influence of the law. However, contradictions between the Law, pedagogical concepts, and administrative policies raise concerns among participants. Therefore, some teachers expressed some doubts that the Law has not led to substantial positive changes, aside from salary increases. The main findings of this study will be discussed and explained by the literature in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The chapter discusses the findings derived from the data analysis. It explains the research study's essential findings by addressing the research problem and research questions. Moreover, the major findings will be discussed in connection with the literature that formed the basis for this research study, showing how they support and contradict previous studies.

The study aimed to explore the factors affecting teacher retention in mainstream schools in Kazakhstan. The main purpose of the study was to determine the factors that influence teacher retention in Kazakhstan by examining one mainstream school. The study also aimed to identify other issues that still need attention and can facilitate teacher retention at school. To achieve the research purpose the following research questions were addressed:

- 1) What are the factors that influence teacher retention in mainstream schools?
- 2) What are the challenges faced by teachers that influence attrition in mainstream schools?

According to the study's findings there are several factors that impacts teacher retention. These findings effectively addressed the research questions, providing valuable insights into the complex dynamics of teacher retention in mainstream schools in Kazakhstan.

5.2 Factors that Affect Teacher Retention in Mainstream School in Kazakhstan

Remarkably, the research found that the retention of teachers in the profession remains a problem to date. The Law About the Teacher Status, which was implemented in Kazakhstan in 2019, made attempts to create favorable conditions for teachers and address the retention issue (Assylova, 2020; Courtney et al.,2023). However, it could not completely address fully the conditions and needs to make teacher profession attractive (Courtney et

al.,2023). Moreover, the findings concerning the factors influencing teacher retention suggest that there is no one size fits all approach or one common factor that can tackle the complex issue of teacher attrition and retention in mainstream school in Kazakhstan. The perspectives of some respondents regarding their satisfaction with the job were found to be dependent on several factors, such as decent salary and favourable work conditions. A similar multifaced approach to the teacher retention issue regards some countries, like Finland, Singapore and South Korea, that have successfully raised the status of teachers, making them one of the most prestigious professions (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Kang, 2023). This achievement is explained by factors such as high wages and favourable working conditions, which increase the attractiveness of the profession and lead to intense competition (Lindqvist et al., 2014; Hughes, 2012; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Therefore, the retention factors should be considered as the perception of the implementation of the Law About the Teacher Status and the factors that need further consideration.

5.2.1 Perceptions (impact) of the Law About the Teacher Status

As the Law on the Teacher Status "...contains 21 articles and provides for the rights of a teacher in professional sphere, material support, encouragement, social guarantees, duties of a teacher, among others etc. (Assylova, 2020). The findings from the participants' interviews critically engage with the diverse findings from the exploration into the influence of salary increase and creating favourable working conditions on teacher retention (Perryman & Calvert, 2020; Seelig & McCabe, 2021; Tehseen & Hadi, 2015; Lindqvist et al., 2014). The multifaceted nature of the participants' perceptions of the Law About Teacher Status, encompassing both positive and critical perspectives, prompts a nuanced analysis of the law's impact. The results of the study indicate that teachers demonstrate significant awareness of the essential provisions presented in the Law About the Teacher Status. The intended effects of the law, such as salary increases, teacher categorization, mentoring support, and exemption

from military service, are significant factors in improving the status of teachers. These findings aligned with what have been noted by Assylova (2020) and Courtney et al. (2023) about the positive impact of the law. Nevertheless, the research results on the retention factors demonstrated similar opinions with Courtney et al. (2023) statement about further research on investigating the phenomena of retention to promote workforce stability and provide evidence-based data for policymakers. In terms of prestige, status, and esteem of teachers the findings supported the literature on the significance of improving the social benefits package and reforms to the education payment system which could be the most effective measure to improve the prestige and status of teachers (Tastanbekova, 2020).

The recognition that public opinion about teachers has changed positively, partly due to higher salaries, highlights the broader social implications of legislative changes. Matching public perceptions to improved conditions for teachers suggests potential positive feedback when improved working conditions contribute to a more favourable public view of the teaching profession (Kasapoglu, 2020; Klimek, 2019). However, despite the positive perception, the participants shared their concerns about vague pedagogical concepts specified in the law and administrative manipulations leading to contradictions between the school charter and the new law. This draws attention to potential ambiguities that could undermine the perceived benefits of the law, which requires a more thorough study of the pedagogical aspects and administrative implementation.

Despite some positive aspects, participants expressed dissatisfaction with the expected impact of the Law on the Status of a Teacher. This dissatisfaction highlighted the difficulty of evaluating the effectiveness of the law in solving various problems in the teaching environment. Some participants questioned the purpose of the law and expressed uncertainty about its overall impact, signaling the need for a more detailed understanding of its intended results. Specifically, problems and factors in the school environment persist, which indicated

the need for further consideration. These findings can be explained by the fact that teacher encounter various challenges in their professional life. This lines up with the findings of Courtney et al. (2023), Polovnikova and Qanay (2023), and Yakavets (2017) that the prime issues start with insufficient preparation of teachers from the very beginning of their teaching practice. Observations of the gap between the intentions of the law and its actual application emphasized the importance of bringing legislative goals in line with practical realities. Specifically, ongoing challenges related to administrative practices and recruitment processes highlighted the difficulties associated with translating policy changes into tangible improvements at schools.

The need for a more comprehensive study of the factors contributing to teacher retention reflected the recognition that the law, while affecting certain aspects, may not fully take into account the complexities affecting teacher turnover. This suggests that a broader understanding of retention factors is essential for effective policy planning and implementation (Gunn & McRae, 2021).

Collectively, the participants assumed that the law has not significantly changed the fundamental aspects of the educational environment, which raises questions about its overall effectiveness. This requires a critical assessment of the law's impact on the holistic teaching landscape, encompassing not only economic considerations, but also factors affecting job satisfaction, professional growth, and work-life balance. This aligns with the findings of Borman and Dowling, 2008 who found that holistic teacher retention issue encompasses a broad range of factors beyond mere economic considerations, including job satisfaction, professional growth, and work-life balance. Moreover, these results are in line with Guarino et al. 2006, who emphasized that a holistic approach to teacher retention addresses the various factors like compensation, working conditions, professional development, and the overall prestige and satisfaction associated with teaching. These findings reflected the

principles of human capital theory which explain teachers' decision to stay in the profession by recognizing the importance of these non-monetary factors.

5.2.2 Human Capital Themes Influencing Teacher Retention

Themes revealed in the analysis of teacher retention factors in mainstream school in Kazakhstan related to human capital. First of all, human capital theory is a framework that views an employee's educational background, knowledge, experience and skills as investments in valuable assets in the education sphere (Ross, 2023). Therefore, continuous professional development factors are crucial in shaping and maintaining the human capital of teachers as they provide opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills, stay updated with educational trends, and acquire new knowledge (Levin, 2008; Kelchtermans, 2017). According to the results of the study, teachers who work more than five years continually seek opportunities for professional development, demonstrating their desire to be more productive, which contributes to job satisfaction and retention. Moreover, the results of the interview of less experienced teachers signaled that when schools invest in the professional development of their teachers, it increases a commitment to growth and success, fostering a positive organizational culture.

Secondly, competitive salaries and the bonus system are important factors in retaining teachers in the profession. Offering high salaries and bonuses recognizes and rewards the skills, experience, and knowledge that employees bring to the organization. This is supported by existing research studies. For example, Borman and Dowling (2008); Ingersoll and Smith (2003), Darling-Hammond (2000). Furthermore, according to the theory of human capital, people with higher levels of education, training and experience contribute more significantly to the success of an organization. Therefore, providing competitive salaries and bonuses helps to attract and retain highly qualified specialists. According to the theory of human capital, organizations that invest in the human capital of their employees gain a competitive

advantage by having a more qualified and productive workforce (McConnell et al. 2009 as cited in Wuttaphan, 2017). The study's findings demonstrated that the increased salary as a result of the implementation of the Law About the Teacher Status impacted positively not only on the retention factor but also raised the status of the teacher profession in society, reflected in the motivation of teachers to pursue the career. Almost all the participants concluded that bonus payment system could encourage teachers to enhance their skills and perform at higher levels, ultimately contributing to increased productivity.

5.3 Job Satisfaction and Professional Development that Affect Retention

The research revealed the multifaceted aspects of job satisfaction and professional development in mainstream schools in Kazakhstan. This study was based on key thematic factors derived from the interviews of participants, which provide insight into the perception of professional growth opportunities in school for teachers, the impact of compensation and benefits, as well as the complex relationship between career opportunities and responsibilities of teachers at school.

5.3.1 Professional development

The results of the study indicate recognition of the importance of continuous professional development among most participants. Young teachers express satisfaction and motivation with the courses (ORLEU and CPE), considering them useful. Meanwhile, some participants find these opportunities limited possibly due to financial constraints or prioritization of teachers undergoing teacher attestation. The problem is that transparent criteria for selecting participants for courses are lacking. However, experienced teachers view professional development as related to obtaining certificates for the attestation. Some representatives of experienced teachers highlighted the crucial role of individual initiative in the professional growth of teachers, emphasizing a sense of personal responsibility. Various

factors, including co-education with colleagues, the study of modern tools and technologies, participation in different projects make a significant contribution to the professional development. The key role of the school in planning advanced training courses, supporting participation and facilitating cooperation through councils and associations demonstrated the importance of institutional support in creating a holistic environment for the continuous development of teachers. The respondents of some studies (Coldwell , 2017; Smet, 2021) shared similar opinions, stating the impact of professional development on job satisfaction. Smet, 2021 proposed a mechanism to explain the link between job satisfaction and professional development. According to Smet's proposal Participation in courses on professional development increases awareness and confidence, turning a high need for development into an opportunity and subsequently leading to increased job satisfaction. The present study implies that there is a relationship between professional development, job satisfaction and teacher experience. For young teachers, who might have a high need for professional development, participating in such courses could be crucial in transforming initial challenges into opportunities, thereby positively impacting job satisfaction. On the other hand, experienced teachers, though potentially having lower developmental needs, could still benefit from targeted professional development, leading to increased job satisfaction. The findings suggest that recognizing and addressing the specific developmental needs of both young and experienced teachers through appropriately leveled courses can contribute significantly to overall job satisfaction within the teaching profession. The results lined up with the research done in several countries like United Kingdom, USA (Coldwell, 2017; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Luesse, et al., 2022) that showed that teachers' participation in professional development (PD) programs has a positive effect on their likelihood of remaining in the teaching profession. A higher level of involvement in professional development is associated with a greater perceived likelihood of remaining in teaching.

Teachers who are highly involved in PD are more likely to feel increasing teacher pride in the profession, energy, excitement for teaching, and self-efficacy, and increased the likelihood that they will stay teaching, compared to those with a lower level of engagement.

5.3.2 Compensation and Benefits

The realm of compensation and benefits as perceived by participants within the mainstream schools is centered around key findings, including the ironic attitude towards compensation inquiries, the evaluation of bonuses as minimal or absent, the pivotal role of compensation in teacher satisfaction, the recognition of its impact on teacher retention, and critiques on the inadequacy of bonuses with suggestions for improvement.

The reaction of some participants who found questions about compensation and benefits amusing, which hints at the widespread lack of such rewards in mainstream schools. This reaction may indicate a resigned acceptance or general recognition of the underestimation of teachers in terms of financial compensation.

Some of the participants perceived bonuses like either small or, in some cases, that they do not exist at all. This opinion underlined the need for a comprehensive study of the compensation and benefits system in mainstream schools. The lack of significant bonuses can affect the morale of teachers and their motivation to succeed in their work.

The participants unanimously emphasize the paramount importance of compensation and benefits to influence teacher satisfaction. The correlation between financial well-being and teacher job satisfaction should prompt mainstream schools to review their pay system and consider the broader implications for teacher motivation and productivity.

5.3.3 Career opportunities and responsibilities

The results of this study shed light on the complex landscape of career opportunities and responsibilities perceived by teachers in mainstream schools in Kazakhstan. It comprises

several key aspects, including the limited perception of career opportunities, the prevailing administrative career path, and the reluctance of some teachers to take on additional responsibilities. The study points to the widespread opinion among teachers that career opportunities in schools are limited. This limitation may be caused by a lack of awareness or clear communication regarding the various ways of professional development in the education system. The results of the study highlight the prevailing opinion that career development in the education system is mainly an administrative process. Teachers perceive the transition from their current roles to administrative positions such as head teacher and school principal as a normal career trajectory. While the administrative trajectory is clearly defined, the study reveals a lack of clear career paths beyond administrative functions. This ambiguity may contribute to the indecision of some teachers in actively pursuing career growth. Creating transparent and diverse career paths, including roles that enable teachers to excel in teaching without taking on administrative responsibilities, is essential to accommodate the diverse skills and preferences in the teaching community.

A noteworthy finding is the preference expressed by some teachers to remain in teaching positions rather than move to administrative positions. This preference may stem from a passion for direct interaction with students and a commitment to the pedagogical aspects of their profession.

The study reveals a significant factor contributing to the lack of desire for career opportunities - avoidance of additional responsibilities. Some teachers express reluctance to take on additional assignments or administrative responsibilities, relieving concerns about workload, stress, and work-life balance.

The findings highlight concerns about teacher retention related to the lack of clear career paths and the prevailing administrative focus. If teachers perceive limited opportunities for professional development and growth within their current roles, there is a risk of

increased staff turnover, which will negatively affect the stability and quality of the education system. Strategies aimed at increasing teacher satisfaction, providing various career paths and fostering commitment in their work are necessary to mitigate staff retention problems.

5.4 Organizational Factors that Impact Retention in Kazakhstani Schools

Remarkably, the research found that the relationship between administrative leadership and teacher retention is significant and complex. Therefore, the views of the participants who worked in the mainstream schools shed light on the impact on the positive administrative leadership, the identification of effective leadership qualities, the impact of supportive administrative teams on teacher confidence and the recognition of the substantial role played by school administration in shaping and developing teachers.

5.4.1 Positive Administrative Leadership

The results of the study indicated that the positive impact of effective leadership is recognized as the most important factor in creating an environment conducive to both personal and professional growth. To be specific, the participants highlighted the significant role that the leadership plays in shaping the work environment, professional experience, job satisfaction, and overall commitment to their responsibilities.

Moreover, the study identified the specific qualities that make up effective leadership in the context of education. According to the research teachers valued leaders who had a deep understanding of teaching methods, could navigate the complexities of emotional dynamics in the school environment, and demonstrated empathy for the diverse needs of teachers in mainstream school. These leadership qualities were seen as necessary not only to provide leadership, but also to create a culture of support and collaboration in the workplace.

5.4.2 School culture and Teacher Values

The teachers who participated in the study recognize the profound influence of school culture on their compliance with professional values. Culture in an educational institution shape not only the daily experience of teachers, but also influences their commitment to their roles. Thus, the study highlighted the key role of aligning school values with teacher values in increasing teacher satisfaction and retaining them at work. Teachers expressed a strong desire for the school culture to match their personal and professional beliefs. When there is a correspondence between the values supported by the school and the values held dear by teachers, this greatly contributes to the creation of a positive work environment and commitment, which ultimately increases teacher satisfaction and promotes retention.

However, a noteworthy finding was the impact of the lack of a clear statement of values in schools, especially for new teachers. When school values were not clearly communicated or integrated into the adaptation process to teachers, this created ambiguity and problems for teachers in understanding and navigating the cultural environment of the school. This lack of clarity can hinder the development of a cohesive and cooperative professional community.

On the other hand, although a positive school culture is recognized as an important factor in teacher job satisfaction and retention, participants emphasized the need for a balanced approach. It is recognized that an overly idealized or rigid school culture may conflict with the daily realities faced by teachers and their individual preferences. Achieving a balance that ensures flexibility, inclusivity, and adaptation to the diverse needs of educators is crucial to ensure a supportive and sustainable school culture.

5.4.3 Support System and Work-Life Balance

According to interviews from teachers, the key findings covered the significant impact of support systems, problems contributing to a stressful work environment, the lack of mentoring programs and their criticism, positive experiences of effective mentoring, and

concerns about work-life balance resulting from intense workload and workplace dynamics.

The study findings demonstrated the impact of support systems, particularly mentoring programs during the early years of teaching, on teacher retention. Teachers highlighted the instrumental role that mentorship played in providing guidance, fostering professional growth, and ultimately influenced their decision to stay within the profession. The positive correlation between robust support systems and teacher satisfaction emphasized the need for institutions to invest in comprehensive and effective mentoring programs.

Although in the complex structure of the work environment, many participants emphasized several problems that created a stressful environment for teachers. Lack of resources, limited meeting space, competition for classrooms, lack of unity among teachers, ageism and problems related to work-life balance all contribute to the creation of a complex professional atmosphere. Addressing these issues is crucial to creating a supportive work environment for teachers.

However, several participants expressed a positive mentoring experience when mentors actively guided and supported new teachers. Effective mentoring had been identified as a key factor in creating a positive and supportive work environment. The positive impact of mentoring programs suggests that investing in mentors' training and professional development can improve the overall teaching experience and promote long-term staff retention.

The study also highlights concerns about work-life balance related to intense workload, unpaid extra hours and disruptions in personal life. Teachers talk about the difficulties in achieving balance due to late requests, informal communication channels such as WhatsApp, and the ubiquitous culture of working outside of office hours and contractual obligations. Balancing professional responsibilities with personal life is becoming a major issue affecting job satisfaction and employee retention.

5.5 Summary

As the current research problem and research questions had roots in the teacher retention issue, views of the understanding the factors of teacher attrition and retention, theoretical framing of the research related to these factors aided in my understanding of the phenomenon and therefore contributed to answering the research questions. The loss of teachers from the profession, especially of high-quality teachers, is exacerbated because teachers in Kazakhstan are underpaid, overburdened and undervalued (Kopeyeva, 2019). The retention of high-quality teachers is complicated by the fact that a recent law, About the Status of the Teacher in Kazakhstan is the first step in addressing the teacher retention issue, is still to address the issue of salaries.

Retaining teachers especially high-quality ones proves challenging, despite recent legislative efforts of the law About the Status of the Teacher in Kazakhstan, which aimed to address teacher attraction and retention issues. However, further measures are needed to fully address the complexities surrounding teacher retention and ensure the continued presence of skilled educators in the profession that directly impacts the quality of learning.

The findings of the study suggest that teacher retention increases with the extent to which they use the opportunities of professional development and receive favourable salaries and their achievements are acknowledged and financially induced, feel the support of effectively trained leaders and with controlled mentoring programs; working environment and facilities (classrooms, printers, interactive boards, computers, paper) are improved, reduced administrative burden by assigning appropriate people and the importance of mental and physical well-being is recognized. These areas are consistent with many studies that described that attraction and retention of teachers. Oke et al., 2016 identified key factors that include inadequate financial rewards, poor working conditions, and ineffective leadership and underscores the importance of addressing these issues to retain teachers in schools. Their

study emphasizes the need for comprehensive management solutions, adequate remuneration, and welfare packages, alongside fostering a supportive work atmosphere to mitigate the challenges of teacher turnover and ensure the retention of qualified teaching staff in schools.

Moreover, the present study results noted that career advancement is not the desirable factor that teachers aim to achieve. Rather, according to participants' answers many teachers are focused on their vocation to work with children and teach students, give them knowledge and develop their interests and reveal their giftedness. And here again, many teachers experience lack of expertise and competence (novice teachers), facilities at school and resources. In other case, when teachers raise their competence on their own resources, and it results on the quality of the learning process, these teachers feel underpaid and undervalued. The results align with the findings of Kelchtermans (2017) stated that the feeling of being undervalued is not just about financial compensation but also about the lack of social recognition and acknowledgment, which are crucial for their motivation, satisfaction, and overall well-being. The need for social recognition from colleagues and principals is of existential importance for teachers, underscoring their value and trust in the professional community.

The research questions were addressed by considering the essential aspects for the most critical factors of teacher retention in mainstream schools in Kazakhstan with considering the existing legislative educational changes in creating favourable conditions for teachers and identifying the teachers' level of satisfaction with their working conditions, specifying their well-being and job satisfaction. There have been several significant new findings that will valuably contribute to the existing research on this topic.

The important research findings will be outlined in the next chapter along with their significance and contribution in relation to the research purpose and research questions. The

chapter will also discuss the study's limitations and offer suggestions for how to proceed with additional field research.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that influence teacher retention in Kazakhstan by examining one mainstream school. The previous chapter discussed the findings of the study. This chapter concludes the study on teacher retention factors by summarizing the research findings in relation to the research purpose and research questions, along with their significance and contribution to education. It also considers the study's limitations and suggests implications, recommendations, and potential directions for future research in the field.

6.2 Major Findings

The major findings of the study lie in its comprehensive exploration of various factors influencing teacher retention in mainstream schools in Kazakhstan. The study considered key areas like professional development, compensation and benefits, and career opportunities and responsibilities. It provided valuable information into the multifaceted aspects of job satisfaction and professional growth among teachers, revealing the significance of continuous professional development and its correlation with job satisfaction and teacher experience. More specifically, experienced teachers perceive professional development as a process that largely depends on themselves and requires a combination of self-motivation, collaboration with colleagues, and continuous learning efforts to stay relevant and effective in their profession. Young teachers valued courses of professional development organized by ORLEU and CPE but highlighted the need for transparent selection criteria.

Additionally, the study emphasized the critical role of compensation and benefits in influencing teacher satisfaction and retention. The study accentuated the need for

comprehensive reviews of the pay system in mainstream schools. The perception of the bonus system among teachers, both experienced and young teachers in mainstream schools revealed common concerns about minimal or absent bonuses, which according to the participants' replies resulted in feelings of undervaluation and demotivation. This perception highlighted the need for a thorough review and improvement of the compensation and benefits structure to better recognize teachers' contributions and enhance their motivation to grow proficiently.

The study also offered valuable insights of career opportunities perception and responsibilities of teachers. The participants noted diverse experiences and insights concerning career advancement. Teachers from mainstream school perceived career growth as limited due to the prevailing administrative responsibilities of higher positions like deputy director or headmaster, which may detract them from teaching. Some of the teachers especially emphasized their main role as working with students rather than doing administrative job. This perception is compounded by a lack of motivation to pursue administrative roles, potentially contributing to retention challenges within the profession. Moreover, they emphasized the role of a classroom teacher's duties and responsibilities that usually make teachers reluctant to take on additional responsibilities that prevent them from preparing for the lessons. This can be illustrated with the experience of some schools where the duties of the subject teacher and classroom teacher are divided.

Thus, this limitation in career paths may contribute to increased turnover rates, emphasizing the need for transparent and diverse career opportunities to retain teachers and maintain the quality of the education system. On the other hand, some other teachers mentioned a certain category of ambitious individuals who actively seek leadership positions in schools or seek to enter public service after gaining work experience in the field of education. These people strategically promote themselves by participating in competitions, seminars, conferences and joining various organizations to demonstrate their abilities and

advance their career. They calculate the necessary work experience and qualifications needed to achieve positions such as senior lecturer or director.

This research also showed that some teachers were moderately satisfied with positive administrative leadership and developed school culture. However, the main findings concerning organizational factors in mainstream schools revealed several critical issues. Teachers reported problems such as a shortage of classroom and insufficient equipment (outdated) that hinder their ability to prepare lessons effectively. Moreover, some teachers who worked multiple shifts experienced difficulties in managing workload and maintaining work-life balance. In addition, teachers emphasized the importance of effective leadership, suggesting that leaders should be trained in leadership and psychology.

Therefore, the study addressed its research purpose and questions by finding factors that influence teacher retention in mainstream school in Kazakhstan. The present study also identified that, despite legislative changes after the implementing the Law About the Teacher Status aimed at improving the status and working conditions of teachers, the study revealed continuing problems and uncertainties in the implementation of these reforms. These problems include ambiguities in the interpretation and application of the law, limitations on teacher autonomy, and concerns about the adequacy of professional development opportunities and mentoring support. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensure the effectiveness of legislative reforms and to increase teacher satisfaction and retention.

6.3 Limitations

After conducting the research, the author of this study recognized several limitations. Be specific, in the present study there were two major limitations that could be addressed in future research. First, the qualitative study used semi-structured interviews, which might not cover the full range of factors affecting teacher retention. The study might have missed important quantitative data or contextual factors that could have provided a more complete

understanding of the issues of teacher attrition and retention. This limitation highlighted the importance of supplementing qualitative approaches with quantitative analysis or the inclusion of additional research methods to provide a comprehensive study of the dynamics of teacher retention in mainstream schools.

Second, the study is based on the subjective experience and perception of the participants, which may introduce bias into the results. Participants can give answers based on their personal opinions, experience or interpretations, rather than on objective evidence. Moreover, the results of the study depend on the context and may not be applicable to other school conditions, which may limit the applicability of the results to various educational contexts.

6.4 Implications and Recommendations

The research findings contributed to a broad understanding of crucial factors influencing attrition and retention of teachers from mainstream school in Kazakhstan. Also, this helped to construct implication for policy makers, scholars, educational practitioners, and future research.

6.4.1. Implications for policymakers and school administration

First, the study findings revealed the factors that are essential to consider for policy makers and educational practitioners. Importantly, the results of this study suggested several recommendations for the policy makers and school administration that should be considered to facilitate teacher retention. After gaining the information on the factors that influence teacher retention, the school administration and policy makers should reconsider the compensation and bonus payments systems for teachers to allow them to get an opportunity to have motivation to raise their competence and proficiency. This will allow them to enhance the teaching and education level.

Another recommendation for the policy makers and school administration is to consider the career advancement options. The perception of limited career advancement opportunities beyond administrative roles is coupled with reluctance to take on additional responsibilities. This will lead to teacher attrition as it prevents them from spending more time with students and focusing on teaching.

Moreover, to address the issues like limited resources such as insufficient classrooms and equipment, heavy workloads (work in two shifts, classroom teacher responsibilities), and inadequate leadership support that teachers face at mainstream schools, it is crucial to review their working conditions and provide them with sufficient resources and equipment, assign responsibilities of a classroom teaching and subject teaching, and opportunities for professional development to foster a positive work environment and enhance their effectiveness in the classroom.

In terms of organizational factors such as effective leadership, supportive school culture, and robust support systems school administration and policy makers should reconsider the role of strong leadership that should be characterized by empathy and collaboration that fosters a positive work environment. In terms of school culture, it is very important when the school culture is developed and aligned with teachers' values which facilitates enhancement of their sense of belonging and commitment. Additionally, school administration and policy makers should acknowledge that support systems from administration and monitoring the mentoring program, development of professional opportunities, by providing guidance and recognition for educators play a vital role in teacher satisfaction and retention.

6.4.2. Recommendations for further research

Based on the results of the study and considering the limitations described above in this section, the following recommendations for further research can be suggested. First, the

type of research did not allow to fully understand the nature and the factors of affecting teacher retention in Kazakhstan. Thus, it is advisable to conduct quantitative research to address the limitations of this study and obtain more reliable results through conducting a survey among teachers from mainstream schools in Kazakhstan. Moreover, it would be useful to enlarge the number of participants to consider a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing teacher retention can be achieved, allowing for more robust conclusions and informed recommendations.

Second, as one of the limitations of the present study was subjective experience and perception of participants, it is also suggested to use the triangulation method to increase the accuracy of the study. According to Creswell (2012), “Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (p.259). Considering the topic of factors affecting teacher retention in mainstream schools in Kazakhstan, in the further research there should be taken the representatives of school administration, they are vice principals and principals of the school. Looking at the issue from different angles will be beneficial for scholars and policy makers in investigating the nature and the factors influencing teacher retention in schools.

6.5 Personal Reflections

The experience of working on the research has been incredibly beneficial for my professional and personal growth. Conducting qualitative research, I've been able to apply the knowledge I received at the Graduate School of Education. Moreover, through this study, I've come to appreciate the multifaceted nature of the issue, recognizing that job satisfaction, professional development opportunities, organizational support, and school culture all play significant roles in teacher retention. Furthermore, I've learned the importance of considering both qualitative and quantitative approaches to research in order to capture the full scope of

factors and to generate more reliable findings. Moreover, I believe I have significantly improved my academic writing skills. Importantly, the most exciting part of my research path was interviews with teachers as I could see the seriousness of my research and it positively influenced my interest and desire to pursue research work. I was very impressed with the interest of some participants to take part in the interview, and their willingness to contribute to the improvement of education in Kazakhstan. Despite some challenges and limitations, I strongly believe my study contributed significantly to the understanding of the factors that influence teacher retention in mainstream schools in Kazakhstan. Overall, it was an exciting and interesting experience.

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Appendices

Appendix A



Thesis Title: Factors Affecting Teacher Retention: Analysis of Mainstream Schools in Kazakhstan

Appendix A – Declaration of the Use of Generative AI

I hereby declare that I have read and understood NUGSE's policy concerning appropriate use of AI and composed this work independently (please check one):

- with the use of artificial intelligence tools, or
 without the use of artificial intelligence tools.

(If you have used AI tools as defined in the GSE policy document, please complete the rest of this form.)


During the preparation of this thesis/examination, I used Chat GPT to paraphrase.

I also declare that I

- am aware of the capabilities and limitations of AI tool(s),
 have verified that the content generated by AI systems and adopted by me is factually correct,
 am aware that as the author of this thesis I bear full responsibility for the statements and assertions made in it,
 have submitted complete and accurate information about my use of AI tools in this work, and
 acknowledge that there may be disciplinary consequences if I have not followed NUGSE's guidelines regarding AI appropriate use.

Name: *Rimma Kushvayeva*

Date: *11.04.2024*

Signature: 

Appendix B

Letter of Initial Contact (School Principal)

Rimma Kushvayeva

Nazarbayev University

Graduate School of Education

53 Kabanbay Batyr Avenue

Astana

010000

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Rimma Kushvayeva, and I'm a graduate student at the Graduate School of Education at Nazarbayev University. I am writing to you because I am working on a master's thesis about the factors that affect teacher retention in Kazakhstan. I find your school as an information-rich site that could be able to offer valuable information and might be interested in taking part.

In this context, I kindly request permission to access the emails of the teachers who have experience working in your school. The permission letter with the teachers' emails list should be on the letterhead of your school, signed and dated, and specifically referring to me by name and the title of my study "Factors Affecting Teacher Retention in Mainstream Schools in Kazakhstan".

I will invite individuals from your school to participate in this study. If they agree, they will be asked to be interviewed for about 30-40 minutes in their free time and preferable place not conflicting with their working hours. The school name and the participants'

identities will be kept entirely confidential. At the end of the study, all information relating to your school and participants will be deleted to make the data anonymous. Moreover, the study results will be discussed generally without revealing the site and participants, instead using pseudonyms.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I thank you in advance for the opportunity to grant me access to your school.

Rimma Kushvayeva

Email: rimma.kushvayeva@nu.edu.kz

Phone: +7 7021160070

Sincerely,

Rimma Kushvayeva

Appendix C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

TOPIC: Factors Affecting Teacher Retention in Mainstream Schools in Kazakhstan

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a research study on exploring the factors affecting teacher retention on the example of one mainstream school in Kazakhstan. You are kindly asked to participate in one-on-one audio-recorded interview which will last from 30 to 40 minutes and contain 15-20 questions in English, Kazakh or Russian depending on your choice. In case you refuse to be audio-recorded, the researcher will take notes. Any information obtained during the interview will be kept confidential and your identity will not be disclosed. Electronic research-related materials containing your personal data will be stored at a password-secured laptop while hardcopy documents will be kept in a key-locked drawer. The data will be accessible only to the researcher and the research supervisor. Once the research is completed, the interview recording, notes and informed consent form will be destroyed.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation will take approximately 30-40 minutes.

RISKS: The risks associated with this study, which are minimal, might be fear of sharing personal information with others; and absence of confidentiality and anonymity. To avoid these possible risks of the study the name of the institution will be unknown; your name will be concealed with a pseudonym used in the writing of the thesis. Interview recordings will be stored in a protected place. Data obtained during the interview will not be disclosed to the school administration/staff or any third party. You might feel uncomfortable when answering some interview questions. Please be informed that you may refuse to answer any question or opt out of participation at any time if you feel uncomfortable to continue. Taking into consideration your busy schedule, the interview will be held at the time and place most convenient to you. No other risks are expected from this research.

BENEFITS: The research may be of benefit to a number of stakeholders. By taking part in the study, you will have a chance to reflect on and share your experiences. Based on the research findings, the policymakers will gain a deeper understanding of your experiences, needs and concerns and might enhance the profitable comfortable environment for you and other teachers. Policy makers and school administration in Kazakhstan may draw valuable insights from your experiences and develop the adjustment strategies and mechanisms to improve the teachers status and provide satisfying working conditions. And last but not least, by participating in this research you will make small, yet important, contribution to the knowledge pool on well-being of teachers and productive education.

COMPENSATION: No tangible compensation will be given. A copy of the research results will be available at the conclusion of the study. The interested participants may request a copy of the research study by email or find it in the repository of Nazarbayev University.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY: Any information obtained during the interviews will be kept confidential. Furthermore, strict confidentiality measures will be implemented during the research. Electronic research-related materials containing participants' personal information will be securely stored on a password-protected laptop, while physical documents will be held in a securely locked drawer. Access to this data will be restricted only to the researcher and the research supervisor.

At the end of the study, all information and data relating to the school and participants will be deleted. Moreover, the results of the study will be discussed generally without revealing the site and participants, instead using pseudonyms. Any information that might be the potential to somehow reveal the identity of any participant will be immediately removed from the final version of the thesis.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY: Participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and if an agreement to participate is given, it can be withdrawn at any time without prejudice. In addition, you are free not to respond to certain questions if you wish.

POINTS OF CONTACT:

Questions: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Master's Thesis Supervisor for this student work, Associate Professor Munyaradzi Hwami munya.hwami@nu.edu.kz , or the researcher, Rimma Kushvayeva, rimma.kushvayeva@nu.edu.kz, +77021160070.

Independent Contact: If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee at gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.

According to the law of the Republic of Kazakhstan an individual under the age of 18 is considered a child. Any participant falling into that category should be given the Parental Consent Form and have it signed by at least one of his/her parent(s) or guardian(s).

Appendix D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Factors Affecting Teacher Retention in Mainstream Schools in Kazakhstan

Hello. My name is Rimma Kushvayeva. I am a Master's student at Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education. Thank you for your participation in the study. The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that facilitate teacher retention in Kazakhstan. The interview will approximately take one hour and will be audio-recorded with your permission. Before we start the interview, could you please sign the informed consent form.

Gender:

Years of teaching experience:

Major/Position:

Questions:

<p>1. Could you please briefly tell about yourself? How did you decide to become a teacher? What motivated you to work in a mainstream school?</p> <p>2. Can you briefly describe your current role and responsibilities as a teacher in this mainstream school?</p>	<p>Background information</p>
<p>Professional Development.</p> <p>1. What opportunities for professional development does the school provide for its teachers?</p> <p>2. Have you found these opportunities helpful in your career growth and job satisfaction?</p> <p>3. Are there any additional professional development programs or resources that you believe would enhance teacher retention?</p>	<p>Job satisfaction and professional development</p>

<p>Compensation and Benefits:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are the compensation and benefits offered by the school competitive and satisfying to you as a teacher? 2. How important do you think compensation is in retaining teachers, and are there any suggestions for improvement in this regard? <p>Career Advancement Opportunities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are there clear pathways for career advancement within the school, and have you personally benefited from them? 2. Do you believe that opportunities for career growth influence teacher retention? 	
<p>Work Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What aspects of the school's work environment do you find supportive and conducive to your teaching career? 2. Are there any specific challenges within the work environment that could potentially lead to teacher turnover? 3. How does the school foster a sense of community and collaboration among teachers? <p>Leadership and Administration:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How would you describe the leadership and administrative support within the school? 2. Can you share any experiences or instances where effective leadership positively influenced teacher retention? 3. Are there any areas where you believe improvements could be made in 	<p>Organizational factors (leadership, school culture, support)</p>

<p>leadership and administration to support teacher retention?</p> <p>Work-Life Balance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does the school address work-life balance concerns among its teaching staff? 2. Have you personally experienced challenges in maintaining a healthy work-life balance? If so, how were they addressed? <p>School Culture and Values:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the core values and culture of the school, and how do they align with your own professional values? 2. How does the school foster a sense of belonging and shared purpose among its teaching staff? <p>Support Systems:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What support systems are in place to assist teachers in managing their workload and professional challenges? 2. Have you used these support systems, and if so, how effective have they been? 	
<p>Influence of the Law About a Teacher Status in Kazakhstan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you provide an overview of your understanding of the Law About the Teacher Status in Kazakhstan and its key provisions? 2. How does the Law About the Teacher Status in Kazakhstan impact the rights and responsibilities of teachers in your school? 3. In your opinion, what are the most significant benefits or advantages that the Law About the Teacher Status offers to teachers? 	<p>Factors that can facilitate teacher retention</p>

4. Have you personally experienced any positive outcomes or changes in your career as a result of this law? If so, could you share some examples?

Suggestions for Improvement:

1. Based on your experiences and insights, do you have any specific suggestions or recommendations for the school to enhance teacher retention?

2. Are there any areas or aspects of the law that could be further improved to enhance its impact on teacher retention?