

EDUCATORS WHO TURNED TO POLITICS IN OKLAHOMA

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Abstract: Since the early 1990's funding K-12 public education in Oklahoma has faced trials and tribulations. The purpose of this study was to understand, through the lens of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), factors that elected educators have experienced that have influenced their ability and their motivation to affect increased funding for education in the State of Oklahoma. The epistemological perspective that guided this study was constructivism. This study is a qualitative case study so its purpose was to understand factors that influence legislator decision-making and how those decisions and behaviors align with their stated goals for funding education. A case study was appropriate for this research because it allowed for this specific issue to be studied in its context. This study is important for two reasons: the small amount of research in this particular area and the long-standing problem with educational funding in Oklahoma. The population for this study was Oklahoma Legislators who serve on the House and Senate Common Education Committees which is comprised of a total of twenty-eight individuals. Surveys, interviews, and observations were used in this study to investigate the legislators' decision-making processes. The research focused on decisions made by politicians who were once educators, elected to office in 2018 or afterwards, and who are now serving on the committee(s) which make the proposals concerning education. Given the small number of potential participants (11 members) in the population, all members were emailed the survey. My sample was those who chose to participate. Those who wished to participate in the interview were allowed to do so by contacting the researcher. A qualitative research commands the use of abundant data resources so observations, surveys, and interviews were administered to investigate the legislators' decision-making processes. Coding was used to analyze the data because it explained phenomena that unexpectedly appeared while conducting observations, surveys, and interviews. The SCCT considered how self-efficacy, outcomes, and goals impacted educational funding since 2018. Results of this study showed understanding in relation to the many decisions taken to fund K-12 public education.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Education has long been the focus of formal reports and legislation at both the state and national levels. The 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* document (Deering & Maiden, 1999) caused national and state leaders to move aggressively to make changes. These changes included efforts “to control millions of classrooms—to require uniform academic standards, aligned curriculum, more tests, and sanctions for lagging schools” (Cuban, 2004, p.105). Since the early 1990’s funding K-12 public education in Oklahoma has faced trials and tribulations. The situation reached a crisis in 1990 when a historic ten-day strike occurred. In a reaction to the strike, the legislators approved a pay raise from the minimum of \$17,000 to \$24,060 for the 36,000 public school teachers over the course of five years to completed by 1995 (Maiden, 1998). Although the pay raise was definitely needed and appreciated, funding continued to be insufficient to keep classroom sizes at more manageable levels.

Building upon the national pressure to make educational changes, Oklahoma followed suit with House Bill 1017, also known as the Education Reform Act of 1990, which increased taxes with the intent to add \$250 million dollars into public schools. In this bill, the Oklahoma Legislature established new standards in student performance, class size, and teacher evaluations. The thirteen mandates were as follows: accreditation standards; curricular standards; early

childhood education; extended school year option; increase in testing; alternative teacher certification; high school diploma requirements; smaller class sizes; instructional loads for secondary teachers; outreach with parents; salary increases; incentive pay for teachers; and periodic review of the state funding formula (Maiden, 1998). Even though the Legislature had good intent, many of these mandates in the 1990 bill were gradually repealed over the years because they could not be fully funded.

Since the 1990 reform act, educational research has focused on the many possible causes for these unfunded mandates, especially the lack of funding overall. Ellinger (1992) produced research on funding's influence on student achievement in Oklahoma after passage of the historic House Bill 1017. His study addressed the issue that many Oklahoma educators and legislators debate: student achievement and its ties to funding, which found that a minor increase in spending per student (\$100) raised achievement, but student poverty, race, and inexperienced teachers had a significant impact on achievement. His research found that funding is important to student achievement, especially for "at-risk" students, and funding for these students comes from Federal funds through Title I money. The Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) also completed a study in 1998 of educational progress since House Bill 1017 and reported that the Legislature could not fund the requirements established by 1017, even with many of the mandate repeals that were put into effect. The OSDE's report even called the funding problem a "crisis."

In 1991, the OSDE underwent a massive internal reduction in force. This resulted in a lack of manpower to research and gather the data needed to determine if mandates were implemented and funded. The task presented was in actually knowing what was funded or had been repealed (Grossman, 1995). Part of the challenge in finding how many mandates were actually funded or repealed lay in the OSDE who underwent a massive reduction in force in

1991, and there were not enough employees to research and gather the data needed to determine if mandates were implemented and funded (Grossman, 1995). Mandates continued to be a challenge because “despite their best efforts, some school districts failed to meet the mandates over the next several years, and the OSDE penalized them by withholding state money” and in actuality HB 1017’s increased funding only helped Oklahoma keep pace with surrounding states (Grossman, 1995).

Externally other factors such as economics, lack of qualified teachers resulting in an increase in those alternatively and emergency certified, and teachers becoming discouraged with criticism and a sense of lowered importance in the society also contribute to the education crisis. These external factors inhibit the ability to provide a quality education and ultimately to keep pace with surrounding states in terms of spending per student and teacher pay. Twenty-eight years transpired and despite legislative efforts, the crisis still existed. These external and internal factors and the resulting debate over education came to a climax in the spring of 2018 with the Teacher Walkout, and the Legislature made a historic budget agreement and appropriated \$157.7 million for common education along with \$480 million. However, despite their best efforts, Oklahoma still remained last among states in per student spending. In 2021, Oklahoma ranked last in per student spending at \$8,100 compared to Texas at \$9,600 and Kansas with \$11,100 (Hanson, 2021).

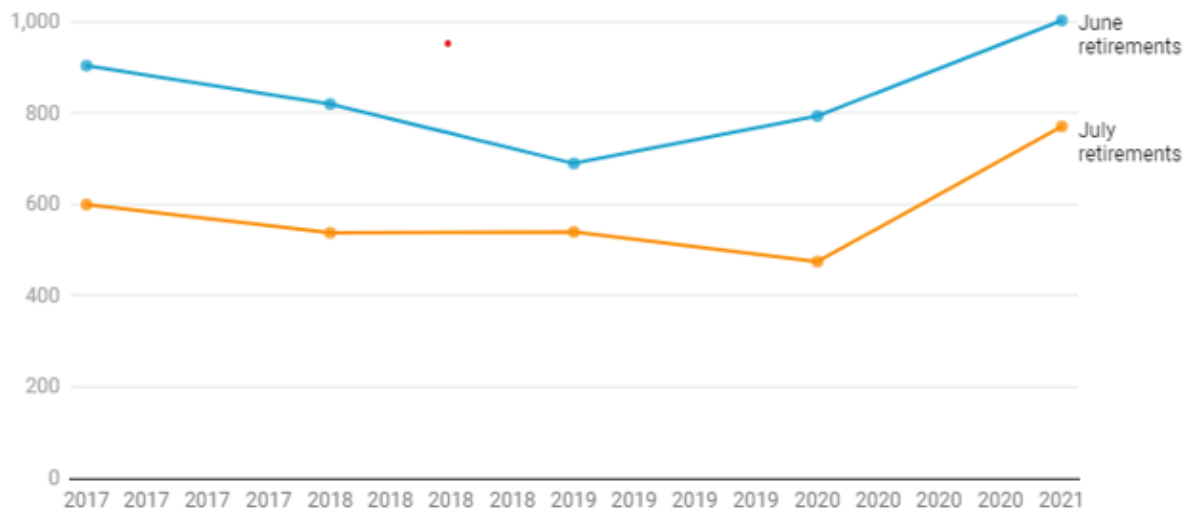
Dee & Cohodes (2008) posited that teachers who are certified in their field of instruction create learning environments that produce students who are more effective learners. “Of the 3.8 million public school teachers working in the school year 2015–16, approximately 676,000 (18 percent) had entered teaching through an alternative route to certification program” (NCTQ, 2015). Emergency certified teachers are necessary to fill the overwhelming vacancies in public

schools (Moblin & Hamba, 2020). For the 2021-2022 school year emergency certified teachers in Oklahoma are over 2,500 making it the highest applicants on record (OSDE, 2021a). There is a necessity for emergency certified teachers due to fewer individuals entering the profession, the large number retiring, and other factors. For the 2021-2022 school year, emergency certified teachers in Oklahoma are over 2,500 making it the highest applicants on record (OSDE, 2021a). State legislatures approved emergency certification be granted to individuals with a bachelor's degree to become a teacher on a temporary basis (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002). To become emergency certified in Oklahoma, one must have a four-year degree and complete an application on the OSDE website, then begin the process of getting certification in the particular subject area within a specific time frame. The continuous policy changes, rising expectations of test scores, and general attitude toward the profession has led teachers to feel dehumanized (Shea & Ceprano, 2013). External factors such as the lack of funding have had an internal impact on the treatment of educators as well as their feelings about their chosen career. Research reveals that the challenge to feel valued and professional in an environment that demands so much has left teachers frustrated and forced them to choose between leaving their profession or going on strike (Valdez, et. al., 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the number of educators leaving the profession for fear of exposure and the continued funding issues, especially in 2021. After the pandemic a record number of educators retired with the external and internal factors weighing too heavily and perhaps not letting them meet goals for themselves and their students.

Figure 1

Number of Teacher Retirements in Oklahoma

June and July are two of the most popular months for people to file paperwork to retire in Oklahoma's Teachers' Retirement system. And 2021, appears to be a record year for retirements.



Note: This graph was retrieved from the article, “Oklahoma Teachers’ Retirement System Seeing a Record Number of Retirements” by KOSU TV station at Oklahoma State University, reported by Robby Korth, June 29, 2021. <https://www.kosu.org/local-news/2021-06-29/teachers-retirement-system-seeing-record-number-of-retirements>

Many external and internal factors have influenced funding and educator issues, and there is little research that specifically investigates the topic in Oklahoma. Therefore, research would be profitable to understand the matter. This study will draw from the work of Bandura’s Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which hypothesizes that how individuals view themselves influences how they perform tasks. Bandura (1986) also asserted that self-efficacy and “outcome expectancies judgments are differentiated because individuals can believe that a particular course of action will produce certain outcomes, but they do not act on that outcome belief because they question whether they can actually execute the necessary activities” (p. 392). He also advocated a model of interaction termed “triadic reciprocity” which focuses on the following: “(a) personal attributes, such as internal cognitive and affective states and physical attributes; (b) external environmental factors; and (c) overt behavior (as distinct from internal and physical

qualities of the person) all operate as interlocking mechanisms that affect one another bidirectionally” (Lent, et. al., 1994). Oklahoma educators have been and continue to face a crisis of funding and as a result many ran for political office in 2018 after the Teacher Walkout in hopes that they could move funding education in a positive direction. Bandura’s theory could offer an avenue to investigate the personal attributes, external factors, and behaviors of educators who turned to politics in an effort to improve the educational environment.

Statement of the Problem

Legislators in state governments are elected by the people to represent them in decision making to enhance government institutions, such as public education, using limited resources (Mezey, 2008). However, despite an outcry from their constituencies, legislative actions toward K-12 public education in Oklahoma have had a long history of funding inadequacies. In response, educators, tired of experiencing repeated funding shortages, made their "voices" heard through a teacher walkout in 2018. This proactive involvement in legislative decisions led many educators to run for office to better represent their constituencies and meet the funding needs of public education (Bracic, et. al., 2020).

Despite an increase of educators elected to legislative positions, funding for education in Oklahoma continues to fall well below educator expectations/needs, indicating that the goals of these elected educators remain unsatisfied (Baekgaard, et. al., 2017).

The reason that stated funding goals have not been reached may be explained by factors that these educators experienced once they moved into governmental leadership positions. For example, these educators may have stepped into an environment that undermines or challenges the decisions that they had intended to make in support of funding for education in ways they had not expected. Specifically, to execute bold influence in decision-making, it is logical to

assume that a strong sense of self-efficacy combined with favorable outcome expectations would be needed to sustain and motivate goal attainment efforts (Bandura, 1986, 2001). When self-efficacy is lacking or when outcome expectations are diminished, it is likely that persistence to goal attainment would suffer, limiting the influence of these elected educators on funding decisions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand, through the lens of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), factors that elected educators have experienced that have influenced their ability and their motivation to affect increased funding for education in the State of Oklahoma.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

1. What factors have influenced the decision-making of these newly elected officials as they have sought to increase funding for education in the State of Oklahoma on their education committee?
 - a. What factors are external (work environment)? (self-efficacy)
 - b. What factors are internal (beliefs and/or perception of abilities)? (self-efficacy)
2. What goals did they claim during their election and what goals do they currently have while serving on the Education Committee? (goals)
3. Are there discrepancies between those goals and what they have currently? (outcome expectations)
4. How does the Social Cognitive Career Theory explain these findings?

Epistemological Perspective

Constructivism is the epistemological perspective directing this case study. Crotty (1998) defined constructivism as asserting that all knowledge and meaningful reality is constructed from human interaction. Constructivism emphasizes meaning-making and learning construction as its foremost principles (Crotty, 1998; Fosnot & Perry, 1996; Phillips, 1995). It considers knowledge as momentary, subjective, and evolving often based on social and cultural influences (Yilmaz, 2008). People construct their own interpretation and understanding of a situation or event, and this procedure leads to creating their own values which might involve interaction between pre-existing knowledge and beliefs and new knowledge and encounters (Richardson 1997; Schunk 2004). Therefore, constructivism is appropriate for this qualitative case study because it aligns with Crotty's (1998) definition of emphasizing understanding human interaction, which may explain why educators made the decision to run for office and explain their goals.

Theoretical Framework

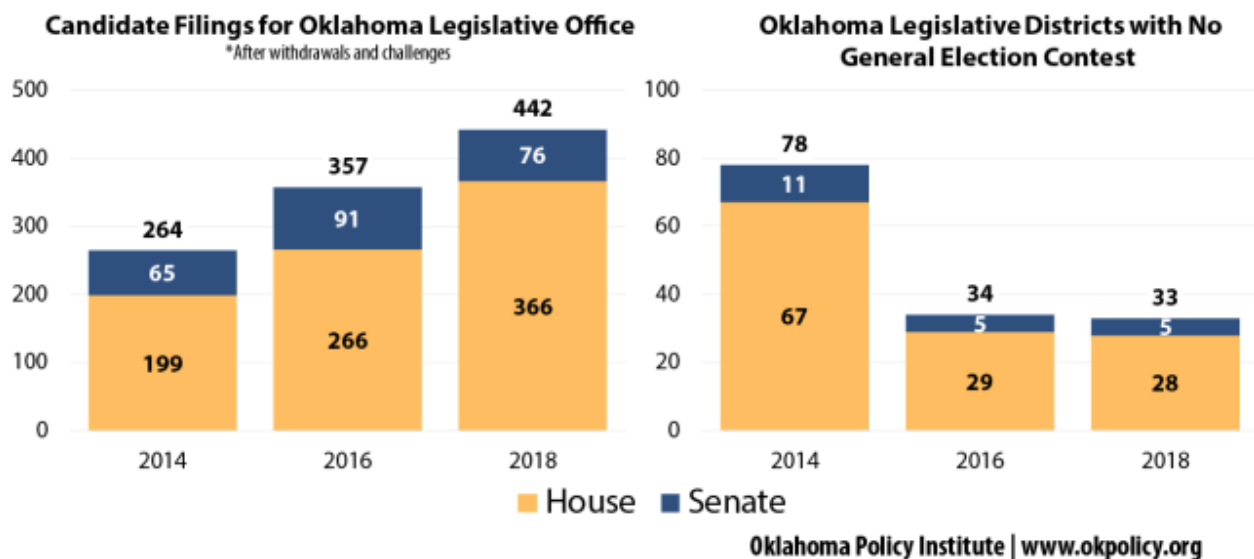
Qualitative research uses a theory to guide the study, and this research will use the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) developed by Bandura. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) has utility for explaining findings from this study because it states that a combination of self-imposed influences and externally imposed influences combine to influence action/decision making. Specifically, SCCT suggests that external factors, such as the work environment, may influence an individual's self-perceptions and efficacy to make desired decisions. Internal factors such as personal beliefs and self-perception of abilities to perform the requirements of the job also influence behaviors (Swanson & Fouad, 2014). Furthermore, SCCT explains that individuals who feel passionately about a specific career as it relates to their life will most likely

have a strong connection to that field, which produces sound career goals” (Blanco, 2011; Rottinghaus, Larson, & Borgen, 2003).

Lent et. al., (1994) developed a model that predicts interest development based on Bandura’s theory, and it will be used to further understand how these educators turned politicians came to their decisions. Their work specifically focused on the link among interests, choices, and performance. Bandura (1997) stated that in making career decisions, individuals have to “come to grips with uncertainties about their capabilities, the stability of their interests, the prospects of alternative occupations, and the type of identity they seek to construct for themselves” (p. 422). Educators faced these issues in 2018 as they felt dehumanized, undervalued, and were tired with the lack of funding for K-12 public education and decided to turn to politics in order to make changes by taking an active role in the decision-making process. The graph below shows the increase in educators who ran and were elected to office.

Figure 2

Educators who Ran for Office from 2014-2018



Note: This graph was retrieved from the Oklahoma Policy Institute online.

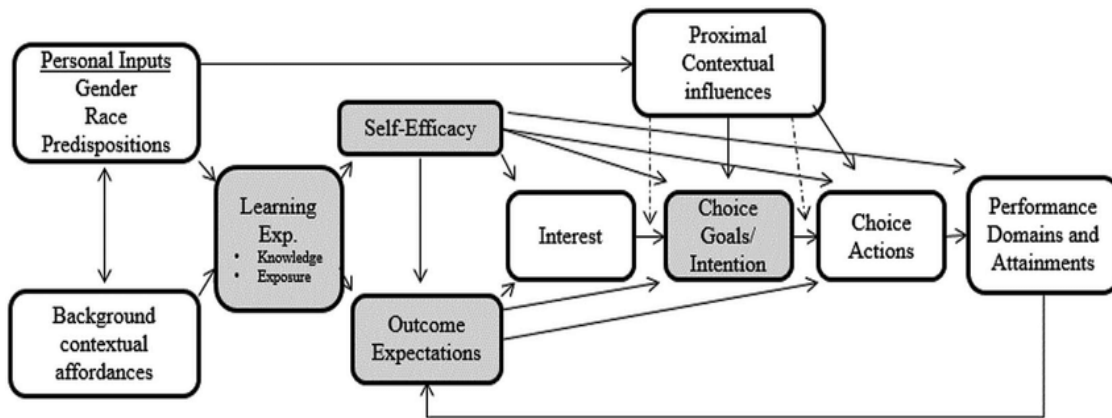
<https://okpolicy.org/oklahomas-2018-elections-were-different-in-many-ways/>

According to the Oklahoma Legislature website which lists the committees and their members for the 2021-22 session, the House Common Education committee has fifteen members with eight previously serving in education, and the Senate has thirteen members with seven having an education career background.

Political leaders may have different goals that are influenced by many factors; therefore, they rely on behaviors and relationships to help make their strategic decisions along with data from research (Baekgaard, Christensen, Dahlmann, Mathiasen, & Petersen, 2017). There are likely factors that influence their decision making as well as their leadership, which is prevalent throughout the Legislature as all members serve on committees in specific areas. Legislators are chosen to serve based on their areas of experience, expertise, and interest. Peretomode (2012) suggested that “leadership is an art or process whereby a member of a group persuades, inspires, or influences the attitudes and behaviors of others while also directing their activities so that the group of members work willingly and enthusiastically together toward a set of goals and improved position within the group” (p. 13). These factors certainly could apply to the educators who are serving in the Legislature to increase funding and improve K-12 public education. According to Bandura (1986) there are external and internal factors that strongly influence individuals to make specific career choices. Lent, et al. (1994) further developed concepts based on Bandura’s Theory of 1996 and created the graph below of which this study will focus on self-efficacy, outcomes, and goals. These three areas descended from learning experiences because race, gender, environment are all elements that create such occurrences and influence these three areas.

Figure 3

Social Cognitive Career Theory



Note: This graph was retrieved online from "Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance," by R. W. Lent, S. D. Brown, and G. Hackett, 1994, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 45, p. 93. Copyright 1993 by R. W. Lent, S. D. Brown, and G. Hackett.

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Social-cognitive-theory-model-of-choice-behavior-From-Toward-a-Unifying-Social_fig1_303697663

Research Design and Procedures

Butler, Davies, Pike, & Sharp (1991) identified the complexity of political decisions because they often have a power base that requires special knowledge or skills to make decisions. Unfortunately, political behavior can add to the ambiguity of decision making because it is at odds with typical decision rules and may undermine them (Mumford & Pettigrew, 1975). Therefore, a qualitative case study will be the methodology used for this study because it will give a narrative of how the decisions of educators turned legislators to run for office along with their goals and how their actual decision making occur and align. Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Career Theory will be used to help explain the self-efficacy, outcomes, and goals that

influenced their decision to run for office and how their decision has impacted their decision and goals for education while in office.

Merriam's (1998) case study methodology will direct this study's actions. Merriam asserted that case studies display and explain the connotations of the elements that occur within a complex social environment thereby allowing for an explanation of the behaviors and choices made by the individuals. A case study is most appropriate for this research.

Merriam (1998) stated that purposeful sampling is based on the supposition that the researcher is attempting to discover, understand, and gain understanding so a specific sample must be chosen for investigation and report results for interpretation. Criterion sampling is selecting participants based on guidelines that are specific to what is being studied (Patton, 2002). The population will be Oklahoma Legislators who were previous educators and now serve on the House and Senate Common Education Committees, which total eleven potential individuals. Surveys, interviews, and observations will be used in this study to investigate the legislators' decision-making processes. This research will allow for the individuals to take part in the survey and interview at their choice; however, personal contact will be made with all individuals to encourage them to take part in the survey which will be sent to their work email. After taking the survey, members can choose to click on a link at the bottom of the email that will let me know they are willing to be interviewed. All committee members will be observed during their Common Education Committee meetings. This will be discussed further in Chapter III, and the survey and interview questions can be found in Appendices D and E.

Coding will be used to analyze the data because it can explain phenomena that unexpectedly appear while conducting observations, surveys, and interviews. Creswell & Creswell (2018) suggests following a linear, six-step coding process: organize and prepare data,

read through data, code data, generate themes or categories, convey findings, and interpret meaning.

Finally, if one looks to the media who reports the educational atmosphere and the yearly data presented by the National Center for Educational Statistics, they both show that Oklahoma is cutting funding for its schools and not keeping pace with its neighboring states. My personal background as a teacher for twenty-six years may potentially create researcher bias, so I will keep a journal of my feelings and responses to educational members' responses and behavior from both political parties so that they will not influence my interpretation of the data.

Potential Significance of the Study

To Research

This study could be beneficial because it identifies the motivation, political factors, and decision-making processes associated with educators turned legislators and the decisions they have had in funding K-12 public education. Little research has been performed specifically about these individuals making a career change while much speculation and commentary has been made so supplying research to prove or disprove what has been written will be significant in identifying educational funding issues in Oklahoma. It is important that both the public and Legislators understand the importance of educational research because "Many policy-makers perceive that educational research has little impact on society and often fails to meet the decision-makers' needs" (Ion, Iftimescu, & Proteasa, 2019, p. 2). Politicians are often criticized for not being in touch with what is happening in schools by supposedly ignoring the research that is available to them; however, politicians conduct interim studies on their bills before presenting them to their committees. The criticism is that politicians do not fully understand the implications of the research and that those in the education community do not make it easy for

them to understand (Simons, 2003). A disconnect between the education community and the legislative community has occurred which hinders positive movement. Therefore, this study is important to show the motivation and behaviors behind these educators turned legislators' decisions.

Because politics has many complexities, evaluating legislators' decision-making would be best performed through a qualitative case study by looking at House and Senate Common Education Committee members' (former teachers) voting records. In 2020, these members voted on the following issues: professional development for teachers; education reform acts; student mental health; textbooks; alternative teacher certification; school spending; and student remediation requirements, to name a few. This case study will only focus on their voting records while they serve on the Common Education Committee, and it will not attempt to explore all of the issues voted on by these legislators but will focus only on their voting records. Politicians' behavior shows they focus on their personal or institutional needs by influencing the decision process using political tactics (Child, Ebana, & Rodrigues, 2009). "Self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations, in turn, affect the formation of vocational interest, which subsequently influence occupational goals, choice actions, and performance attainments" (Schaub & Tokar, 2005, p. 305). The SCCT asserts that personality influences interests based on learning experiences, self-efficacy beliefs, and outcome expectations. SCCT also influences human motivation and behavior as shown through the many educators in 2018 who were highly motivated to make a change in education by running for political office.

To Theory

Theories regarding the Oklahoma Legislature's decisions have been prevalent since the Teacher Walkout of 2018 with many speculating about funding issues at the Capitol. The SCCT

will consider how self-efficacy, outcomes, and goals have impacted educational funding since 2018. Results of this study could show understanding in relation to the many decisions taken to fund K-12 public education. This theory will help explain if educators turned legislators' goals align with the decisions they make when creating, hearing, and voting for educational bills.

To Practice

Crotty (1998) asserted, “We typically start with a real-life issue that needs to be addressed, a problem that needs to be solved, and a question that needs to be answered” (p. 13). Funding K-12 public education in Oklahoma is a significant problem that needs an answer as well as educators taking a role in the decision making in the legislature. The results of this study will provide insight as to what educators turned legislators' decisions have been and the challenges they potentially face when trying to fund K-12 public education. This study seeks to inform and increase awareness about the educators turned legislatures' educational funding decisions and how their “behavior is considered to be a function of personal factors, learning experiences, self-efficacy belief, outcome expectation, interests, environmental norms and values, and intention” (Rajabi, Papzan, & Zahedi, 2012, p. 3). “Teachers must view activism as a deeply situated role within their profession and should cultivate positive social justice perceptions about their profession and their influence on social justice pedagogy” (Watts, 2020, p. 143). In 2018, teacher morale appeared to be strengthened during the walkout as they worked collaboratively for the same purpose, even running for political office. Shor (1987) emphasized the importance for teachers to view their career as essential for social change and highlight the idea that education serves to improve, change, and transform students and their communities for the better. This research will contribute to the need and explanation for funding education and the decisions that educators turned politicians must make in doing so.

Definition of Terms

Strategic Decision Making. This perspective is concerned with the ways in which involved parties can affect the process and outcomes of strategic decision making either through the power they possess or through measures they take to exert influence (Child, et al., 2009).

Oklahoma Legislature. This is the state legislative branch of the State of Oklahoma. It is comprised of the Oklahoma House of Representatives and the Oklahoma Senate. There are 101 representatives and 48 senators. (www.oklegislature.gov)

Committees. The Senate has thirteen committees and the House has thirty-one committees. (www.oksenate.gov and www.okhouse.gov)

K-12 Public Education. This term refers to all Oklahoma public schools that serve students in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade and receive state funding. (www.sde.ok.gov)

Oklahoma Education Association. Founded in 1889, this teachers' union advocates for public education and considers itself the voice of education in Oklahoma. (www.okea.org)

Supermajority. This is the phrase when referencing that one political party has a significant majority (over half of the total) in the House, Senate, or the Legislature.

Summary

This study introduced the problem of funding K-12 public education along with why educators turned to politics in Oklahoma in 2018. An examination of the self-efficacy, outcomes, and goals of these specific educators turned politicians has demonstrated they had a career change and how their decisions have impacted funding K-12 public education. The purpose of this study is to understand, through the lens of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), factors that elected educators have experienced that have influenced their ability and their motivation to

affect increased funding for education in the State of Oklahoma. The Social Cognitive Career Theory of Bandura (1986) and its model developed by Lent, et.al., (1994) are appropriate for this study because they explain how learning experiences influence self-efficacy which has an impact on outcome expectations and goals.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review is organized into the following areas of study: (1) the legal requirements to fund education; (2) the nature of Federal and Oklahoma State Funding and sources of revenue is described; (3) how the Oklahoma Legislature currently funds education; (4) the State education Funding Formula is explained; and (5) the Social Cognitive Career Theory is discussed. Also, the literature review's goal is to establish the State of Oklahoma's Legislative functions and requirements to fund education and explain how these processes are completed.

Legal Requirements to Fund Education

After the Revolutionary War and the United States became a nation, individual states created their constitutions and education was listed in every one of them ((Thattai, 2001). From its roots, this nation has valued education and made many legal and financial requirements to assure its success specifically at the state and local level. As stated in the Oklahoma Constitution, the Legislature must attend to many facets of education such as establishment, funding, attendance, textbooks, instruction, and school boards. (Oklahoma State Legislature, 2021). Politicians have a tremendous responsibility to fund education for over 700,000 PreK through twelfth grade students in 525 districts (OSDE, 2021b), and there should be trust among educators, parents, and the legislature in order to meet these needs and accomplish great things for Oklahoma students. House Bill 1017 added language to its Constitution,

The Legislature, recognizing its obligation to the children of this state to ensure their opportunity to receive an excellent education, and recognizing its obligation to the taxpayers of this state to ensure that schooling is accomplished in an efficient manner, hereby establishes requirements for compliance with quality standards (Grossman, 1995, p. 536).

The U.S. Supreme Court has a history of not hearing from cases involving funding education and has let the states' courts make a majority of the rulings. Rebell (2018) found "the state courts' active involvement in promoting equal educational opportunity in the schools resulted from the U.S. Supreme Court's refusal to consider the extensive inequities in state systems for financial education" (p. 6). Although the Court has had challenges appear before its bench, it has chosen to let most state rulings stand because of the issue of adequately funding versus providing free public schools, which most state constitutions affirm. This action has led to more involvement on the part of politicians to assert policy changes and mandates because the Court has refused to interfere with States' Constitutions.

In the 1980s the Reagan Administration began to implement changes in public schools resulting with *A Nation at Risk* which asserted that public schools were failing students and radical changes had to be made (NCEE, 1983, p. 7). Baker & Green (2005) reported that "the increased use of secondary policy levers led to rapidly increasing complexity in state aid allocation formulas from the late 1980s through the present" (p. 375). The culmination of legal battles was Kentucky's 1989 Supreme Court ruling *Rose v. Council for Better Education* because it changed how states funded education. This case claimed that the State did not follow their constitution so courts in Texas, South Carolina, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Kansas, Arkansas, and Alabama followed suit by adopting a list of requirements beyond

adequately funding education. Jackson et al. (2016) reported that by 1990 ten states had court-mandated reforms, with thirty states producing legislative reforms, and thirty-nine states altering their state funding formula.

Prior to the Kentucky case, other suits argued adequacy in education funding as seen in Oklahoma cases *Miller V. Childers* in 1924; *School District No. 25 of Woods County v. Hodge* in 1947; and *Fair School Finance Council of Oklahoma v. State* in 1987, which were heard only in the Oklahoma Supreme Court. In all of these cases, the Oklahoma Supreme Court ruled for the school districts because they were providing an adequate education as stated by the State Constitution (Education Law Center, 2021).

After the 1980s states began to focus on the discrepancy in funding between high- and low-income districts because of the above Oklahoma cases. The effects were positive because the adequacy-based court cases that changed state's education funding had an effect on revenues, graduation rates, students' equalization, and improvement of academic outcomes (Candalaria & Shores, 2017). The Legislature has made efforts to improve education in the state by signing bills into law that mandate improvements, but often they cannot fund these mandates because there is a lack of revenue sources.

The Nature of Federal Education Funding

Public schools receive funding from federal, state, and local governments with the federal supplying the least amount of funds. According to Hanson (2021), federal funding provides an average of 7.8% for public schools. In 1965, under President Johnson's leadership, the federal government became more involved in public education funding with the signing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) whose aim was to address the disparity of funding to low-income schools in an effort to raise the overall quality of education for these

specific students through the national school lunch program, Title I grants, Head Start program, special education grants, and the Youth Build program (Gamson, McDermott, & Reed, 2015).

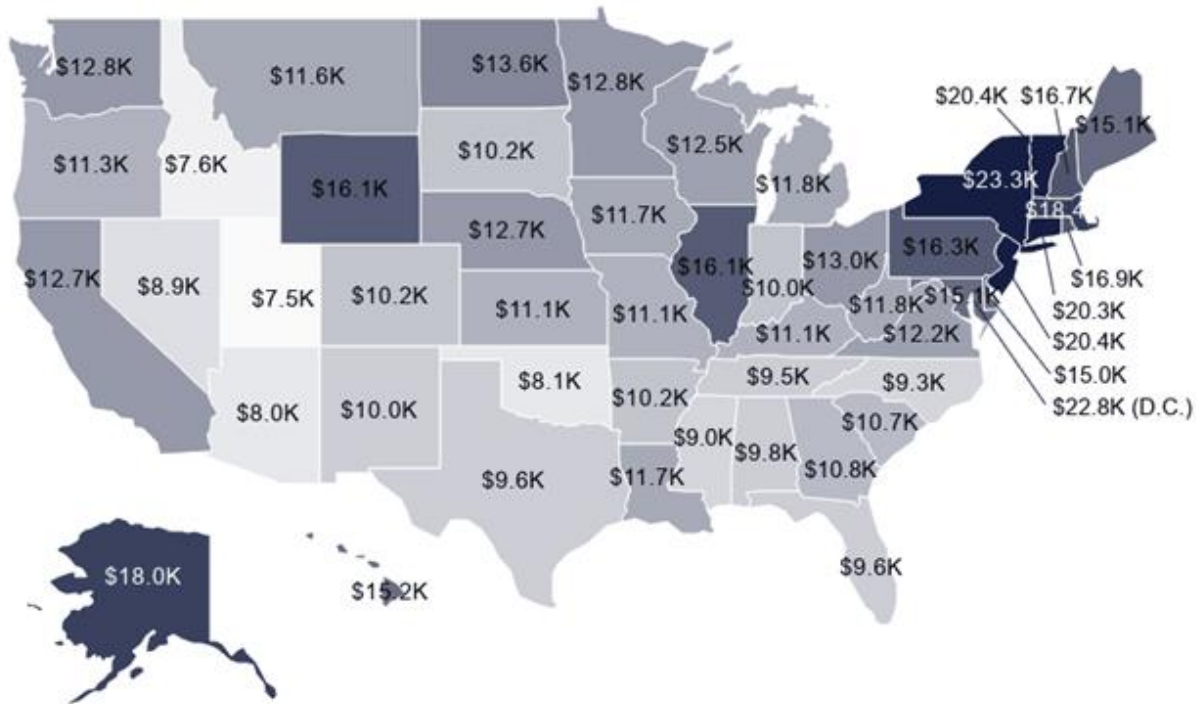
Another significant landmark in public education occurred in 1975 when President Ford signed into law the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) which ensured that children with any disability were guaranteed an education. The U.S. Department of Education (2021) listed on its website the definition of the Individual's with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as,

A law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children. The IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 7.5 million (as of school year 2018-19) eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities.

Additions and subtractions took place in federal funding, especially with the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* which proposed that public schools were failing their students, and funding had a direct correlation to that issue; therefore, more accountability needed to take place along with providing educational initiatives (Stair, Hock, Warner, Levy, & Conrad, 2017).

Figure 4

Public K-12 Spending Per Student



Note: The above graph was retrieved from Education Data Initiative.

<https://educationdata.org/public-education-spending-statistics>

Much research has been conducted on the relationship between student performance and funding, and a research-based funding formula aimed at improvement considering equity might be more effective and efficient (BenDavid-Hader, 2018). Although the government had enacted significant laws, more needed to be done to address the increasing student needs. In response to this inequity in education, President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015 in an effort to lessen the role of the federal government in public education so that communities who know their students best had more flexibility in meeting their students' needs with funds. Funding alone cannot solve all of the educational challenges, but research shows "there is little chance that can be solved without adequate and equitably distributed resources" (Baker, 2018, p. 6). ESSA's purpose was to provide states with the power and ability to fund educator support and professional development and to assist their schools in leadership

roles (Hirsch, 2017). Collectively, legislative actions such as ESSA and IDEA as well as reports such as *A Nation at Risk* have had a cumulative influence on education in both our state and country.

How Funding Decisions are Made

Historically, the federal government has had a small role in K-12 public education funding as it asserts that most of the responsibility should lie at the state and local level (Evans, Schwab, & Wagner, 2019). However, court cases have had a significant role in forcing Congress to consider other factors when making decisions regarding educational funding, even though they also consider data and research to make such decisions. The federal government is not alone in having their decisions being influenced by other issues, “The growing role of the states in education is in part a response to a long series of court cases that have challenged the constitutionality of an education finance system that has led to wide disparities in education spending across school districts” (Evans et al., 2019, p. 301). External factors such as the threat of litigation and political pressure have most likely made state legislators more aware of the impact of their decisions (internal factors) regarding education funding, while revenue plays a significant role in their ability to fund education.

At the federal level, Congress and the U.S. Department of Education make decisions for public schools who want to supplement their budgets to help student learning and instruction. The President, too, can suggest legislation which President Obama did in 2009 with his Race to the Top Education Reform Program that provided states with extra funding whose schools showed academic progress and measured growth among students (Bicehouse & Faieta, 2017). Schools must follow federal guidelines if they want to receive these funds. Again, federal funds make up a small portion of public-school funding, but they “are intended and targeted to provide

supplemental services to such specific groups as those in poverty, English learners, and students with disabilities” (Morgan & Amerikaner, 2018, p.3). Nevertheless, research indicates that high-poverty schools face disproportionate demands in educating low-income students and need more resources and support to help them have an equal opportunity for success in post-secondary education and career (Ushomirsky & Williams, 2015). “Innovation, entrepreneurial spirit, and more education options for parents do not justify American children receiving an education that is too often inferior education to traditional public schools” (Kaplan & Owings, 2018, p. 212). Although the federal government offers supplements and has increased funding in recent years to make education equitable, public schools still have disparities because most of their funding comes from the state and local governments (Baird, 2008).

Sources of Funding

Economics has a direct relationship on funding at all levels as education spending is sensitive to the business cycle. The federal government has many more sources of revenue than the state and local communities so it is able to provide more funding, even though its financial support is minor in the funding budget. However, economic growth and recession do play a significant role in how much money is available to public schools for the supplemental programs. “Primary and secondary public education in the U.S. encompasses one of the largest publicly owned and operated institutions and employs the largest unionized workforce in the country” (Scott, 2011, p. 269). Education is not only a learning environment, but also a business that has a significant impact on economics. For example, the latest recession of 2008 slowed federal funding to education, so “the government signed into law the American Recovery Act of 2009 and provided \$100 billion for education” (Evans, et al., 2019, p. 317). State and local governments rarely have the ability or option to offer relief funding and are forced to face

funding cuts or not funding a program in efforts to keep their economies from a severe recession or collapse thereby leading to decisions that are inequitable in funding because funding is directly related to declining sales tax, income tax, and tourism tax revenues (Ikpa, 2016). The Oklahoma Constitution's Section X-23 Balanced Budget Procedures states: "The state shall never create or authorize the creation of any debt or obligation, or fund or pay any deficit, against the state, or any department, institution or agency thereof, regardless of its form or the source of money from which it is to be paid."

Numerous studies have been conducted regarding the connection (if any) between school spending and student achievement in an effort to explain spending more or less on education. The Coleman Report of 1966 is what began this intensive investigation into the topic of school spending and subsequent research has reported anomalies because "national studies correlate actualized changes in school spending with changes in student outcomes; this is unlikely to yield real causal relationships because many of the changes to how schools have been funded since the 1960s would lead to biases" (Jackson, Johnson, & Persico, 2015, p. 2). The school finance reforms that began after Johnson's ESEA produced many changes to public school spending with reforms attached as conditions to receiving such supplemental funding. Such reforms have compelled the federal government to offer alternative sources of funding such as grants and loans to continue the supplemental programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Uses of Funding

The federal government disperses supplemental funding to states for the public schools, but guidelines have to be followed in order to receive the funding; therefore, public schools must follow mandates in order to receive such finances. In 1995 Congress passed the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) in an attempt to lessen or avoid the financial strain on state and

local governments that were related to funding mandates. The federal government always funds its mandates but the exception is again, if states want to receive the funding, they have to follow the rules or mandates associated with those monies. If Congress has a majority of one party, this often influences mandates and funding decisions. For example, Ikpa (2016) states that education has exceedingly become a partisan issue among politicians, and that their parties may not be able to agree on societal values which are fundamental in education.

As mentioned earlier, recent reforms that have had a significant impact on funding are the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Individuals' with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which are the two main sources of federal funding for public schools as both programs act as supplements for students from low-income families, low-achieving schools, and students with disabilities and special education. Both sources have stipulations attached for schools who want to utilize the programs, but ESSA gives state policy makers and leaders school-level statistics and resource allocation reviews so that decisions can be data-driven (Amerikaner, 2018). Section 618 of the IDEA requires each state to submit statistics about students with disabilities who receive special services to the U.S. Department of Education so it can compile such data in its yearly report to Congress who provides funding for the program.

The Nature of Oklahoma Educational Funding

The State of Oklahoma offers funding to public schools but at different levels. It is one of eleven states that use a formula to fund its public schools in an effort to offer equitable opportunities to its students, but the formula can often appear arbitrary if student needs are not carefully considered (Barnett & Kasmin, 2018). Many studies have been conducted on the relationship between student performance and funding and a research-based funding formula

aimed at improvement considering equity might be more effective and efficient (BenDavid-Hader, 2018).

How Funding Decisions are Made

In the Legislature, decisions are made to fund education starting in the House and Senate's Common Education Committees who conduct interim studies that lead to bills that are heard within those committees and if passed, proceed to the Legislative Floor where they are debated, approved, and then sent to the governor who will either sign or veto the bills. Revenue sources are a significant external factor that influence educational decisions because the Legislature knows that it is challenging, or next to impossible, to enact a mandate that cannot be funded.

The Legislature must uphold the State Constitution's requirement to offer and maintain a free public education for every child; however, this does not mean the needs of the schools will be met in entirety. Although lawmakers likely make every effort to fund schools while offering a quality education, external factors such as low-revenue sources leave them little choice in their decisions to cut funding which leads to inequalities in state aid. "State policymakers who are intent on increasing educational and life outcomes for students—especially students of color and students from low-income families—must therefore pay close attention to variations in school-level spending" (Amerikaner, 2018, p. 15). Endeavoring to keep improving education and meet the request of voters, mandates are also a factor that legislators must consider when making decisions about funding. Legislatures approach funding and policy by looking at available economic resources, the demands for them, and what society has asserted is their priority (Enrich, 1995).

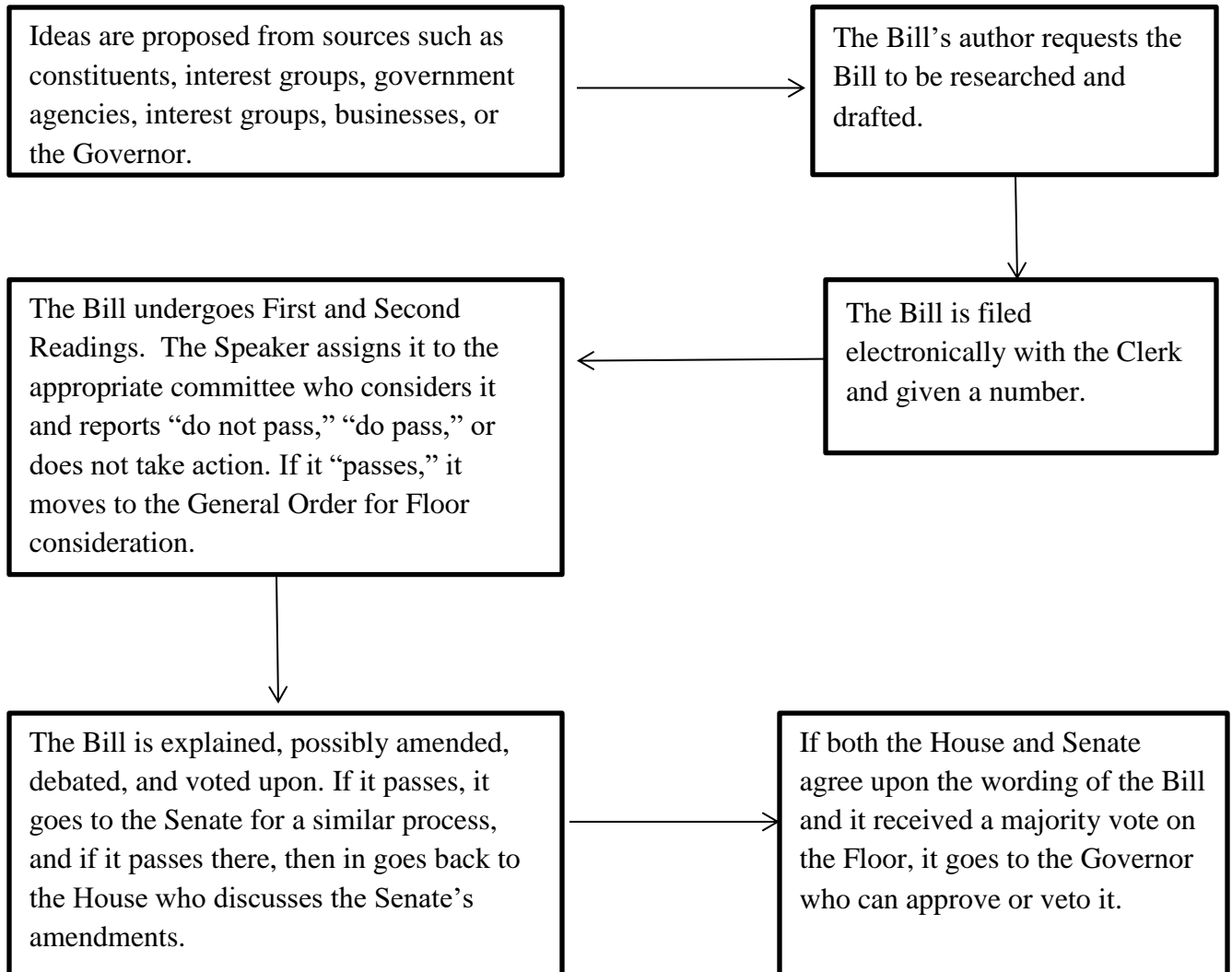
The Legislature must uphold the State Constitution’s requirement to offer and maintain a free public education for every child, which is stated in Article XIII, Section 1, “The Legislature shall establish and maintain a system of free public schools wherein all the children of the State may be educated;” however, this does not mean the needs of the schools will be met in entirety. Although lawmakers likely make every effort to fund schools while offering a quality education, low-revenue sources leave them little choice in their decisions to cut funding which leads to inequalities in state aid. “State policymakers who are intent on increasing educational and life outcomes for students—especially students of color and students from low-income families—must therefore pay close attention to variations in school-level spending” (Amerikaner, 2018, p. 15). Endeavoring to keep improving education and meet the request of voters, mandates are also a factor that legislators must consider when making decisions about funding because when revenues are down, it is difficult for the Legislature to meet the funding needs of schools.

Bill Development in the Common Education Committee

A bill must go through a multi-stepped process before it can be signed into law. Many external and internal factors influence the creation of a bill such as its appropriateness and its applicableness for the current session. The Legislature’s Policies dictate that interim studies must be approved. In the Senate, the President Pro Tempore assigns study requests to the appropriate committee and then it is up to the committee’s chair to decide if the study will be heard. In the House, the Speaker decides whether to approve or disapprove a study. Interim studies are generally heard from September to November and the committee can schedule to hear the study’s experts anywhere from an hour to several days. If the committee agrees that the topic is appropriate or necessary, the committee member who proposed it writes a bill that will be heard and voted on in the spring session. Also, bills can be passed without requiring any funding.

Figure 5

How a Bill becomes a Law



Note: The above graph was created by gathering information from the Oklahoma State Legislature Website <https://okhouse.gov/Information/CourseOfBills.aspx>

Sources of Funding

“States have assumed a larger role in education finance over the last forty years and rely on more volatile forms of funding, and this shift is in part a result of legislative and judicial efforts to reduce the wedge between resources in rich and poor schools” (Evans et al., 2019, p.

322). Oklahoma is no different in facing education funding challenges. The side effect could lead to a financial burden that some states may not be able to handle in the future; however, states have the flexibility to raise taxes in efforts to make up during recessions but rarely lower them when an economic growth spurt occurs in anticipation of future downturns. Moreover, research shows that in Oklahoma on average almost half of state revenues come from individual and corporate income taxes supplemented with sales taxes but at the local level property taxes are the major source of revenue (Evans et al., 2019).

In the past twenty years, Oklahoma has experienced growth and prosperity through oil and gas production as well as economic decline which have impacted education funding (Ballard & Maiden, 2018). However, the State has offered tax incentives and breaks in an effort to attract or keep such businesses in the State because of their ability to offer employment, industry, and revenue. In fact, Oklahoma has one of the lowest effective tax rates on horizontal wells in comparison to other states and this break has a significant bearing on state income (Gade, Maguire, & Makamu, 2018). Nationally, Oklahoma continues to be among the lowest to impose taxes on oil and gas companies. Research shows that such tax break benefits to the state are short sighted and do not provide a lasting resource from which to make a significant change for local communities (Crowe, Silva, Ceresola, Buday, & Leonard, 2015). Also, Oklahoma offers more flexibility and financial relief to royalty owners and leases than Texas which can result in lost revenue (King & Ammons, 2015). These sources of funding have a significant impact on the State of Oklahoma's revenue and education spending.

Uses of Funding

The year 2018 was an especially volatile one for education in the state of Oklahoma because of a decrease in education funding (Muex, 2021). A teacher walkout that lasted almost

two weeks and forced some schools to close was a primary news headline. School leaders, teachers, parents, and students were demanding an increase in funding. Legislators wanted to have a bill for teacher pay and would try to raise funding, but mandates were attached to the bills.

The Oklahoma state legislature recently introduced new mandates that demand more accountability and higher standards for students and educators alike. Political leaders and school administrators have voiced concerns about this problem and have pleaded with the state for additional funds for schools to little or no avail (Ballard & Maiden, 2018, p. 2).

Legislators fulfilled their promise to raise teacher salaries in 2018 and Governor Kevin Stitt followed through with his promise to make teacher pay at the top of the region in 2019 giving teachers another \$1,200 pay increase. Regardless of the recent pay increases, it is common knowledge that there is a severe teacher shortage in Oklahoma due to poor retention and recruitment while surrounding states offer a much higher salary (Lazarev, Toby, Zacamy, Lin, & Newman, 2018).

More Democrats than Republicans favor increasing teacher salaries, but support jumped in 2018 among members of both political parties. Support rose from 45% in 2017 to 59% this year among Democrats, and from 27% to 38% among Republicans. Meanwhile, teachers are even more convinced about the merits of increasing their salaries, with 76% of them registering support, up slightly from 71% in 2017” (Cheng, Henderson, Peterson, & West, 2019, p. 8).

Although there was strong support from the Governor and legislators with the passing of teacher salary increases and currently, legislators provide funding for salaries, the revenue was not there

to support the mandates leaving public schools with the tough decision of cutting teachers or programs (Maiden & Reynolds, 2019).

A substantial body of research validates the conclusion that teachers' overall wages and relative wages affect the quality of those who choose to enter the teaching profession. Increases in teacher wages have also been found to be associated with increases student achievement—presumably because more capable teachers are recruited and retained (Baker, 2018, p. 5).

Research has shown the importance of teachers upon student instruction, success, and college attendance. Students who were taught by an effective teacher may achieve a year more of learning than students taught by an ineffective teacher (Mobra & Hamlin, 2020). To keep teachers effective in the classroom and life-long learners, the legislature mandated that they attend professional development covering a variety of topics ranging from Autism to Bloodborne Pathogens. Since schools do not receive enough funding to meet the mandate of professional development opportunities, they turn to online programs where teachers complete the yearly training by online instruction or attending free meetings. Studies on professional development conclude that rural schools offered conferences and online learning while larger schools were able to offer teacher-led professional development (Peltola, Haynes, Clymer, McMillan, & Williams, 2017). The lack of funding and resources are the explanation for why schools offer professional development in such a manner. This shows that sometimes legislators' decisions are equitable (when passing legislation to raise teacher salaries) and sometimes they are not (when not properly funding mandates such as teacher salaries and professional development).

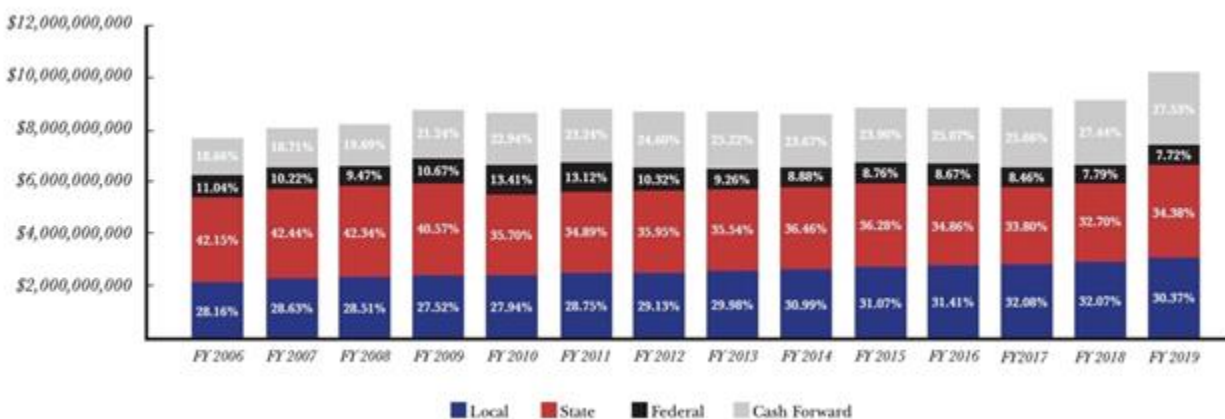
How Oklahoma Currently Funds Education

The Oklahoma Legislature is comprised of the House with 101 members who serve two-year terms and the Senate with 48 members who serve four-year terms. They are elected by the

voters to carry out goals based on their campaign promises as well as uphold state laws with funding education as one of those legal obligations set forth in the State’s Constitution. Article 13 of the Constitution states the Legislature’s responsibility is to establish and maintain free public schools. Oklahoma receives approximately 30% of its funding from the federal government by means of Title money (programs for low-income students) while the rest of the funding comes from the State and local governments (BenHader, Case, & Smith, 2017). For the 2020-21 school year, the State’s 525 districts have approximately 700,000 students based on the latest numbers from the Oklahoma State Department of Education’s website (OSDE, 2021b). These districts report data from their schools regarding student enrollment and then report that information to the State and federal government so they may receive funding. Funding has increased but so has student enrollment thereby increasing the needs that are not met. Because of research educators and schools are more aware of individual student needs and are better equipped at assessing those needs compared to 2006 thereby requiring an increase in state and especially national funding.

Figure 6

Revenue Sources for Oklahoma State Department of Education



Note: The above graph was retrieved from the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs who gathered the information from the Oklahoma Department of Education.

<https://www.ocpathink.org/post/review-process-launched-into-epics-charter>

Oklahoma heavily relies upon the oil and gas industry for revenue, along with business, personal, and property income taxes, to fund the State's education formula which consists of Foundation Aid and Salary Incentive Aid which are both determined primarily by student attendance and have formulas that determine how much funding the State gives the school from taxes (Maiden, 1998). In 1981, the Legislature adjusted the Formula to take into consideration the individual needs of students. This needs-base formula took into account that students should be financed according to their unique needs, but research shows there are differing opinions on such a formula (BenHader et al., 2017). The Oklahoma Funding Formula attempts to determine how much funding is needed for each student to receive the education they need while the formula also endeavors to offer adjustments based on the variations in the needs of such students (Barnett & Kasmin, 2018). The Legislature has a responsibility to fulfill the Constitution's requirement along with meeting the demands of an ever-changing world that students must contribute to and thrive.

Funding Formula

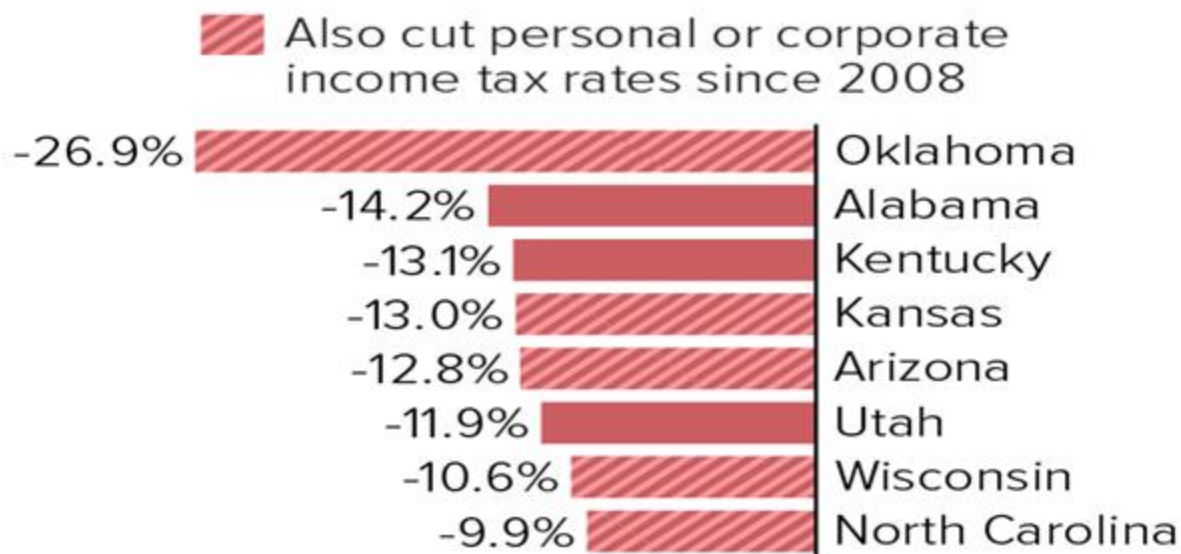
The Funding Formula was created in 1981 when the Legislature adopted methods for the distribution of state money to schools and was later amended in 1989 and 1996 to better represent students' individual needs. According to the Oklahoma State Department of Education's website, the Formula was created to enforce "vertical equity" so that all students whether gifted or special needs would have equal standing to an education. "The state uses a multi-tiered funding formula to support local districts and the formula is designed to provide a

level fiscal playing field among districts” (Hime & Maiden, 2019, p. 82). However, fully funding the Formula does not necessarily mean that the educational system in Oklahoma is funded (Hancock, 2015). “The funding formula used by Oklahoma and many other state governments apportions funds for education with a series of weights based on student characteristics. Elected policymakers create the standards and the penalties and design the budgets for financing the educational system ” (Ballard & Maiden, 2018, p. 2).

The Formula is driven by student enrollment based on a two-tiered system which is the Foundation Aid and the Salary Incentive Aid. First, the purpose of the Foundation Aid was to allow policy makers to allocate state aid using property taxes to help fund education (Baker & Green, 2005). Minor alterations in a state’s school funding formula can lead to a reallocation of millions of dollars, which explains the debate that has surrounded reform movements (Shelly, 2011). Furthermore, state policy makers could consider that the salaries of teachers, needs of students, and working conditions play a significant role in the cost to fund education and that perhaps, the Funding Formula is not always equitable and alternative methods of calculating funding might be necessary. The graph below shows how Legislators’ decision to cut taxes has affected Oklahoma education compared to other states in similar situations, but their decision reflects the downturn in the economy.

Figure 7

States with Deepest Income Tax Cuts from 2008-2017



Note: The above graph was retrieved from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

<https://www.cbpp.org/five-of-eight-states-with-deepest-k-12-cuts-also-cut-income-taxes-0>

The growing demand to fund this increasing number of students requires that more revenue sources be found or taxes need to increase. External factors such as a lack of funding and not enough educators in the classroom can create negative internal factors such as distrust, lack of appreciation, and frustration leading individuals to not pursue an education degree or present educators to leave teaching.

Formula Calculations based on Student Needs

As mentioned before, the Funding Formula attempts to make students equitable regardless of their background or school district by a series of mathematical formulas for districts to receive state funding, or the Foundation Aid. The basis of the aid considers the individual needs of students as well as their grade level. However, disparities in student funding abound and there is clear evidence that closing them would have a significant impact on student achievement (Morgan & Amerikaner, 2018). States that use a formula like Oklahoma’s place values on students in relation to a prediction of their achievement outcomes which is not likely to produce

an accurate forecast of the actual needs of students thereby not giving a truthful picture of needed school resources (Jackson, Johnson, & Persico, 2016). Often, funding is considered adequate if students' academic performance meets state's standards but meeting the individual needs of students is a challenge that has ended up in the courts (Barnett & Kasmin, 2018). Clearly, it is difficult to place a value on students because of the many variables involved with learning, but the State Formula does attempt to take those factors into consideration.

Taxes/Revenue

The Funding Formula includes taxes used as revenue for school districts which impacts how much aid schools receive. Another factor in determining aid is the revenue provided by the local district through its property taxes, school land earnings, motor vehicle taxes, rural electric association taxes, and gross production taxes. Research shows that the manner in which school districts spend money they receive from the state matters and the way in which they spend it is considerable because such money is usually used for much-needed instruction and instructional support (Ballard & Maiden, 2018). If taxes and revenue in the State are down, funding will be as well. "The reality for schools in Oklahoma is that the state may not be able to guarantee additional money for education" (Ballard & Maiden, 2018, p. 20). Oklahoma has to consider and investigate revenue sources so that it may fund education in the manner that makes students successful. Also, the State may need to investigate its tax structure and income tax cuts to avoid future deficiencies (Hancock, 2015). Ballard & Maiden (2018) contend that students who had better achievement results were in schools that received larger investments in instruction and instructional support salaries. This research supports the concept of the State needing to find stable and consistent revenue sources and examining its tax structure to appropriately fund education.

Federal Funding

The U.S. Government provides school districts with funds for specific programs that are given to the State and then distributed to schools, but this accounts for a small amount of aid because sources are not consistent on the exact level of funding but are less than ten percent for most districts. These monies are known as Title funds and act as supplements to state and local funding. President Johnson's ESEA of 1965 created the supplemental funds that are so important to schools with low income and special needs students in an effort to lessen the academic gap. Kaplan and Owings (2018) claim that the poorest schools that receive Title funding are able to assist the most students in need. Since 1965, research has focused on the relationship between increased spending and student achievement. Baker (2018) asserts that schools that have more funding are able to provide higher quality instruction with more teachers and resources that produce better student outcomes. This is the purpose of the supplemental funding from the government because student disparities exist and must be constantly reviewed for improvement.

Social Cognitive Career Theory

Psychologist Bandura created the Social Learning Theory in 1977 and then crafted it into the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) in 1986. Further studies and developments by other researchers have been completed on the SCCT with changes and items being added to the theory. SCCT primarily focuses on three basic concepts in relation to personality and career choice: self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals. Bandura asserted that individuals' assurance to perform tasks (self-efficacy) occurs between what they know as well as their belief in their personal capability to meet goals which decides the actions they will take, while self-efficacy is determined by their preceding performance accomplishments, observing others, verbal persuasion, and environment (Swanson & Fouad, 2014).

This theory has been primarily used to determine how career interests develop and explain how job performance is influenced by many factors. The principal assumption of SCCT is based on the relationship between the personal, cognitive, and environment of the individual with personal behavior as a function of particular factors, learning experiences, self-efficacy, outcome expectation, interest, environmental norms and values, and intention (Rajabi, et al., 2012). Models have been developed to explain the facets of these ideas with research declaring that some are appropriate for explaining the behaviors and choices of some groups and not for others. Fundamentally, individuals approach and perform in their careers of choice based on their own beliefs, expectations, and goals.

Lent, Brown, & Hackett (1994) created the choice model which posits that personal factors, personal beliefs, and outcome expectations influence the career interests, goals, actions, and performance of individuals. Further developments and models have been created to study specific groups and their environments to explain the SCCT, but this research will use Lent's 1994 model. Lent, et al., (1994) further proposed the following about factors, "Thus, SCCT posits that, when confronted by such presses, an individual's choice behavior may be guided less by personal interests than by other environmental and person factors (e.g., availability of acceptable if nonideal options, coupled with self-efficacy and outcome expectations related to these options)" (p. 38).

Self-Efficacy

Bandura's Theory suggests that self-efficacy is fundamental in determining the individual's choice of pursuits and environments as well as how effort is set forth and the tenacity one gives in determining the emotional responses when facing challenges while the SCCT is a very good indicator of academic and career-related choices (Lent, et.al., 1994).

“Social cognitive theory assumes that human ability is a dynamic (rather than fixed) attribute, and that competent performance at complex or challenging tasks generally requires both component skills and a strong sense of efficacy to reemploy one’s resources effectively” (Lent, et. al., 1994, p. 83). Self-efficacy is most likely to influence goals and actions of the individual directly and indirectly because of perceived self-ability. For example, if individuals believe that mathematics is important, they will more likely support such interests in themselves.

Self-efficacy refers to individuals’ ability to perform in the chosen work environment and perform tasks that will make them successful and personally satisfied. Self-efficacy is an important component in determining outcome expectations (Lent & Brown, 2008). It is the first step in determining the individuals’ choice of career because it is based on personal beliefs and abilities to accomplish goals.

Outcome Expectations

Bandura distinguished several divisions of outcome expectations such as physical, social, and self-evaluative results which likely affect career behavior (Lent, et.al., 1994). He also suggested that the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) proposes that people act on what they believe they can do well and what they believe the outcomes can be; however, the SCT found that the nature of the activity influences the individuals’ beliefs about their ability and their behavior. Interests are a component of outcome expectations in that what individuals find relevant is significant. Personal beliefs have a direct impact on outcome expectations because if individuals like a specific area of study, they will be motivated to set goals relevant to what is interesting. For example, SCCT is most often concerned with two types of goals: choice content which is an activity that individuals desire to pursue and performance which is the quality that individuals wish to achieve (Carrico & Tendhar, 2012).

Goals

“In SCCT career goals determination is considered as the personal intentions in favor the improvement of some impressive career behaviors” (Rajabi, et al., 2012, p. 1). This theory assumes that behavior is closely related to personal factors and that self-efficacy belief and outcome expectation have a direct impact on intention (Gainor & Lent, 1998). Self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals have a significant influence on career choices. Goals are a significant component of the SCCT because they regulate the individuals’ behavior. “Goals are a ubiquitous, if generally implicit, element of career choice and decision-making theories such as concepts as career plans, decisions, aspirations, and expressed choices” (Lent, et. al., 1994, p. 85). Goals are most likely to impact motivation on behavior because they are defined as “consciously articulated, personally relevant objectives that lend a sense of purpose and direction to people’s behavior” (Elliot, Sheldon, & Church, 1997, p. 915).

Alignment between Goals and Decisions

During a campaign, politicians make many statements and promises about what they want to accomplish in office. They also take opportunities to let voters know who they are on a personal level by sharing information about their family, career, and organizational membership. Citizens hold politicians to higher standards of expectation because of the impact their decisions and behavior will have on the district and state they are representing (Moynihan, 2008). Schultze & Vanderbosch (1998) found that people are more receptive to information that aligns with their personal belief system therefore they will seek out and use such data to support their personal beliefs.

Discrepancies between Goals and Decisions

Baekgaard et al., (2019) asserted that “politicians increasingly tend to misinterpret new information the more that information is at odds with their prior attitudes and beliefs” (p. 1124). This may lead to the discrepancy between what politicians state in their campaign goals and how they vote. Bullock (2009) found that regardless of the political party, when politicians are given more information that dissents from their personal belief system, they consider voting against their belief systems because the evidence is indisputable. Baekgaard et al., (2019) contend that “when confronted with larger amounts of unambiguous information, we expect politicians to be increasingly persuaded by the evidence and therefore less inclined to stick to their prior attitudes” (p. 1119). Redlawsk, Civettini, & Emmerson (2010) reported that there is a turning point when individuals cannot ignore new information and must go against what they believe. When confronted with incontestable data, it is challenging for politicians to deny that their personal beliefs may not align with what is factual. Education is one such field that people generally have strong feelings and beliefs which are difficult to sway, and politicians are no different.

Another factor that may produce discrepancies is educational research because it has a specific language that teachers would be more able to understand but maybe not the general public. Ion et al., (2019) found there were roadblocks between educators and policy makers when it comes to understanding the role of research:

...politics and the opportunity cost for decision-making, a lack of stable and efficient procedures to institutionalize their relationship, a high level of bureaucracy, limited resources and a lack of financing, a lack of institutionalized communication, limited accessibility of results, and a lack of consultation and cooperation between the two parties, attributed to their belonging to different professional areas, defined by different

cultures, values, and rewards (p. 10).

These factors are significant when trying to build relationships between educators and policy makers because misinterpretation and misunderstanding can create problems that will influence possible bills going into effect as laws, and this may explain the discrepancies between their stated goals and the actual decisions they make in office.

Voter disillusionment may be another explanation for the discrepancy between stated goals and decisions. Much has been written about the American political landscape since its formation in the 1780's, and the evolution of campaigning has moved from local to national as more states were added to the Union. Voters depend upon politicians to campaign so that they can develop an understanding and knowledge of who the candidate is and for what they stand; however, corruption has created apathy and distrust among voters. Stockemer, Bernadette, & Scruggs (2011) state that "corruption can make citizens skeptical of not only those officials who engage in corruption, but most or all public servants whether or not they are guilty" (p. 76). It is challenging for politicians to shake this stereotype because of its proliferation in American politics and can possibly lead to voter apathy and lack of trust. Nonetheless, corruption does occur in politics and it's challenging for citizens to distinguish between what is fact or fiction. Agerburg (2019) reported that, "It is now understood that corruption, arguably the most blatant example of poor institutional quality, is a pathology that is likely to be found thriving not only in autocratic states but also, to different degrees, in developed democracies" (p. 370).

Voters can find examples of political corruption, whether real or supposed, by looking at special-interest groups who pervade every state capitol as well as the nation's. Such groups influence politicians that are associated with them which impacts voters' opinions of the politicians' identity and belief system. Special-interest groups will influence voting by offering

campaign support and resources to assert their personal agendas (Lacombe, Coats, Shughart, & Karahan, 2016). This may lead politicians to be more motivated to take support from such groups or refuse to be associated with them, but voters are aware of such practices which can lead to disillusionment and mistrust. Special interest groups number in the tens of thousands in the United States who are organized around economic concern and often do not represent the wishes of the voters (Grossman & Helpman, 2001).

Studies on voter turnout began in 1982 with G. Bingham Powell, Jr.'s *Contemporary Democracies* which considered the many factors of what guides voters. Powell's research found that the most influential thing citizens consider when they vote is party beliefs (Blais, 2006). Although more research has been conducted since then, results have not changed much in that people usually choose candidates who share similar beliefs and values thereby motivating politicians to assert their party's fundamental belief system and using it as a platform to get the people's vote (Christensen, Jarvib, Mikko, & Von Schoultzb, 2021).

Summary

Chapter II provided a review of the literature regarding how education is funded at the National level and for the State of Oklahoma's public schools. Educational funding is a topic that has been studied but not so much for Oklahoma. The State is one of 11 that relies on a funding formula which attempts to meet the needs of students at all academic and grade levels; however, research shows that when the economy is not strong, it is difficult for the State to provide funds to meet the formula's requirement thereby leaving legislators with the challenging task of finding alternative sources of income. This study intends to investigate what internal and external factors influence legislators' decision-making process and if their stated goals regarding education are aligned with their behaviors using the SCCT to explain the findings.

After the literature review regarding funding and decision making was conducted, a look at the sources of revenue for Oklahoma and the need for the State to review its methods of taxation among the oil and gas industry as well as consider long-term sources of revenue were discussed. Also, a look at the literature pertinent to the Social Cognitive Career Theory and its self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals in explaining why educators turned to politics was given.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will discuss the methodology and data collection procedures that were used in this study. Analyzing the beliefs, outcomes, and goals of former educators who serve on the Common Education Committees in the House and Senate will provide insight into how elected educators address educational funding and their motivation to increase such funding. A qualitative case study was the methodology used for this study because it gave a narrative of how educators turned legislators' decision to run for office along with their goals and how their actual decision making occur and align.

Merriam's (1998) case study methodology directed this study's actions. Merriam asserted that case studies display and explain the connotations of the elements that occur within a complex social environment thereby allowing for an explanation of the behaviors and choices made by the individuals. Again, a case study was most appropriate for this research.

The education funding crisis began many years ago in Oklahoma, and the statistics continue to reveal that there is a large discrepancy between student achievement and funding. Ellinger (1992) asserted the significance of funding's influence on student achievement in Oklahoma after passage of the historic House Bill 1017 and the connection between students' achievement and funding. The latest national numbers for the 2017-18 school year show that

Oklahoma is one of sixteen states that has a D on its report card (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2021). In Oklahoma's defense, the national average is a C with no states receiving an A. Sixty-five educators ran for the Oklahoma Legislature in 2018 and twenty-two were elected. This increase in numbers has shifted the focus toward educational funding and more bills are being proposed each year to help public schools. For the 2020 Oklahoma Legislative Session, almost one-quarter of the bills proposed had to do with education; 60 in the House and 117 in the Senate (LegiScan, 2020). The 2022 is an election year and all of the potential participants for this study that are up for re-election are running for office.

The discrepancy between political parties as well as education committee members is clear when looking at how legislators vote. A majority of those who serve on the Common Education Committee in both the House and Senate have an educational background so that they have the knowledge to understand the research and information to vote accordingly. However, not all members have an education background therefore other factors must be considered as to why they serve and vote the way they do. Decision-making, personal beliefs, and motivation play a significant role in any job, but when individuals are given the power to make policy, sometimes priorities are neglected or influenced. Taber, Cann, & Kucsova (2008) found that politicians are unable to ignore their personal beliefs when listening to arguments and debate concerning education.

Statement of the Problem

Legislators in State governments are elected by the people to represent them in decision making to enhance government institutions, such as public education, using limited resources (Mezey, 2008). However, despite an outcry from their constituencies, legislative actions toward K-12 public education in Oklahoma have had a long history of funding inadequacies. In

response, educators, tired of experiencing repeated funding shortages, made their "voices" heard through a teacher walkout in 2018. This proactive involvement in legislative decisions led many educators to run for office to better represent their constituencies and meet the funding needs of public education (Bracic, Israel-Trummel, Rhinehart, & Shortle, 2020). Despite an increase of educators elected to legislative positions, funding for education in Oklahoma continues to fall well below educator expectations/needs, indicating that the goals of these elected educators remain unsatisfied (Baekgaard, et. al., 2017).

The reason that stated funding goals have not been reached may be explained by factors that these educators experienced once they moved into governmental leadership positions. For example, these educators may have stepped into an environment that undermines or challenges the decisions that they had intended to make in support of funding for education in ways they had not expected. Specifically, to execute bold influence in decision-making, it is logical to assume that a strong sense of self-efficacy combined with favorable outcome expectations would be needed to sustain and motivate goal attainment efforts (Bandura, 1986, 2001). When self-efficacy is lacking or when outcome expectations are diminished, it is likely that persistence to goal attainment would suffer, limiting the influence of these elected educators on funding decisions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand, through the lens of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), factors that elected educators have experienced that have influenced their ability and their motivation to affect increased funding for education in the State of Oklahoma.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

1. What factors have influenced the decision-making of these newly elected officials as they have sought to increase funding for education in the State of Oklahoma on their education committee?
 - a. What factors are external (work environment)? (self-efficacy)
 - b. What factors are internal (beliefs and/or perception of abilities)? (self-efficacy)
3. What goals did they claim during their election and what goals do they currently have while serving on the Education Committee? (goals)
4. Are there discrepancies between those goals and what they have currently? (outcome expectations)
5. How does the Social Cognitive Career Theory explain these findings?

Research Design

The epistemological perspective that guided this study was constructivism. Creswell (2013) stated that this research allows for “individuals to develop subjective meanings of their experiences—meanings directed toward certain objects or things” (p. 8). Such inquiry not only focuses on the individuals, but also the surroundings in which they function. Meaning was established through the interactions of the legislators and their education committees.

This study is a qualitative case study so its purpose was to understand factors that influenced legislator decision-making and how those decisions and behaviors aligned with their stated goals for funding education. Merriam (2009) asserted that qualitative case studies allow for the researcher to act as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis and then construct meaning and understanding from such material that will provide richly descriptive information. Also, Patton (2002) stated that a case study allows for the researcher to gather and

review data of the information from the case. A case study is appropriate for this study because it allowed for this specific issue to be studied in its context.

This study is important for two reasons: the small amount of research in this particular area and the long-standing problem with educational funding in Oklahoma. Conducting more research in this field is imperative for not only students, parents, educators, and education advocates, but also voters as all Oklahomans must work together to find ways to increase revenues (both short and long-term) to fund education. Awareness of the factors that influence our legislators' decisions is important.

Methodological Procedures

Participant Selection

Creswell (2013) reported that researchers should carefully choose participants that will assist the researcher in understanding the issue. The population for this study was Oklahoma Legislators who serve on the House and Senate Common Education Committees which is comprised of a total of twenty-eight individuals. According to the rules and customs of the Oklahoma Legislature, these individuals were chosen by the Speaker of the House based on their interests and experience (Oklahoma State Legislature, 2021). The House and Senate Common Education Committees are the ones who initially vote on bills that affect any aspect of education whether it's mandates or funding so that is why they have been selected for participation. Their responsibilities are also outlined in the Legislature's online manual which says that any committee member may submit an interim study for approval by the Speaker. The results of that study are heard by the entire committee who then votes to approve or disapprove whether it will be made into a bill that may eventually be heard in front of the entire legislature on the floor.

Patton (2002) stated that criterion sampling is selecting participants based on guidelines that are specific to what is being studied. The study focused on decisions made by politicians who were once educators who are now serving on the committee(s) who make the proposals concerning education. Merriam (1998) agreed that such sampling is founded on the premise that the researcher wants to gain knowledge through investigation and must do so through a select sample that can provide that information.

Given the small number of potential participants (11 members) in the population, all members were emailed the survey (Appendix B). My sample was those who chose to participate. Those who wished to participate in the interview were allowed to do so by clicking on a link in the survey. The purpose of this study was to understand what factors influence their decisions and if their behaviors align with their goals, which is what the survey questions specifically addressed.

Data Collection

According to Merriam & Tisdell (2016), qualitative research commands the use of abundant data resources so observations, surveys, and interviews were administered to investigate the legislators' decision-making processes. All participants were asked to sign a consent form after IRB approval was obtained.

Surveys

The survey in Appendix B was comprised of questions focused on the purpose of the study as well as helping to answer the research questions guiding this research. The survey contained six open-ended questions which ended with a final question asking for comments or suggestions. Caprara, Vecchione, Capanna, & Mebane (2009) found that surveys that measured perceived self-efficacy using a Likert Scale provided informative data. Such a survey is

important because one's perceived political efficacy is not confined to the individual's belief in their own influence but the shared belief among a group (Caprara, et al., 2009).

Eleven former educators that serve on the Common Education Committee members from the House and Senate were asked to complete it. Determination of their inclusion was based on their willingness to participate in the survey and the interview part of the research. Personal contact was made to encourage participation and surveys were sent electronically with a Word document being used to administer the survey. Schaefer & Dillman (1998) reported that the personalization of survey emails makes individuals more likely to respond than a generic, mass email. They also found that email surveys were completed on the day they were sent over 50% of the time and that such surveys were more likely to be answered when the respondents were made aware that such a survey would be sent to them. Dillman, Smith, & Christian (2014) suggested using two modes to collect data from the same person in a population such as email and in-person interview. When using email, Dillman, et al., (2014) proposed a timeline that covers three weeks in which letters and emails be sent to the participant. Although Schaefer & Dillman (1998) stated that contacting respondents did increase response, they encouraged researchers to know their population and decide the appropriate amount of time for contacting them. Therefore, I followed up with my population each week that I did not receive a response and allowed for two months for their survey to be included since my research took place over a three-month time period. The Oklahoma State Legislature's website states that January 22, 2022 was the deadline for bills to be introduced, and the spring session began February 7 with adjournment on May 27. My population had access to and knowledge of using email so completing the survey was supposed to be easily done, but it was not, which will be discussed in

chapter IV. Also, their survey responses were not anonymous since a copy of their responses for their records required their email address be collected in the Word document.

Interviews

Patton (2002) stated that interviews can provide the best source of information and data when the researcher is investigating what participants think and feel. Interviews are a rich source of information for any study as they allow for the participant to give authentic feedback and information to the questions being asked. Appendix C contains an interview protocol of questions that are specific to the research questions guiding this study in hopes that legislators felt comfortable enough to answer the questions that addressed their purpose for running for office as well as their personal and professional beliefs regarding education. Merriam (1998) proposed procedures for conducting semi-structured interviews: (a) ask open-ended questions so that truthful responses can be allowed, (b) utilize specific and consistent words to understand more significant information, and (c) establish a relationship with the participants. I conducted interviews in person as a priority and through Zoom or phone if not convenient or possible for the participant. My interviews took place where the participants felt most comfortable, which was in their office. Also, I conducted interviews, which were audio recorded, and then transcribed for the participants' review. Then, I observed member checking by allowing participants to read the transcription of the interview to verify the information and extend the opportunity to change their responses for accuracy. Their identity in the interview answers were kept confidential with only their answers being reported. Rubin & Rubin (2011) state that qualitative data gathering using interviews focus more on understanding specific situations and the people involved with them. These researchers also suggest using responsive interviewing

which is asking the main questions, probing, and following up with questions to the initial responses, which is appropriate for this study.

Interview Questions. The goal was to interview seven to nine committee members, but I interviewed ten. I strove for diversity of experience in terms of urban, suburban, and rural backgrounds by interviewing all but one who wished not participate in the interview part.

Observations

Merriam (2009) asserted that “observational data represent a first-hand encounter with the phenomenon of interest” (p. 117); therefore, I collected observational data for this case study through legislators’ formal educational committee meetings. Observations were conducted in the spring because that was when committee members met to hear, discuss, and recommend if bills should proceed to the floor for consideration among the entire legislature; however, I only surveyed committee members who were former educators. Field notes were collected using an observation protocol that is easily retrievable by topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During all my observations, I followed a protocol of documenting the physical setting, participants, interactions, reactions, and any other factors that may have an impact on their behaviors.

When using the SCCT, researchers usually develop questionnaires by which they can measure self-efficacy and goals and this study has done the same. In 1995 Bandura asserted that self-efficacy scales should focus on factors that are linked to ways in which self-efficacy and personal beliefs operate (Lent & Brown, 2006). Surveys and questionnaires revealed what external and internal factors influence self-efficacy and goals. The SCCT considers what additional influencing factors such as background, learning experiences, as well as supports and barriers play a role in self-efficacy and goals (Carrico & Tandhar, 2012).

The formal meetings were recorded so I was able to review them and gather more information at later times. Also, I recorded my reactions to what was occurring. Afterwards, I wrote memos so that I could note anything else of importance that came to mind. Merriam (1998) stated such memos can include researcher interpretation and the working hypotheses. The formal meetings were open to the public and were recorded so the public could view; therefore, their identity and confidentiality was not an issue in these settings.

Data Collection

The collection of data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Materials

<u>Research Questions</u>	<u>Artifacts</u>	<u>Observations</u>	<u>Documents</u>
What factors have influenced their decision-making?	SQ 1,2,3; IQ 1,	committee meetings	state documents
What goals did they claim when running for office compared to what they have as current Common Education Committee members?	SQ 5,6; IQ 2,3,4	committee meetings	state documents
Are there discrepancies between those goals and current ones?	SQ 6; IQ 4,5	committee meetings	office memos state documents election websites
How does the Social Cognitive Career Theory explain these findings?	SQ 5,6; IQ 6,7	committee meetings	state documents

Note. SQ-Survey Question IQ-Interview Question

Data Analysis

Creswell (2013) devised a six-step process for data analysis that this study followed: organize and prepare the data for investigation; review all the data; begin coding all the facts; use the coding process to produce an account of the setting, people, and the categories; communicate how the description and themes will be shown in the qualitative narrative; and analyze the findings. Creswell (2013) stated about this process that “the various states of analysis are interrelated and not always visited in the order present” (p. 196).

Merriam (1998) suggested that qualitative researchers use data analysis at the same time as data collection, which will allow me to focus on the information. I used a coding system that allowed for analysis of the data and that related to contributing factors and relationships that were used, along with other phenomena that potentially appeared while conducting surveys, interviews, and observations. Merriam & Tisdell (2016) suggest that an open coding process be utilized so that all data is considered significant. Merriam (1998) claimed that the process of categorizing is based on the researcher’s beliefs and understanding. Therefore, I reviewed all of the information from my observations, surveys, and interviews before devising a method that was most applicable for this research. However, themes that developed from the collected data were divided into categories that led to sub-categories. Steps were taken to arrange the data: organize and prepare the data by transcribing and typing; read and look at the data; coding the data looking for themes and descriptions; and generating descriptions and themes by topics.

Interpreting the data involved several procedures because capturing the essence of the observations, surveys, and interviews required summarizing, comparing, discussing and stating limitations, and future research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). My role as researcher is to conduct, organize, and report the findings. “Particularly in qualitative research, the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values,

assumptions, and biases” of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Being aware of my biases was important so the data could be reported accurately.

Researcher’s Role

This research relied on me to be the research instrument since this was a qualitative study. I carefully considered my own biases since this study was based on communication between me and the legislators who participated in this inquiry.

Researcher Bias

I graduated with a B.A. in English in 1996; M.Ed. in Secondary Education in 1998; M.A. in English in 2006; and an M.Ed. in Educational Administration in 2008. It is clear that I highly respect and value education as well as furthering my knowledge in the field in which I teach. As an educator for twenty-six years, I’ve seen many changes in funding to education at the State and Federal levels. The impact of funding is significant when considering all facets of a school system as well as the culture and environment that is created when funding is increased and decreased.

I have been a private and public-school teacher so I’ve seen both sides of the issue regarding funding. Private school parents and teachers advocate for vouchers because they believe they should have a choice in where their tax dollars are used for their children while public school supporters refer to state law which says tax funds are for the purpose of educating the public. I know that I will be more supportive toward public schools since that is where I have taught for over twenty years, and the families do not have the financial resources in this environment like the ones in the private school do. Also, my children have attended both private and public schools so I have been a parent who chose to pay tuition for my children to attend the private schools.

Studying educational funding in Oklahoma is important to me because I believe that in order to institute significant and meaningful change, understanding must first take place. The State Legislature is the heart of funding and these individuals are the ones who are elected to make decisions on behalf of the people; I believe that awareness of how they make such decisions and what factors influence them is important for all voters to know.

Ethical Considerations

As all research must be sensitive to the individuals taking part in this study, this situation is an exceptional one because legislators' actions are public. Nevertheless, even though these participants are used to being in the public and most of their work and words are publicly scrutinized, I was sensitive to the individuals taking part in this study. My goal was to do no harm to their reputation, allowing them autonomy and privacy in their willingness to participate and in their responses, and respect their beliefs and feelings. Also, I kept my political feelings private, trying to be apolitical, and wrote my feelings in my response journal. Merriam (1998) stated that ethical dilemmas occur in qualitative research for the research-participant relationship; therefore, I was cognizant of any ethical concerns that arose during the research process. Creswell (2013) asserted that possible ethical issues could include the following: "informed consent procedures; deception or covert activities; confidentiality toward participants, sponsors, or colleagues; benefits or research to participants over risks; and participant requests that go beyond the social norms" (p. 174).

Data Collection Ethics

To be respectful and mindful of such considerations, I developed an ethical way in which to collect the data that fulfills the above listed obligations. Merriam (1998) stated that researcher bias and participant privacy influence ethical issues related to data analysis. Creswell (2018)

claimed, “Good qualitative research contains comments by the researchers about how their interpretation of the findings is shaped by their background, such as their gender, culture, history, and socioeconomic origin” (p. 200-201). As the primary instrument of gathering the data, I, too, was aware of my own biases and interpretation of the participants’ responses that reflected their personal feelings and beliefs. Therefore, I made consistent, clear notes that reflected my thoughts and feelings as well as accurately reflecting those of my participants.

During my observations, I was mindful of what I was viewing and how I reported such information. Fortunately, my participants are in the public eye and have their behaviors and words scrutinized so I my presence did not seem to be a distraction or disruption to their work as all of my observations took place during their publicly viewed committee meetings. All documents and artifacts that I collected were available to the public so there was little concern that what information I have is confidential. Also, my observation notes were available to the participants upon request and were securely stored on paper at my home and on my home computer, which were not accessible by the public.

Finally, I applied for Institutional Review Board (IRB) through Oklahoma State University which required me to consider the best ways in which to keep the participants’ information confidential. Informed consent documents were emailed to those who chose to participate in my study.

Trustworthiness of Findings

Research must prove itself to be trustworthy through a series of steps that will validate its findings and ensure that reliability has occurred. Merriam (1998) stated that validity and reliability require careful attention to how data is collected, analyzed, interpreted, and how the findings are reported.

Internal Validity

Merriam (1998) posited that qualitative researchers might use the following six strategies to validate their information: triangulation, member checks, long term observations, peer examination, participatory research, and researcher biases. Therefore, I wrote follow-up emails, made phone calls, and made personal contacts for any questions I had for clarification of my survey and interview responses and observations.

Reliability

Merriam (1998) defined reliability as to how research data could be replicated. Three techniques to ensure such reliability are presented in the following table.

Table 2

Trustworthiness Techniques

Internal Validity

<u>Technique</u>	<u>Expected Results</u>	<u>Examples</u>
Triangulation	Confirm data	Transcriptions and State documents
Member checking	Confirm documents and artifactual conclusions	Transcriptions
Long-term observations	Gather in-depth data Gather accurate data Sort significant from insignificant	House Meetings Senate Meetings
Peer examination	Add a perspective from a respected source	State documents
Participatory research	Build trust Develop rapport Build relationships Gather accurate data	Surveys Interviews Observations State documents
Researcher Bias	Show biases for the party	Memos and journal notes

the researcher is a member of

Reliability

Referential adequacy	Provide an inclusive picture
Thick Description	Provide a data for communication
Audit Trail	Allow the examiner to determine the trustworthiness of the research

Note: The above table’s information was gathered from Erlandson, D.A, Harris, E.L., Skipper, B.L., & Allen, S.D. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry: A guide to methods.* Sage.

Limitations of Study

In any study, the researcher can be both an asset and limitation and I was, too, due to my actions as a researcher and my personal biases. Patton (2002) stated researchers must be aware of their personal biases and assumptions regarding the participants they are studying. In this case, I had little knowledge of the people and questions of which I was studying so that decreased my bias. Nonetheless, I remained open-minded to my biases and personal feelings, especially as I began the research process of observing, surveying, and interviewing. I did not allow my personal feelings or interpretations to skew the data interpretation which is why making personal memos and writing in a journal were imperative so that I could distinguish between what was fact and what was not.

Summary of the Study

Chapter III outlined the methodology that was utilized. It included a discussion of the research questions and designs, procedures, my role as researcher, ethical considerations, trustworthiness of my findings, and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Chapter IV presents findings from this qualitative case study. The purpose of this study is to understand, through the lens of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), factors that elected educators have experienced that have influenced their ability and their motivation to affect increased funding for education in the State of Oklahoma. Research questions included the following:

1. What factors have influenced the decision-making of these newly elected as they have sought to increase funding for education in the State of Oklahoma on their education?
 - a. What factors are external (work environment)? (self-efficacy)
 - b. What factors are internal (beliefs and/or perception of abilities)? (self-efficacy)
2. What goals did they claim during their election and what goals do they currently have while serving on the Education Committee? (goals)
3. Are there discrepancies between those goals and what they have currently? (outcome expectations)
4. How does the Social Cognitive Career Theory explain these findings?

Through the lens of Bandura's Social Cognitive Career Theory, participants were studied using an analysis of external and internal factors. Throughout the research process, data was collected

and analyzed using multiple methods such as observations, surveys, and interviews.

Triangulation occurred through member checks.

The aim of Chapter IV is to present themes that emerged from data analysis and directly address each research question. In order to provide context for the reader, this chapter will begin with a detailed description of the case—its setting, demographics, history, and the participants of the study. Next, so that readers may better understand the unique individuals included in the study, a general profile of the participants will be given. A brief discussion of methods used in analyzing data to generate findings will be explained. Then, I will present themes that emerged during analysis. Finally, I will directly answer research questions using the findings.

Context of the Case Study

Before statehood, Oklahoma, Choctaw for “red people,” was known as Indian Territory because in the 1800s thousands of Native Americans were moved to the location in an effort of assimilation. After Native Americans were settled on designated tribal reservations, land runs were held in 1889 and 1893 for individuals to stake claims and settle the non-native lands in an effort to end the wars with Native Americans and continue the homesteading acts that began in the early 1800s (Hightower, 2018).

Gaining statehood in 1907, Oklahoma is a mid-western state that lies in the “Bible Belt” of the United States. It became famous for its cattle trails, oil boom, and scenic Route 66 highway that runs through the middle of the state (Baird & Goble, 2013). Presently, its economy is primarily comprised of natural gas and oil, agriculture, and food (United States Department of Agriculture, 2007). As of January 2021, the Oklahoma State Election Board released the following data about Oklahoma’s registered voters: Democrats 32.9%; Republicans 50.1%; Libertarians 0.7%; and Independents 16.3% (Oklahoma State Election Board, 2021).

In 2018 a statewide teacher walkout occurred in most schools who shut their doors so that students and staff could gather at the Capitol in protest to the state of education. Since 2012, states across the nation organized walkouts in response to the lack of funding and cuts to education. The Oklahoma Walkout lasted nine days and although teachers gained a \$6,000 salary increase, they continued to protest in efforts to increase school-wide funding for classrooms, staff, and students (Harlow, 2020). A record number of educators ran for office that same year to assert themselves as political activists (Watts, 2020).

Due to the 2020 Oklahoma Census, redistricting took place in 2021 which changed the geographical configuration of some districts. As a result, some locales were in a new district with a different legislator. Added to the redistricting changes, the year 2022 is also an election year. Races that are up for the election include the Governor of Oklahoma, State Superintendent of Schools, and the House of Representatives. The governor and superintendent serve four-year terms and representatives serve a two-year term.

Currently, campaigning is in full swing. In March many voters began receiving political flyers in the mail from candidates running for the governor's race as well as the new legislators running for their district. The primary election will take place in June to choose one candidate for each party. If there is no decisive victory for one candidate, then a run-off will take place in August with the general election taking place in November. One candidate for the governor's office has changed parties and the race promises to be contentious as the attack commercials have begun. Television is the most effective way in which candidates can reach voters (Hale, Fox, & Farmer, 1996). Unfortunately, research suggests that negative ads suppress voter turnout which is why opposing campaigns do it (Gants, 1991).

An election year has effects on the Legislature in that some bills are presented in hopes of the author getting them signed into law in case they lose their election while other bills are suppressed by legislative leadership because they might upset voters. The COVID pandemic is still influencing voters and the Legislature by creating an unsettled political environment (Picchio & Santolini, 2021).

In the House and Senate, bills for consideration cover a variety of topics related to education: vouchers, school funding formula, violence in schools against teachers, teacher recruitment and retention, restrictions of books in public school libraries, and adding topics such as financial literacy for 10th to 12th graders and Holocaust instruction to school curriculums. Vouchers, especially, have been a main talking point among members of the Senate and the House because if passed, they would allow state dollars to be spent on private school tuition or other educational expenses instead of students attending public schools. Based on the OSDE, 2021 estimates are that a voucher would be worth approximately \$3,500 to \$5,300 per student and would add \$160 million dollars to the state budget to make up for the loss of those funds going to private schools.

During this study, bills related to these topics have been voted down, but the governor and senate leadership are still trying to find a way to get vouchers attached to another bill under consideration. Bills for consideration in the House and Senate had to be presented by March 4. The deadline for a bill to pass out of its committee was March 24, 2022. Then bills must be voted on by their origins (House or Senate) and must pass both the House and Senate Floors by April 28, 2022, before going to the governor who may or may not sign the bill into law in May. Even though a bill passes both sections, the governor can choose not to sign it into law by the May 27, 2022, deadline.

Presentation of Data

This section presents data relevant to understanding this study's context. Topics that are up for consideration in the legislature will be discussed.

Participants

This study looked at educators who turned to politics after 2018 who currently serve on the House or Senate Common Education Committees. These two committees were chosen because of their responsibility to hear bills on education. Personal contact was made at the Capitol with all eleven individuals who met these criteria. All individuals participated in the survey and ten participated in the interview. However, after all interviews were completed, one participant voiced concern over their information being included so that individual's survey and interview were withdrawn from the study to avoid any further issues. Nine interviews and ten surveys from the pool of eleven potential participants were completed. I chose not to identify the participants as being a member of the House of Representatives or the Senate as well as their political parties to protect their confidentiality. Again, the number of participants was small as I finished with nine interviews and ten surveys.

All participants served in various roles in education before their election. All were classroom teachers, administrators, or counselors. Others moved to administration to increase their salary while others stayed in the classroom. The Teacher Walkout of 2018 was the reason the majority, but not all, left education and ran for office. In summary nine interviews and ten surveys from the pool of eleven potential participants were collect, which is a high participation rate.

Data Collection

There were specific steps taken in collecting the data. First, I contacted each of the eleven legislators' Legislative Assistants (LA) by telephone to set up an appointment so I could introduce myself in person and explain my study to each legislator. I was able to meet in person with all but two legislators whom I spoke with over the phone. Bad weather threatened our scheduled in-person appointments.

During my initial conversation, I introduced myself, my study, and all eleven said they would do the survey. While in person I asked them to sign the consent letter, and then we scheduled another appointment to conduct the interview. Two of the legislators asked if we could complete the interview during that initial meeting, which we did.

All of the interviews were completed within one month. The interviews were all recorded and transcribed within one week of their occurrence. They were then sent to each legislator for their review giving them ten-days to make any changes or corrections, which none of them did. Also, I emailed a copy of their signed consent letters along with the transcribed interviews.

I had planned on all of the surveys being completed online through email but ran into some problems. First, some of the legislators were not able to open their survey because it was a Google document. I had to submit a change of form from Google to Word to IRB and that took over a week to obtain. Once I did gain approval, I emailed the surveys with only two legislators completing them within one week. I did follow up phone calls with the LA's who prompted the legislators to complete and email the surveys to me. However, I still had a few legislators not complete them. When I was at the Capitol to finish my final interviews, I went to those legislators' offices and asked them to complete the survey on paper. This resulted in gathering ten surveys.

I do find it interesting and significant that the legislators were eager to do interviews but the simple act of filling out an online survey presented the most challenges. The original plan was for them to complete the surveys prior to the interviews but that only occurred with two legislators. This would suggest that these individuals are well suited for the social side of politics in that they enjoy interacting with people. Many of them were enthusiastic about their input on such a study regarding education funding.

I deliberately conducted observations throughout the three-month data collection process. I observed the House Appropriation and Budget Education Committee three times and the House Common Education Committee four times. I observed the Senate Common Education Committee five times. Also, I observed the entire House and Senate debate on their respective floors once each. The total observations were fourteen times so that I could see the legislators in different situations, at different times, and specifically not to form biased opinions of them. I found their behavior to be consistent as I spoke to and observed all of them on these difference occasions and settings. This technique allowed me to immerse myself in their environment.

Data Analysis

Data for this study was collected through observations, interviews, and surveys. Creswell's (2013) six-step process for data analysis was used to analyze the data using organization and preparation of the data for investigation; reviewing all the data; coding all the facts; using the coding process to produce an account of the setting, people, and the categories; communicating how the description and themes will be shown in the qualitative narrative; and analyzing the findings. This process allowed me to continually consider how each piece of information related to the study's purpose and research questions. As participants responded both

to the survey and the interview, I began to see and consider potential ideas and themes. An example is the repetition of similar ideas and themes across the interviews.

Merriam & Tisdell's (2016) open coding process was utilized so that all data was considered significant. Merriam (1998) claimed that the process of categorizing is based on the researcher's beliefs and understanding. Keeping in line with this concept, I reviewed all of the information from my interviews, surveys, and observations and devised a method that was most applicable for this research. I organized and prepared the data by transcribing and typing; reading and looking at the data; coding the data looking for themes and descriptions; and generating descriptions and themes by topics.

The following sections present findings of the data collection and surrounding factors that elected educators have experienced that have influenced their ability and their motivation to affect increased funding for education in the State of Oklahoma. In keeping with the epistemology of constructivism case study methods, I have included direct quotes from participants to illuminate the voice of these legislators to reveal their motivation in funding education at the Capitol. Such information will allow for participants' subjective meanings to be heard and the establishment of meaning to occur through the interactions of legislators and their common education committees. They experienced situations and constructed their knowledge from their days in education. They brought such understanding to the Capitol in the form of goals thereby expecting great outcomes that would change education for the better.

Thematic Findings

While analyzing the interview data, I began to see that common words and themes emerged regardless of political party, gender, or place in the House or Senate. The observations

and surveys supported these themes as well. However, I did find a particular political party did produce some specific themes, which I will address.

Findings from Observations

House of Representatives. My first set of observations came from the House of Representatives which has the Appropriations and Budget for Common Education and the Common Education Committee. The Appropriations and Budget for Common Education consists of thirteen members and eight were previous educators, some of who also serve on the Common Education Committee. These meetings were live-streamed and also archived so the public can watch them afterwards. The agendas are available on the House website.

House Appropriations and Budget for Common Education Meetings

The first meeting I observed was the House Appropriations and Budget for Common Education on February 9 at 4:30 p.m. This committee hears bills that require funding. The meetings are usually held in Room 206, face to face. There are three rectangular tables set into a “u” shape with the chair and vice chair sitting at the short table and the committee members sitting along the other two long sides of the “u.” Chairs are set against the walls for guests and staff. Speakers presenting bills stand at a microphone at the open end of the “u,” unless they are committee members who stay in their chairs at the table.

The following agendas are not propriety information and can be found in the public domain. No violation of confidentiality occurred. Some bills have two authors listed which means that a member of the House and one from the Senate were co-authoring the bill. At this meeting the committee heard seven bills listed in the table below:

Table 3

Bill Numbers, Authors, and Descriptions

Bill	Author	Description
3072	Hasenback	Teachers; providing for and increasing amount of annual bonus for teachers with National Board certification; effective date; emergency
3322	Miller	Teachers; directing the State Department of Education to establish a microcredential program in dyslexia; effective date
3367	Roberts, E.	Schools; higher education; in-state tuition; members of Armed Forces; spouses; dependent children; effective date
3507	Provenzano	Schools; creating a task force to study feasibility of requiring high school students to complete certain application prior to graduation; effective date; emergency.
3564	McBride	Teachers; creating the Oklahoma Future Teacher Scholarship and Employment Incentive Program; effective date; emergency
3565	McBride	Teachers; providing a one-time bonus for certified classroom teachers employed by a public school district; effective date; emergency.
257	Hasenbeck,Coleman	Oklahoma Arts Council; authorizing Council to create endowment fund for certain purpose; providing for expenditures.

Source: Oklahoma House of Representatives website

<http://webserver1.lsb.state.ok.us/2021-22HB/CMN-AP-EDU-20220209-16300000.pdf>

The significant item I noticed about this meeting was when representatives stood before the committee to present their bill, most of them said they had already spoken to some members of the committee. All members were present. When committee members asked questions of the representative, they, too, mentioned that they had spoken to the legislator previously but still had

questions about the bill. Questions came from both Majority and Minority members. Clearly, it is important to have a relationship between members and their leadership so bills have the opportunity to be heard.

The concept of relationships supports what legislators said in their interviews regarding the importance of developing and establishing that connection. It was clear connections were made simply by the way legislators spoke to the committee members and the way questions occurred as they were congenial and informal in nature. It appears legislators did so to ensure their bill had the best chance to pass. Legislators are clearly motivated to create positive relationships among leadership and committee members to gain support for their bills.

Members came and went during the meeting but most were back in time to vote for the bill. Members receive an agenda of the meeting beforehand so they are aware of upcoming bills; these agendas are available to the public online or by request. Two of the bills were not heard, but the rest passed. The few nay votes came from both Majority and Minority members.

I observed another House Appropriations and Budget Committee for Education on February 21 at 10:30 a.m. that heard eight bills all of which again related directly to funding:

Table 4

Bill Numbers, Authors, and Descriptions

Bill	Author	Description
4388	Hilbert	Amusements and sports; Oklahoma Education Lottery Act; proceeds; Teacher Empowerment Fund; State Department of Education; characteristics; procedures; instructions; effective date; conditional effect.
1836	Waldron	Teacher certification; establishing a Data Governance Council; effective date.

3262	Talley	Schools; class size; deleting exception from class size penalties for certain districts; modifying calculation to determine class size; effective date.
4044	Hasenbeck	Students; requiring school districts to provide remediation for students who score below certain benchmarks on the ACT or SAT exam; effective date; emergency.
4154	Goodwin	Tulsa Reconciliation Scholarships; income qualification; scholarship number; appropriation; Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education; allocation; Tulsa Reconciliation Education and Scholarship Trust Fund; effective date; emergency.
3759	Johns	Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program; providing Program eligibility for children of certified teachers; effective date; emergency.
3720	McBride	School curriculum; requiring Holocaust education in public schools; effective date; emergency.
3367	Roberts, E.	Schools; higher education; in-state tuition; members of Armed Forces; spouses; dependent children; effective date.

Source: Oklahoma House of Representatives website

<http://webserver1.lsb.state.ok.us/2021-22HB/CMN-AP-EDU-20220221-10300000.pdf>

This House Appropriations and Budget for Committee meeting was similar to the one I had observed the week before. Again, all members were present. There was the usual question/answer period with the opportunity for debate. This time all of the bills passed. Since I had completed a few interviews by this time, I knew that Minority members would include or give their bills to Majority members so they would have a greater chance of being placed on the agenda or passing out of committee. I witnessed this happen when a Minority member's name was still on a bill, but the Majority member presented the bill.

The final House Appropriations & Budget for Education Committee meeting I observed was on April 4 at 10:30, Room 4S5. Only one bill was presented:

Table 5

Bill Numbers, Authors, and Descriptions

Bill	Author	Description
1673	Nollan, Pugh	Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program; providing income qualification based on certain number of dependent children. Effective date. Emergency.

Source: Oklahoma House of Representatives website

<http://webserver1.lsb.state.ok.us/2021-22HB/CMN-AP-EDU-20220404-10300000.pdf>

This meeting lasted six minutes with half of the committee present. They met in a different room with a large rectangular table which they all sat around. There were a few questions, but the bill was quickly approved.

House Common Education Meetings

I observed my first House Common Education Committee on February 15 at 10:30 a.m. in Room 206. The setting of this meeting reflected that of the Appropriations and Budget's with the tables and chairs in the same places since it was held in the same room. This committee consisted of fifteen members and ten were previous educators. There were eleven bills presented:

Table 6

Bill Numbers, Authors, and Descriptions

Bill	Author	Description
3038	Boles	Schools: student transfers; permitting school district to give preference for sibling transfers; emergency.
3643	Dills	Schools; modifying and establishing requirements for governing boards which contract with certain management organizations; effective date; emergency.

3644	Dills	Schools; modifying various provisions of the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act and related sections of law to provide for additional transparency; effective date; emergency.
3645	Dills	Virtual charter schools; modifying attendance requirements for virtual charter school alternative education programs; effective date.
4370	Ford	Schools; meetings of school boards of education; requiring certain meetings to be accessible through a live video and audio stream; effective date.
3823	Newton	Schools; vision screening; specifying that optometrists and ophthalmologists may perform screening; adding exemptions; effective date.
3658	Sterling	Teacher certification; Oklahoma Teacher Preparation Act; removing requirement to pass the general education portion of the competency examination; effective date.
3655	Sterling	Schools; subject matter standards; including agricultural power and technology in fine arts curriculum; effective date.
3656	Sterling	Schools; authorizing school district to offer law enforcement elective course to juniors and seniors; effective date.
4107	Vancuren	Teachers; directing State Board of Education to issue teaching certificate for teacher certified by a federally recognized tribal nation; effective date.
4390	Baker	Teachers; Education Leadership Oklahoma Act; modifying micro-credential program for teachers; effective date.

Source: Oklahoma House of Representatives website.

<http://webserver1.lsb.state.ok.us/2021-22HB/CMN-COMED-20220215-10300000.pdf>

Similar to the House Appropriations and Budget Committee meeting, I noticed that when presenting their bill or answering questions, legislators mentioned they had previously spoken to

committee members. All members were present. When members questioned the legislator presenting the bill, they often stated that even though they had already spoken, they still had a few questions. Questions came from both Majority and Minority members. Obviously, members receive an agenda of the meeting beforehand so they were aware of upcoming bills. Again, members did leave and return to the meeting while bills were being presented but mostly returned in time to vote. This suggests they knew what the bill was and had decided how to vote. Almost all of the bills presented passed with the few nay votes coming from both Majority and Minority members. One bill was not heard.

The next House Common Education Committee meeting I observed took place two weeks later on March 1 at 10:30 a.m. in Room 206 with twenty-one bills for consideration:

Table 7

Bill Numbers, Authors, and Descriptions

Bill	Author	Description
3968	Burns	Education; creating the Education Act of 2022; effective date.
3502	David	Schools; modifying age requirement for compulsory school attendance; emergency.
3896	Hasenbeck	School curriculum; subject matter standards; requiring certain subject matter standards to include a book icon; effective date.
3872	Phillips	Education; creating the Oklahoma Education Act of 2022; effective date.
3432	Kerbs	Agriculture; Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry; overseeing school lunch program; effective date.
2991	West	Schools; requiring students participating in 4-H activities to be considered present for attendance purposes; effective date.

3500	McEntire	Schools; creating the Oklahoma Schools Act of 2022; effective date.
1919	Blancett	Schools; setting minimum ratio of students to certified school counselors; effective date.
3084	Hilbert	School transportation; authorizing transport of students living outside of certain boundaries and routes; effective date; emergency.
4387	Hilbert	Teacher certification; providing for issuance of advanced teaching certificates; modifying procedures for issuing lead and master teaching certificates; effective date; emergency.
3092	Hilbert	School libraries; directing library media program to be reflective of community standards when acquiring materials, resources, and equipment; effective date.
4409	Lowe, D.	Schools; subject matter standards; modifying graduation requirement to complete a personal financial literacy course; effective date; emergency.
3506	Provenzano	Teachers; providing exemption from Professional Learning Focus for teacher who exceeds certain amount of professional development; effective date.
2768	Randleman	Education; creating the Education Improvement Act of 2021; effective date.
3552	Caldwell, C.	Education; creating the Oklahoma Education Act; effective date.
3545	Caldwell, C.	Charter schools; creating the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act of 2022; effective date.
3373	West, T.	School textbooks; clarifying when a school district may petition the State Board of Education; emergency.
3374	West, T.	Community schools; authorizing the State Board of Education to assist in establishing community school pilot projects; effective date.

4107	Vancuren	Teachers; directing State Board of Education to issue teaching certificate for teacher certified by a federally recognized tribal nation; effective date.
4389	Baker	School curriculum; subject matter standards; modifying computer science college preparatory curriculum requirements; effective date.
4393	Baker	Schools; modifying frequency of conducting an educator supply-and-demand study; listing shortage areas to be identified in study; effective date.

Source: Oklahoma House of Representatives website

<http://webserver1.lsb.state.ok.us/2021-22HB/CMN-COMED-20220301-10300000.pdf>

This meeting was very lengthy because of the twenty-one bills. All members were present. This was the last meeting before the deadline for bills to be passed in the House and then proceed to the Senate Common Education Committee for consideration. In the last thirty minutes of the meeting, some committee members had to leave so they voted from their offices and their votes were voiced by the chair. Only two bills failed at this meeting.

Meetings that take place in April are considering bills that have passed the Senate Common Education Committee. The final meeting I observed took place on April 5 at 10:30 a.m. in Room 206. If the House Common Education Committee passed these bills, then they were able to go to the House floor for debate. There were two authors listed on each bill in this meeting with the first a House author and the second a Senate author. There were nine bills that were on the agenda from the Senate:

Table 8

Bill Numbers, Authors, and Descriptions

Bill	Author	Description
SB1112	Dills, Pemberton	Student transfers; allowing the child of a support employee to transfer to employing district. Effective date. Emergency.

SB1119	Hilbert, Garvin	Teachers; removing clock-hour limitation for adjunct teachers; including adjunct teacher in certain retirement definition. Effective date. Emergency.
SB1307	Vancuren, Coleman	Students; requiring certain schools to include certain information on student identification cards. Effective date.
SB1408	Lawson, Rosino	Children; adding responsibilities of Oklahoma partnership for School Readiness Board. Effective date.
SB1429	Sterling, Haste	Alternative teacher certification; providing option of passing certain competency examinations; providing exemption for certain degree. Effective date. Emergency.
SB1618	Baker, Pugh	State Department of Education; directing the Department to develop a website for district employment vacancies. Effective date. Emergency.
SB1620	Hilbert, Pugh	School transportation; removing language restricting transportation within certain boundaries. Effective date. Emergency.
SB1624	Kerbs, Pugh	School meals; granting the Board of Agriculture the authority to administer the National School Lunch Act. Effective date.
SB1671	Bush, Pugh	School curriculum; directing development of curricula and materials related to Holocaust education. Effective date. Emergency.

Source: Oklahoma House of Representatives website.

<http://webserver1.lsb.state.ok.us/2021-22HB/CMN-COMED-20220405-10300000.pdf>

One bill was held over and two were withdrawn so only six were heard. When a bill is withdrawn, it can be for several reasons: the author withdraws it; the chair withdraws it; or the author is saving it for consideration next year. One bill failed. All committee members were

present except one. There was much discussion on two bills, but the rest had little discussion or questions.

The final House Common Education Committee Meeting took place on April 12 at 10:30 a.m. in Room 206. Twelve bills were on the agenda:

Table 9

Bill Numbers, Authors, and Descriptions

Bill	Author	Description
SB626	Randleman, Bullard	Students; allowing disclosure of whether a student has received certain mental health services. Effective date. Emergency.
SB1138	Pae, Pemberton	Schools; modifying provisions of the School Safety and Bullying Prevention Act. Effective date. Emergency.
SB1139	Baker, Bullard	Teacher pay; creating a task force to study and make recommendations on certain pay for teachers. Effective date. Emergency.
SB1147	Miller, Taylor	Schools; allowing the State Board of Education to determine if certain course is eligible for certain credit. Effective date. Emergency.
SB1238	Ranson, Dugger	Schools; allowing transfer students to enroll in certain fulltime virtual education program. Effective date. Emergency.
SB1408	Lawson, Rosino	Children; adding responsibilities of Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Board. Effective date.
SB1535	Osburn, Pugh	Teachers; repealing language relating to the Oklahoma Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Evaluation System. Effective date. Emergency.
SB1544	Conley, Pederson	Schools; prohibiting certain schools from knowingly entering into a transaction with certain individual or entity. Effective date. Emergency.

SB1579	Hilbert, Paxton	School employees; allowing a district board of education to approve certain leave of absence for certain purpose. Effective date. Emergency.
SB1621	Caldwell, C, Pugh	Charter schools; creating the Statewide Charter School Board; providing for succession to certain contracts. Effective dates. Emergency.
SB1623	Boatman, Pugh	Schools; creating the Learn Everywhere Act to allow students extended learning opportunities. Effective date. Emergency.
SB1631	Vancuren, Pugh	Teachers; directing the Commission for Educational Quality and Accountability to establish a mentor teacher pilot program. Effective date. Emergency.

Source: Oklahoma House of Representatives website
<http://webserver1.lsb.state.ok.us/2021-22HB/CMN-COMED-20220412-10300000.pdf>

All committee members were present. One bill was not heard, but the rest of the bills were presented and passed. There was little discussion on most of the bills. Three bills did have quite a few questions from committee members.

In April, I also observed the House of Representatives discuss and debate bills on the House Floor. Most members were present at their desks. The Floor is reflective of a classroom with the Speaker at the front and seven rows and eight columns with two representatives sharing a desk. Representatives took turns presenting the bills that were up for considering from the Senate that they had co-authored. They used a microphone at their desk and when others had questions, they would stand and ask using their microphones. Members were presenting bills they had co-authored from the Senate. There was much discussion and debate since if these bills were approved, they would be going to the governor's desk.

What is interesting about the House Common Education Committee meetings is that they met earlier in the session and had fewer bills that were presented in comparison to the Senate. After conducting the interviews, I am suggesting this occurs for two reasons: leadership chooses

the bills they are confident will pass or have a strong possibility of passing in the House committees while the Senate spends much more time debating. Secondly, the House works more quickly because it has 101 members and has to be more efficient in presenting their bills in order to get them out of committee. This is likely because the Floor considers all of the amendments that might need to be made. In April while listening to a podcast, I heard one of the chairs of a House committee state that they only put bills on the agenda they are confident will pass. So, this is likely the reason there are not as many bills presented in the House as in the Senate because leadership is possibly more selective about the agenda.

I noticed something interesting about Floor debate. Members were able to listen from their offices and enter the Floor to verbally vote, a change that took place during the Pandemic and is still in effect. When I asked one legislator about this, they said it allowed for House members to take care of work in the office because they knew the agenda for bills and had already decided their vote. If they wanted to participate in discussion on a bill, they could stay on the Floor at their desk and do so. Otherwise, they could work from their office desk, have meetings, listen to the proceedings over the intercom, and enter the Floor if they needed to vote. Representatives no longer have to sit at their Floor desk for discussion, but they have to be physically present to vote. This is why a fourth floor office is somewhat coveted because they can step straight from their office into the chamber and signal their vote. This applies also to the Senate. Any implications to this will be discussed in Chapter V.

The Senate. My second set of observations came from the Senate which like the House has the Appropriations and Budget for Common Education and the Common Education Committee. The Appropriations and Budget for Common Education consists of thirteen members. Eight were previous educators and also serve on the Common Education Committee.

These meetings are live-streamed and also archived so the public can watch them afterwards. Agendas are also posted on the Senate website.

The Senate Appropriations and Budget for Common Education Committee met once while the Common Education Committee met weekly from February 8-March 1. Like all of the House meetings, the Senate live-streams and archives their meetings for public viewing. I observed all of these weekly meetings. These meetings were live-streamed and archived so the public can watch them at any time. Their agendas were also available on the Senate website.

Senate Appropriations and Budget Education Subcommittee Meetings

I was not able to observe any meetings as they were not scheduled on the website. There are six members of this committee with four previous educators and one a school counselor.

Senate Common Education Meetings

The Senate Common Education Committee meetings took place weekly from February 8-March 1. This committee has thirteen members with seven members who were previously in education. The meeting took place in Senate Room 535. The room was theater-like in setting where senators sat at long tables and the leadership was seated at the front. Guests and staff could sit at chairs in the back of the room. There were thirteen bills presented:

Table 10

Bill Numbers, Authors, and Descriptions

Bill	Author	Description
703	Pugh	Teacher compensation; requiring credit by given For out-of-state and out-of-country teaching Experience. Effective date. Emergency.
1112	Pemberton	Student transfers; allowing the child of a support Employee to transfer to employing district. Effective date. Emergency.

1147	Taylor	Schools; allowing the State Board of Education to Determine if certain course is eligible for certain Credit. Effective date. Emergency.
1175	Rader	School personnel; directing boards of education That adopt certain policy to submit policy to the State Department of Education. Effective date. Emergency.
1190	David	Career and technology education; allowing the Establishment of certain courses in hydrogen Energy. Effective date. Emergency.
1191	Stanley, Baker	Schools; creating the Oklahoma Principal Leadership Program; providing for participation. Effective date. Emergency.
1207	Montgomery	Student assessments; directing the State Board of Education to promulgate rules for limited exceptions to testing window. Effective date. Emergency.
1377	Hall	Higher education; allowing the board of regents of Oklahoma colleges to issue certain obligations. Effective date. Emergency.
1429	Haste	Alternative teacher certification; proving option of Passing certain competency examinations; Providing exemption for certain degree. Effective Date. Emergency.
1512	Pugh	Higher education; stating legislative intent for Institutions regarding scores required on certain Examination to grant credit. Effective date. Emergency.
1618	Pugh	State Department of Education; directing the Department to develop a website for district Employment vacancies. Effective date. Emergency.
1630	Pugh	Teachers; directing school district to conduct exit Interviews with certain teachers; providing for use Of date. Effective date. Emergency.
1631	Pugh	Teachers; directing the Commission for Educational

		Quality and Accountability to establish a mentor Teacher pilot program. Effective date. Emergency.
1659	Newhouse	Tax credits; modifying certain Oklahoma Equal Opportunity Education Scholarship Act reporting Dates. Effective date.

Source: Oklahoma Senate website

<https://oksenate.gov/committees/meeting-notices/education-41>

This meeting lasted approximately two hours, and all members were present.

Interestingly, there was no mention of senators having prior discussion about the bills like there was in the House during the question/answer period. Only one senator mentioned that his/her bill was a bi-partisan effort. The Senate meetings also seemed to be more formal than the House meetings. Also, the questions primarily came from the Minority. Although the Minority were the only ones with the nay votes, all eleven bills passed. Members did not come and go during these meetings like they did in the House meetings. They stayed for questions and debate which occurred on almost every bill.

I observed another Senate Common Education meeting on February 15 at 10 a.m. that began in the morning and finished in the afternoon with a break for lunch. Some bills had two authors with the first author a Senate member and the second a House member. There were thirteen bills heard:

Table 11

Bill Numbers, Authors, and Descriptions

Bill	Author	Description
1592	Treat	Liability insurance; creating Educators' Professional Liability Insurance Program; Requiring liability coverage for school employees. Emergency.

1583	Treat	Schools; allowing a transfer allowance to be Granted to a student enrolled in certain school To attend a private school. Effective date. Emergency.
1647	Treat	Students; creating the Oklahoma Empowerment Act; providing eligibility for Oklahoma Empowerment Accounts. Effective date. Emergency.
1108	Bergstrom	School finances; adding items to be reviewed by School Finance Review Commission. Effective Date. Emergency.
1447	Jett	School district boards of education; removing Language requiring members to complete certain Instruction. Effective date.
1138	Pemberton, Pae	Schools modifying provisions of the School Safety And Bullying Prevention Act. Effective date. Emergency.
1284	Stanley, Baker	Higher education; repealing language creating the Dyslexia teacher training pilot program. Effective Date.
1416	David	Higher education; providing in-state status for current Oklahoma National Guard members. Effective date. Emergency.
1418	David	Higher education; creating the Oklahoma National Guard Educational Assistance Act; providing for Eligibility. Effective date. Emergency.
1213	Dossett, J.J.	Career and technology education; creating the Oklahoma National Guard Career Tech Act; Eligibility. Effective date. Emergency.
1535	Pugh	Teachers; repealing language relating to the Oklahoma Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Evaluation System. Effective date. Emergency.
1620	Pugh	School transportation; removing language Restricting transportation within certain boundaries.

Effective date. Emergency.

1627

Pugh

Higher education; creating the Workforce Development Revolving Fund; providing for award Of funds. Effective date. Emergency.

Source: Oklahoma Senate website

<https://oksenate.gov/committees/meeting-notice/education-42>

Like the February 8 meeting, most questions came from the Minority . In the afternoon meeting, which took place in a different room from the morning meeting, there was one mention by a legislator that previous conversation had taken place about a bill. All of the bills passed. Again, most nay votes were from the Minority.

I observed another Senate Common Education meeting on February 23. The morning meeting took place in the regular Senate Room 535. There were six bills presented in that meeting. Some of these bills had two authors with the first author a senate member and the second was a house member. The afternoon meeting took place in a different room from the morning meeting but the same room as the afternoon meeting from last week. The total time of both meetings was approximately three hours. As in the previous meetings, most of the questions came from the Minority and the nay votes were primarily from the Minority. Two authors were on the bill with the Senate author listed first and the House second. There were seventeen bills for consideration:

Table 12

Bill Numbers, Authors, and Descriptions

Bill	Author	Description
2	Bergstrom, Hasenbeck	School finance; directing the School Finance Commission to review certain matters. Effective date. Emergency.

13	Stanley, Baker	Teachers; requiring a teacher whose certificate has been suspended to be placed on suspension. Effective date. Emergency.
22	Floyd, West,T	Boards of education; directing a nonprofit organization be given right of first refusal to purchase certain property. Effective date. Emergency.
51	Hicks, Sterling	Teacher certification; removing requirement for general education portion of examination. Effective date. Emergency.
89	Haste, Baker	Education; creating the Health Education Act; requiring health education to be taught in public schools. Effective date. Emergency.
126	Daniels	Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program; modifying certain discrimination prohibition. Effective date. Emergency.
132	Bullard	Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program; allowing eleventh-grade students to enter into agreements. Effective date. Emergency.
222	Standridge	Scholarships; creating the Hope Scholarship Program Act; allowing certain parents and legal guardians to request scholarship. Effective date. Emergency.
229	Montgomery	Teacher certification; allowing renewal of emergency or provisional certificate for up to five years. Effective date. Emergency.
292	Haste, Nollan	Higher education; creating a task force to study concurrent enrollment needs of the state. Effective date. Emergency.
419	Dossett (J.J.)	Student assessments; removing requirement for assessment in U.S. history. Effective date. Emergency.
503	Dahm	Schools; requiring certain subject matter standards and assessment include certain historical documents. Effective date. Emergency.
614	Bullard	Higher education; affording certain rights to students enrolled in certain institutions. Effective date. Emergency.

642	Pugh	Student assessments; allowing administration of certain multiple-aptitude battery. Effective date. Emergency.
701	Jett	School support employees; directing support employees be entitled to pay for certain lost time. Effective date. Emergency.
783	Pugh, Boles	Student transfers; directing the State Department of Education to establish certain capacity; directing adoption of certain transfer policy. Effective date.
807	Kidd	School support

Source: Oklahoma Senate website

https://oksenate.gov/sites/default/files/2021-02/CMN-ED-20210223-09000000_1.pdf

The total time of both meetings was approximately three hours. All of the members were present. As in the previous meetings, most of the questions and nay votes came from the Minority. Not all of the bills passed. I do specifically want to mention that the bills that were voucher related did not pass. Although the Senate leadership presented the bills, members of the leadership’s party had many questions and eventually voted against the bill. This occurrence demonstrates that politics must have influenced the senators more than relationships with leadership. Because of media coverage, it is public knowledge that the Senate leadership wrote such bills, but there was very little support among committee members to pass them onto the House for consideration.

The March 1 Senate Common Education meeting took place at 10:30 a.m. in Senate Room 535 and lasted almost two and a half hours. The first author’s name is from the Senate and the second is from the House. There were thirteen bills for hearing:

Table 13

Bill Numbers, Authors, and Descriptions

Bill	Author	Description
1119	Garvin, Hilbert	Teachers; removing clock-hour limitation for adjunct teachers. Effective date. Emergency.
1165	Stanley, Miller	Higher education; granting priority enrollment and registration to certain students. Effective date. Emergency.
1238	Dugger, Ranson	Schools; allowing transfer students to enroll in certain full-time virtual education program. Effective date. Emergency.
1238	Garvin, Hill	Oklahoma Center of the Advancement of Science and Technology; repealing advisory committee. Emergency.
1285	Stanley, Baker	Education; repealing language regarding the Oklahoma School for the Visual and Performing Arts. Effective date.
1307	Coleman	Students; requiring certain schools to include certain information on student identification cards. Effective date.
1317	Stanley, Baker	Cities and towns; repealing Advisory Committee to the municipal clerks and treasurers division of the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education. Effective date. Emergency.
1379	Garvin, McEntire	School employment; allowing a school district board of education to contract for student mental health counseling with certain individual. Emergency.
1405	Floyd, McEntire	Schools; naming act related to suicide awareness and training Evan's Law. Effective date. Emergency.
1512	Pugh	Higher education; stating legislative intent for institutions regarding scores required on certain examination to grant credit. Effective date. Emergency.

1579	Paxton	School employees; allowing a district board of education to approve certain leave of absence for certain purpose. Effective date. Emergency.
1623	Pugh	Schools; creating the Learn Everywhere Act to allow students extended learning opportunities. Effective date. Emergency.
626	Bullard, Randleman	Students; directing disclosure of whether a student has received certain mental health services. Effective date. Emergency.

Source: Oklahoma Senate website.

<https://oksenate.gov/committees/meeting-notices/education-46>

Only three bills were heard in the morning session because of the lengthy debate. All members were present. Ten bills were heard during the afternoon session of this committee. Again, most questions were from the Minority and almost all the nay votes were from the Minority. After watching all of these weekly meetings, I’m led to believe that the Minority is left out of discussion among the Majority outside the Senate Chamber, and this belief is supported from the interviews. One Minority member stated, “We don’t see any real outcomes collaborative outcomes when it comes down to the votes.” This member also said, “The legislative priorities of the supermajority are the ones that pass.” However, this member added that the Minority more often votes yes than no on the bills of the Majority.

The final Senate Common Education Committee meeting to consider bills from the House took place on April 12 at 9 a.m. in Room 535. Like the House meetings, the first name is the House author and the second is the Senate author. There were twelve bills for debate:

Table 14

Bill Numbers, Authors, and Descriptions

Bill	Author	Description
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HB 2991	West, Allen	Schools; requiring students participating in 4-H Activities to be given excused absence for Attendance purposes; effective date.
3643	Dills, Pemberton	Schools; virtual charter schools; modifying and Establishing requirements for governing boards Which contract with certain management organizations; effective date; emergency.
3645	Dills, Pemberton	Virtual charter schools; modifying attendance Requirements for virtual charter school Alternative education programs; effective date.
3872	Phillips, Taylor	Schools; Charter Schools Act; sponsorship; Office of Juvenile Affairs; emergency.
4014	Conley, Bergstrom	Public libraries; disclosure of records; permitting Disclosure of certain records to parent or legal Guardian; effective date.
4106	Vancuren, Pemberton	Schools; requiring school districts to maintain protocol for responding to students in mental health crisis; effective date; emergency.
4107	Vancuren, Rogers	Teachers; directing State Board of Education to Issue teaching certificate for teacher certified by A federally recognized tribal nation; effective date.
4349	McCall, Bullard	Schools; boards of education; modifying size of school district for exemption from on certain relatives; emergency.
4387	Hilbert, Pugh	Teacher certification; providing for issuance of Advanced teaching certificates; modifying Procedures for issuing lead and master teaching Certificates; effective date; emergency; conditional Effect.
4389	Baker, Stanley	School curriculum; subject matter standards; Modifying computer science college preparatory Curriculum requirements; effective date; emergency.

4390	Baker, Stanley	Teachers; Education Leadership Oklahoma Act; Modifying micro-credential program for teachers; Effective date.
4154	Goodwin, Young	Tulsa Reconciliation Scholarship Trust; Administration; award of scholarships; qualifying Income; number of scholarships; effective date; Emergency.

Source: Oklahoma Senate website

<https://oksenate.gov/committees/meeting-notices/education-50>

This meeting lasted one hour and twenty-three minutes. Nine members were present at the beginning, but another two arrived within the first twenty minutes. All of the bills passed unanimously except two. There was much discussion regarding two bills. This meeting did progress very quickly as there were few questions and no debate.

In April I observed the Senate debate and vote on the Floor. Most members were present at their desks. The Floor is reflective of a classroom with the Speaker at the front and the members at their individual desks with seven rows and seven columns. Senators took turns presenting the bills that were up for considering from the House that they had co-authored. They used a microphone at their desk and when others had questions, they would stand and ask using their microphones.

In conclusion, the twelve meetings I observed in the House and Senate Common Education Committees were professional and conduct their meetings following a certain protocol. However, the atmosphere of the meetings is very different. The House is more informal while the Senate is much more formal and some question/answer periods were slightly contentious with many more questions and much more discussion and debate. This observation was supported in the interviews as the Senate Minority reported that they excluded in the authorship of bills.

The House Minority participants did mention supermajority but did not express the same feelings of exclusion that the Senate members did. One Minority member stated, “When a supermajority exists, conditions do not exist for true compromise.” The same participant stated, “The supermajority has all of the votes that they need to pass anything they want.” Ironically, a Majority member said, “We’ve got a supermajority. We can do whatever we want to.” However, that same member expressed frustration that the Majority cannot agree on how to fund education. The interviews support the difference in atmosphere and relationships.

Findings from the Interviews

I completed the interviews and surveys simultaneously. By conducting observations at the same time as the interviews and surveys throughout the three-month data collection process, I was able to immerse myself in the environment. Ten interviews were completed. After the interviews, one participant had reservations so that data was not included. Nine interviews were analyzed for coding. Six interviews were done in person while the other three were done by Zoom, phone, and through email.

The interviews were conducted in the participants’ Capitol offices to make them feel comfortable. Some asked for the questions before the interview so I emailed them the list of twelve questions. During the interviews I asked the questions and allowed them the time and freedom to answer the questions thoroughly. A few participants went back to previous questions and expounded on them. I tried not to prompt or ask them to further explain their answers unless they were confusing or I felt they didn’t answer them thoroughly. Also, I tried not to ask further questions to avoid getting off topic. Although I recorded the interview, I took notes for myself just as a self-check.

Common words and themes that emerged from the interviews were as follows: teacher walkout, relationships, leadership, politics, money, supermajority, and funding formula; support for education; teacher retention and recruitment; and vouchers. Quotes from their interviews to support these findings will be included.

Teacher Walkout. The theme of the 2018 Teacher Walkout was mentioned by five of the nine participants. Two participants specifically stated, “When I sought office in 2018, I really ran on education” and “I started reflecting on it (running for office) in 2018 when the teacher walkout happened.” The lingering after effect of the walkout was mentioned by one participant when they stated, “There is still animosity for the Teacher Walkout in 2018.” Two participants mentioned the significant teacher raises that were given in 2019. In fact, one participant indicated because of the raises, “And then 18 happened. Our salaries were boosted such that it just didn’t seem outright foolish to stay in Oklahoma.” The last participant to mention the Walkout stated, “I just got so sick of it (funding cuts) and then to be honest with you and it (running for office) was almost poetic that’s when the teacher walkout happened.” Clearly, the participants had strong feelings about the Teacher Walkout of 2018, and it had a significant influence on them personally so much so they chose to run for office.

Relationships. Five participants stated the importance of relationships in getting bills passed. One said, “If you have a good relationship with your fellow member across the aisle, you can ask them to carry your bill for you.” Another said, “As long as you keep up good relationships with your colleagues as long as you keep up good relationships especially with committee chairs one opportunity for collaboration is for Minority members to hand their bill over to a Majority member to carry it.” Finally, “You know I was told when I first came up here that it was all about relationships, and that is so true.” Even though relationships are important,

leadership still has a significant role and has power. This theme was present in the committee observations when House members mentioned they had already spoken with colleagues about their bill.

Leadership. Five of the nine participants mentioned the influence of leadership and its significance in their work. One participant said, “You’re not powerful within the body especially if you’re not leadership.” Another participant indicated this influence of leadership and power in their work was a surprise. “I think the biggest shock is just how much control leadership has in the building.” Finally, “Leadership has the power to block legislation and control the agenda.” After conducting the observations and interviews, references to leadership had a negative connotation. Regardless of party legislators felt that leadership had too much power and influence. They were frustrated that their bills didn’t have the opportunity to be heard because leadership would not put them on the agenda.

Politics. The idea of politics was mentioned by four of the participants and surprisingly the connotation was positive. The first one said, “You have to navigate the politics in the building to get a bill heard.” Another participant stated, “That really shows what’s possible when you put partisan politics aside.” Another reference was made, “I’ve always been interested in politics” and “Politics plays a huge part of that (goals).” A final participant said, “Politics does tend to drive some division but that’s healthy.” This word generally has a negative feeling in the media and society in general. In fact, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt and former President Donald Trump both campaigned on the idea that they were not career politicians, which was meant to boost their votes. Upon interviewing these participants, they primarily referenced politics in a good manner.

Money. The scarcity of money and the possible mismanagement were all mentioned most likely because these concepts make passing a bill that needs funding much more difficult. One participant stated, “I would say money (influences the legislature’s ability to meet educational needs in Oklahoma).” This statement is fundamental to how the budget is set for the state. Legislators must always be cognizant of the current budget and future projections. After their interview one participant mentioned to me that there were some brilliant financial minds at the Capitol to make the budget to help as many as possible.

Another participant said, “I just feel it (a new bill) will be fraught with conflict and issues because there’s no money tied to it.” The next participant continued the concern for money by saying, “I think we need to do a better job of managing the money that we have.” Finally, the last participant stated, “We don’t appropriate enough dollars to meet educational needs.” This last statement is rather controversial because education receives over half of the state’s funds. However, those funds go to all forms of education: higher education, career techs, and K12 public schools. As one participant mentioned, maybe the funds need to be better managed. Again, bills do not always require funding.

Supermajority. This phrase generally has negative connotations because it asserts that one specific party is in control and can carry out their agenda without healthy debate and input from the Minority political party. There was an even amount of negative and positive interpretation from the interviews when referencing super. One participant said, “The act of them putting their name on it because they’re a member of the Majority, the supermajority, greatly increases the chance the bill will be heard.” The same participant added, “Because the supermajority exists, we have flawed outcomes in the legislation that we hear, we consider, and we pass.” The next participant had a positive statement, “We’ve got a supermajority. We can do

whatever we want to.” The rest of this participant’s statement referred to the idea that since they are the Majority, they should be able to come together and accomplish great things, but they can’t because they can’t agree on how to do it.

My observations and surveys support the concept that the supermajority in the Oklahoma Legislature exists because bills that belong to Minority members generally do not get placed on their committee agendas. Also, Minority members had Majority members’ names on their bills so they could pass out of committee. The Oklahoma House of Representatives has 101 members and eighteen are in the Majority making them possess overwhelming numbers. The Oklahoma Senate has 48 members and nine are Minority members. Again, the numbers are somewhat staggering for the supermajority.

Funding Formula. The Funding Formula dates back to the mid-twentieth century when the Legislature decided to create a fair and equitable way to distribute funds to schools. Not surprisingly this phrase appeared in the interviews as it has been debated for years in relation to its fairness and allocation. A participant said, “We have a fairly equitable funding distribution formula.” Another participant stated, “Every year we fail to adequately fund the formula.” Funding the Formula has been a sticking point among educators and legislators. Research has been conducted showing that Oklahoma schools may never be adequately funded; however, they are funded. “The Legislature shall establish and maintain a system of free public schools wherein all the children of the state may be educated” (Okla.Const. art. XIII, §1).

Another participant shared, “The greatest needs of Oklahoma (sic) I said funding to the formula.” Others mentioned that the Funding Formula is controversial and still needs work, “(A leader can) come out against the funding formula bill.” While another said, “We try to figure out a funding formula.” It appears that none of the participants from this study believe the Formula is

adequate. In fact, from my observations of the House Appropriations and Budget Education Subcommittee meetings, the Chair and other members would state that there was not enough funding for a bill or they were concerned there would not be future funding. If they are concerned about money and revenue, which they always seem to be, then the Formula may potentially never be adequately funded.

Support for Education. In almost all of the interviews, the participants stated that everyone in the Legislature cares for and supports education, but they do not agree on how to fund it. One participant said, “I think my goal was for there never to be a vote from (my district) that would harm the public school system in Oklahoma.” Another one said, “I have learned up here is that you have a lot of people that want to fix education and I appreciate that.” Finally, “There’s not one person in this building that’s not supportive of education. But the difficulty would be in coming to a consensus about how to get it done and where the money needs to go.” This statement will be further discussed in Chapter V’s implications section.

From my observations, I would agree with their statements because the questions about funding that members asked during the meetings were very thoughtful. For example, there was a bill presented about paying teachers for their National Board Certification. Members all stated they believed teachers should receive the \$5,000 stipend and potentially more but there was concern over where current and future funding would come from.

Teacher Retention and Recruitment. This phrase has become a hot topic in this legislative session in response to the growing concern over the decreasing teachers in the state with six of the nine interviewees mentioning it. A participant said, “It’s only gotten worse; you know, the teacher shortage is growing.” Another added, “Retaining teachers, recruiting teachers, ensuring they have the support they need and making sure that we incentivize them to continue

learning.” While the next participant stated, “Some big-time issues in education as far as especially I’d put at the top of the list the teacher pipeline.” Finally, “The greatest problem is the teacher work force. We need to restore the teacher corps.”

During my observations, the House Common Education Committee presented several bills to address this concerning issue. Legislators wrote bills that targeted recruiting teachers at the college level by paying them money each year of college that they majored in education. Another bill looked at changing the teacher certification process and not requiring so many tests so more teachers could get certified. A bill presented the idea of increasing current teachers’ pay based on performance to keep them in the classroom. Clearly, legislators know there is a teacher shortage and are attempting to solve the problem from different perspectives.

Surprising Words

Religion. When I say that the following two themes were surprises to me, I assert that I didn’t expect these ideas to come through in their responses to my questions related to education. One participant said, “I’m a person of faith so I believe God has put me here for such a time as this.” Another said, “I will represent them and vote just like they want unless it goes against my spiritual or moral upbringings.” A participant relayed, “I am very confident not in my ability but in the skills that God has given me to utilize and He’s prepared me for this.” Finally, “I feel like God led me into those things.”

Three more participants referenced religion during their interviews. Some even mention their faith on their campaign websites and where they attended church on their legislative pages. Living in the “Bible Belt” does not make it uncommon for candidates or legislators to mention religion but including it in their answers was surprising to me.

Vouchers. In 2002 the Supreme Court ruled in *Zelman v. Harris-Simmons* that Ohio's school voucher program was constitutional and did not violate the separation of church and state. Since then there has been a move among parent groups to take funds from public schools and use them for private school tuition.

In Oklahoma in 2007, the first voucher-related bill was presented when Representative Mike Reynolds introduced House Bill 1301 titled the Opportunity Scholarship Act. Since then legislators have proposed bills to support the taking of public school funds to use in private schools. During this session Senate leadership has been very vocal about a voucher bill while the House leadership has responded that such a bill would not be heard on their side. Since it's a recycled topic, I didn't expect it to be mentioned, but it was. A participant strongly stated, "I will die on the voucher expansion hill. I will vote against voucher expansion every single time." Another said, "We as educators or teachers or whatever go crazy about that equal opportunity scholarship." Another again referenced the role leadership has in relation to voucher bills being heard, "He (a leader) comes out for the equal opportunity scholarship." Lastly, "The current conversation about vouchers was really pretty fascinating to see on this side of the Capitol the lack of support for expanding vouchers" and "I think we need a response for vouchers."

Vouchers have been mentioned this session more than ever most likely because of the Covid Pandemic and the Epic Charter Schools investigation. The U.S. government has passed several acts to give pandemic funds to schools. On March 27, 2020, "Congress set aside approximately \$13.2 billion of the \$30.75 billion allotted to the Education Stabilization Fund through the Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER)" (U.S. DOE, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2022). The website includes another act that was signed into law on

December 27, 2020, titled the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) that promised an additional \$54.3 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER II) Fund. The latest act was signed on March 11, 2021, to add \$122 billion for the ESSER fund called the American Rescue Plan Act. These funds were specifically labeled for reopening schools and maintaining their operations.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on not only the American economy and health system but the world's. Almost every aspect of life has been affected and the Government has made significant efforts to assist students and their families through schools by providing free lunches regardless of income. The funding has allowed schools to provide other resources to help families. Mental health services and community schools programs are other avenues in which these funds are acting as aides to students and their families. According to some legislators, vouchers offer a way in which students can take funds and attend private schools who claim to offer better opportunities.

In 2020 Epic Charter Schools in Oklahoma was investigated for their alleged misappropriations of state funds. State Auditor and Inspector Cyndi Byrd began an audit of the school system and found that the school founders were splitting profits. Epic has offered the alternative for virtual instruction. If vouchers were approved, legislators who support school choice argue students could use those funds to help with items associated with school such as clothing, computers, extracurricular activities, and transportation.

Senator Greg Treat Pro Tempore of the Oklahoma Senate has voiced his support and written bills with the above items in them. Senator Treat proposed such bills to the Senate Common Education Committee and underwent questions from both the Majority and the Minority before the bills were voted down this session. Although there is a place for charter

schools in education, legislators continue to work on a state oversight committee to take charge of funding and requirements through bills this session, which are currently in debate on the House and Senate floors.

Although there were common themes among all participants, it was obvious that political parties do play a role in their viewpoints, especially in the Senate most likely due to the small number of senators (48) compared to the House (101). The word “politics” has received negative connotations over the years, especially when non-career politicians run for office. The term is used to suggest that individuals involved in politics are corrupt or out of touch with the voters. After observing, interviewing, and surveying this study’s participants, perhaps the term “politics” means the ability to navigate the agendas of every legislator who is trying to do what their district wants. Legislators have to come together to accomplish what their voters want. The term “politics” is what that delicate balance and the relationships take to accomplish the most means to these legislators.

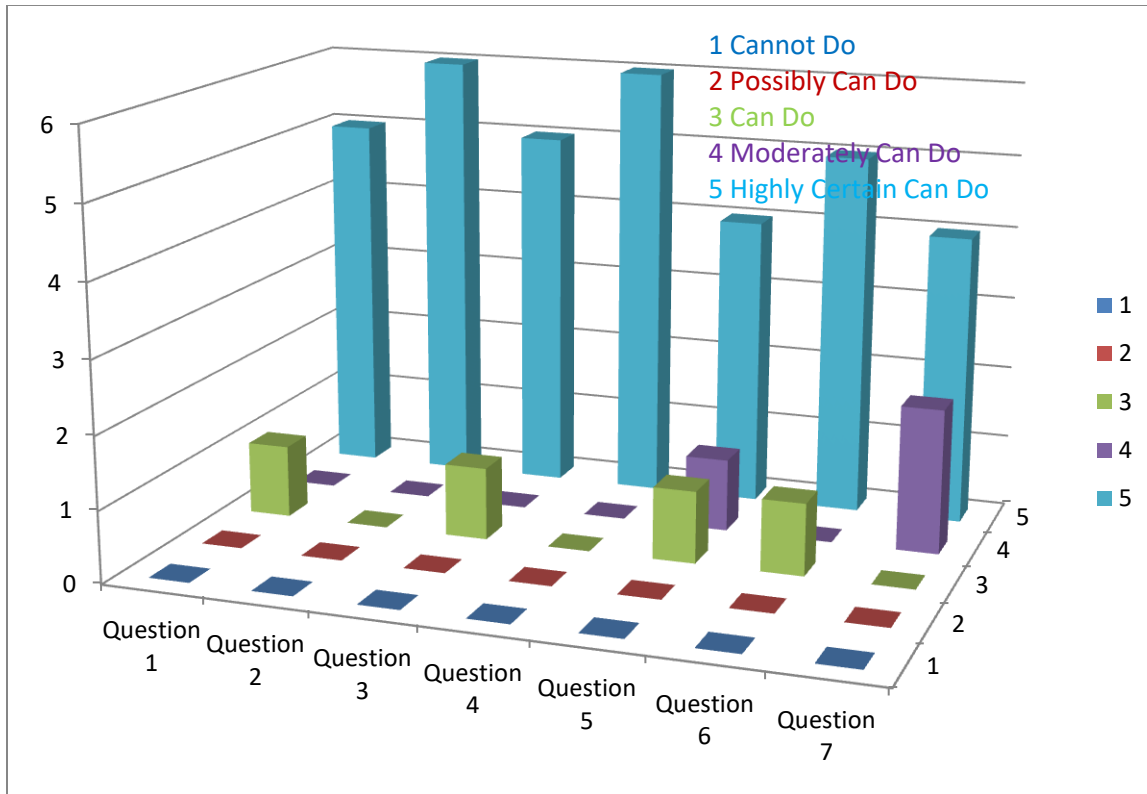
Findings from Appraisal Inventory Survey

The Appraisal Inventory Survey data produced some surprising results. There were eleven surveys but I only used ten because of the one withdrawal. Of that ten six were in the political party and four were in the political party. Again, surveys provide rich data because they measure an individual’s self-efficacy. Caprara, et al., (2009) asserted that self-efficacy beliefs, especially in politics, are founded in “specific group-based identities and ideologies” whereby membership in such a group “implies different experiences and life conditions which may affect individual political self-efficacy” (p. 1004). Participants who were in the political Majority rated their self-efficacy much higher which may be related to their being in the majority political party.

The following bar graph represents the political Majority's answers. Their answers represent a high level of confidence at almost all levels.

Figure 8

Majority's Responses to Survey Questions

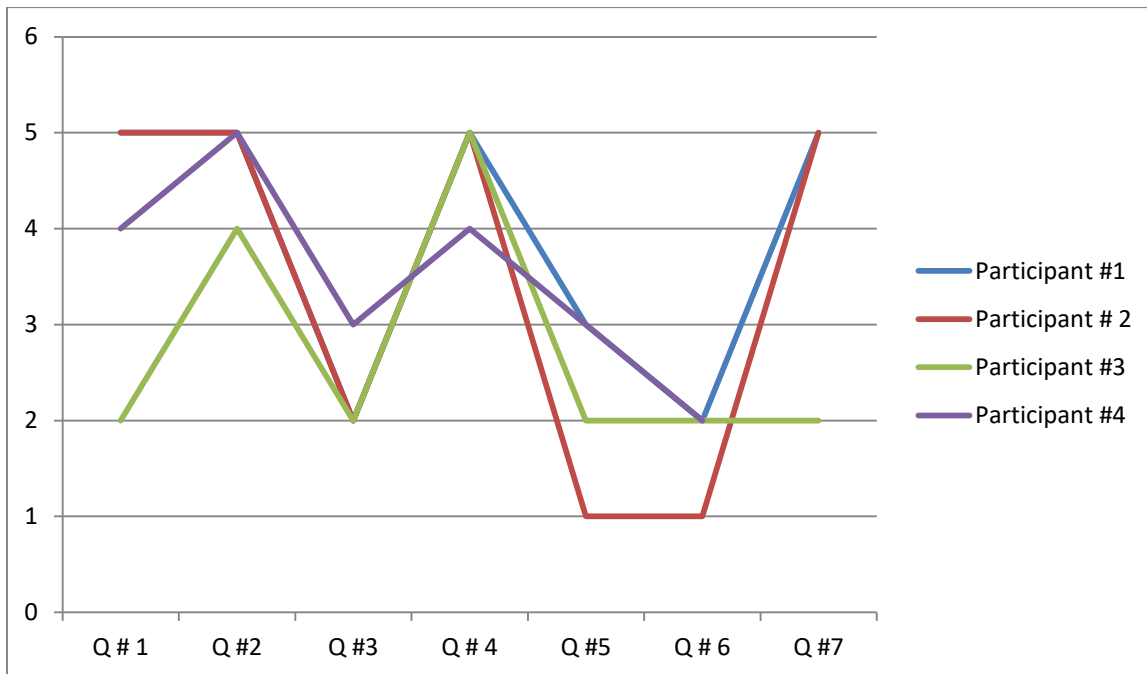


The Minority political party members' answers were considerably different. The questions to which these specific answers were associated were primarily questions five and six which asked about their environment encouraging collaboration and leadership on their committees. The frustration the Minority political party showed their frustration with these scores making their averages much lower with 1's and 2's. This is most likely because they are in the Minority and do not have the votes to make an impact, which is an external factor.

The Minority did express confidence in their ability and knowledge-related questions like the Majority did, which is an internal factor. Also, their interviews reflected those feelings as well as my committee meeting observations and their interviews. This was especially highlighted in questions five and six. Although participants felt confident about the ability to do their jobs (internal factors), the primary differentiation is how they could lead or effect change on their perspective committees (external factors). Again, the SCCT suggests that external factors, such as an individual’s work environment, may affect an individual's self-perceptions and efficacy to make favorable decisions. Internal factors such as personal beliefs and self-perception of abilities to perform the requirements of the job also influence behaviors (Swanson & Fouad, 2014). The graph below shows how the Minority responded:

Figure 9

Minority’s Responses to Survey Questions



The survey revealed that the Majority had more confidence in committee matters over the Minority because of their numbers in the House and Senate.

The interviews supported the participants' answers to the surveys because Minority members felt excluded from collaboration among their committee. One participant stated, "We've (the Minority) also been able to plant some ideas and see them grow across the common education platform." Another asserted, "Leadership has the power to block legislation and control the agenda. It is difficult to make much headway against a supermajority." The next participant shared, "(When) those vote count conditions, exist there is no coming to the center on anything because as I stated before the votes already exist on the one side."

Research Questions Answered

This section presents an overview of findings related to each research question.

Research Question One.

1. What factors have influenced the decision-making of these newly elected officials as committee?
 - a. What factors are external (work environment)?
 - b. What factors are internal (beliefs and/or perception of abilities)?

Question 1a: external factors (self-efficacy). Factors that influenced their decision-making were primarily the leadership and money. Whether they were the Majority or the Minority, many participants said that the leadership set the agenda for what bills would be heard. Several participants stated that when they communicated to the committee leadership what their bill was about, the leadership would tell them that their bill would not get on the agenda. Often, they were not given a reason other than the bill would never pass.

Money is another external factor that affected their decision-making. Both in interviews and during observations, legislators brought up the fact that their bill would not require funding and if they didn't mention cost, someone on the committee was quick to ask how much the bill would cost.

During my observations, interviews, and surveys, I saw evidence of this. While observing the committee meetings, funding was always an issue if the bill required it (which it often did). During the interviews participants stated that leadership was often a hindrance to their bill. Their reasons were that leadership said the bill would never pass out of committee or in the other chamber, or there was not funding for the bill. These external factors affected the participants' self-efficacy in that they were not confident their bills would get heard.

Question 2a: internal factors (self-efficacy). The surveys revealed that all participants were confident in their ability to do the job they were elected to do. During the interviews all participants stated they came to the Capitol with hopes of representing their districts and/or achieving their stated goals, but politics and relationships had a significant impact on whether their bills were heard or passed, regardless of political party.

These responses support Chapter II's Literature Review regarding the concept that self-efficacy is most likely to influence goals and actions of the individual directly and indirectly because of perceived self-ability. The participants clearly believe they are able to create bills that address educational issues and contact leadership about their bills. However, if the leadership rejects their bills or if there is not adequate funding for their bills, their self-efficacy might be diminished. I saw evidence that their self-efficacy was impacted, but the participants said they found alternative ways to get their bills on the agenda such as asking another member to co-author the bill or amend the bill for the next year.

Research Question Two.

2. What goals did they claim during their election and what goals do they currently have while serving on the Education Committee?

During their campaign, participants listed on their websites what their goals were or why they were running for office. Five participants' websites mentioned education. To protect their identity, I cannot list specific phrases but education was purposely mentioned. During my observations and interviews, I witnessed the participants strongly support educational bills. Their surveys showed that they had a strong belief in their goals regardless of the external factors of leadership and money that may keep their bills from being heard. Again, if a bill does not make it to the agenda or get passed out of committee, it stays alive for two years and the author can bring it for hearing the next year. In fact, when I was observing, I heard two legislators (non-participants) say they would bring their bills back for hearing the next year since it did not pass out of committee.

During the interview process, all of the participants claimed that their goals were to represent the interests of their perspective districts. However, some participants stated specific goals such as education (the most common mentioned), health care, and business. None of them said their goals had changed, and they did not appear to change since being elected, but getting bills past leadership was the real challenge, especially if they were in the Minority.

Research Question Three.

3. Are there discrepancies between those goals and what they have currently? (outcome expectations)

There were no noted discrepancies in the stated goals and what they have currently. In the interviews, all claimed to be doing what is best for their districts, voting how their

constituents want, except for one legislator who said they would vote how their district wanted unless it went against their spiritual or moral beliefs, “I will represent them and vote just like they want unless it goes against my spiritual or moral upbringing.” I believe these participants have fulfilled their goals because if you look at their legislative website, the bills they have proposed are listed. Upon looking at every bill, most of the bills are education related.

Research Question Four.

4. How does the Social Cognitive Career Theory explain these findings?

Using the SCCT further developed by Lent, et. al. (1994), learning experiences influence self-efficacy which directs goals and clearly the outcome expectations. Many of the participants indicated that it was a learning curve their first year at the Capitol. In the Minority their learning experience taught them they must develop relationships with the Majority in order to get a bill before the committee as well as create a positive relationship with their leadership. The Majority did not express the same challenges associated with their bills, but leadership was a significant part of their decision-making when writing bills because it was up to the leadership whether their bill appeared on the agenda for hearing. Finally, money was always an issue with their bills because whether revenue is up or down, legislators have to be aware of whether the funds currently existed and would be there in the future for their bills.

The observations show that the SCCT’s learning experiences are invaluable to the participants. They recognize that not everyone knows as much as they do about education and legislation moves slowly. One participant said, “We have a lot of people (legislators) that truly don’t understand education.” And the same participant stated, “Legislation moves through the process at a slow pace where many people get eyes and ideas on it.” During the committee meetings, it was evident that legislators were informed because of their questions about a bill.

They were very insightful and mindful of teachers, students, parents, and administrators' needs as well as the possible expectations the bill might place on schools.

The interviews reveal that their learning experiences significantly impacted their self-efficacy because they are caring individuals. One participant shared, "Sometimes people think we don't care about education. That is so untrue. We do care. And have a heart for it. We do have more educators as legislators now than what we've had in a long time." These participants are motivated to meet their goals of helping education in any way possible whether it's through supporting bills in committee or creating them. They set goals to meet the best possible outcomes possible.

The surveys establish that the participants were confident in their self-efficacy despite external and internal factors. Although their bills might not be placed on an agenda or be passed out of committee, these former educators were highly motivated to get their bills heard in the next year. They seemed determined to do what their districts wanted, especially when it came to education. One participant stated, "I just decided I needed a bigger microphone" so that's why they ran for office on the education platform.

Summary

Data collected for this study was observations, interviews, and a survey. The interviews showed common words and themes that emerged from the interviews were as follows: teacher walkout, leadership, relationships, politics, money, supermajority, and funding formula; support for education; teacher retention and recruitment; classroom discipline; and the surprising themes of religion and vouchers.

During observations the House and Senate Common Education Committees are professional and conduct their meetings following a certain protocol, but the atmosphere of the

meetings are very different in that the House is more relaxed while the Senate is much more formal and some question/answer periods were slightly contentious with much many more questions and much more discussion and debate. This observation was supported in the interviews as the Senate Minority reported that they did not feel included in bill authorship. The House Minority did mention supermajority but did not express the same feelings of exclusion that the Senate members did.

The Appraisal Inventory Survey showed that all participants felt confident about their ability to do the job, but the primary differentiation is how they could lead or effect change on their perspective committees. The survey revealed that the Minority had more confidence over the Majority because of their numbers in the House and Senate.

Finally, the study's research questions were answered using the interviews, observations, and surveys. The data gathered from these three sources supplied rich information that gave insight to how these educators were optimistic when they ran for office, but they quickly gained insight when they came to the Capitol about how significantly relationships played a role in getting their bills passed as well as the influence of money on their bills.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter begins with a summary of findings. Next, in the discussion section, I consider potential explanations and interpretations of findings. Then, in the conclusion section, using the theoretical framework and relevant scholarly literature, I consider the broader meaning of findings. Finally, implications of this study are included, along with limitations, context matters, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

This qualitative case study aimed to explore factors that elected educators have experienced that have influenced their ability and their motivation to affect increased funding for education in the State of Oklahoma. This case study focused on self-efficacy, goals, and outcomes from Bandura's Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) for these educators turned politicians using interviews, observations, and surveys to answer the research questions. Findings demonstrated that discrepancies exist between what educators turned politicians thought they would be able to accomplish at the Capitol versus what they were able to accomplish primarily due to leadership and money.

Data from the observations, interviews, and surveys suggest that legislators as a whole support education but how they get to the point of funding it is a constant struggle. Although

legislators want to improve education, political parties produce a different viewpoint on ways to accomplish these goals. Participants in this study had high levels of self-efficacy and established goals, but their outcome expectations were in conflict with their actual outcomes based on committee leadership and available funds. The people that I interviewed along with the people I came into contact with in the offices, hallways, the Floor, and Chambers were the epitome of an Oklahoman: hard-working, dedicated, and determined. When debating in committee or on the Floor, they were often passionate about their bills and most often respectful of another's viewpoint. However, contentiousness did arise on several occasions when legislators could not answer questions or felt their voices were not being heard, or people were dismissive toward them, especially Minority members. In the following section, I discuss findings and implications related to each research question, and I explore possible explanations for findings.

Discussion of Findings

At the Capitol, barriers that existed were between committee leadership and its members, Majority and Minority members, and actual funds versus future funds for bills. Before starting this study, I had no idea that a legislator could create a bill to only be told by committee leadership that the bill would never be heard without explanation. Participants of both political parties stated this happened to them. When I further pressed them for reasons, their answers suggested that it was related to funding issues, politically heated topics in an election year, and because they were in the Minority political party. Currently, voucher bills are an example of this situation in that several such bills have been heard in the Senate while House Speaker Charles McCall has said on multiple occasions that no voucher bills would be heard on that side of the Capitol. When I watched the Senate Common Education Committee meetings, one of the meetings was consumed with questions, discussion, and debate of SB 1647, also known as the

Oklahoma Empowerment Act, presented by Senate Pro Tem Greg Treat. The OSDE estimates that almost \$20,000 students would participate in the program taking almost \$160 million dollars away from public education. However, Treat stated in the Senate Appropriations Committee, “I want you to hear me loud and clear: we will not pursue final passage on this bill if we cannot find the money to offset the cost in the state aid formula, not just for this fiscal year but on an ongoing basis.” At this point he has not provided details on how the funds would be replaced. Clearly, there are barriers among the leadership at the Capitol despite their being of the same political party. Even money divides people of the same political party.

Majority and Minority members will always have barriers, but at the Capitol, the findings suggest that the Minority often feels defeated when trying to get their bills heard. However, the survey findings state that they do not feel defeated in their self-efficacy or goals. Regardless of the external factors, Minority members do not give up hope as they possess strong self-efficacy, which are internal factors. They know the outcomes are not likely hopeful, but that is an external factor of leadership and not an internal factor. In the interviews, Minority members expressed the frustration of creating a bill then finding a Majority member they could trust to carry the bill so it could get passed. One participant even said that it was hard to give up control of the bill and to have trust that the Majority member would keep it as true to its original form as possible. But, that is the only choice they have, especially in the Senate when there are only nine Minority among forty-eight members while the House has fifteen Minorities among 101 members. Clearly, it is challenging for the Minority members to get their bills heard; therefore, they have to strongly rely on relationships across the aisle, which they mentioned in their interviews.

Though barriers often exist for both political parties to get their bills on their committee agendas, funding appears to be the most common reason they are not on the agenda or do not

pass out of committee. Upon multiple observations of the Senate Common Education Committee meetings, senators proposed their bills and if they did not state what funding was needed, committee members would always ask how much the bill would cost. Often, the senators did not know. In the House Common Education Committee meetings, only a few bills required minimal funding, but they appeared to have more facts and information about their bills, although committee members still did not get the answers they needed on most bills. It is noteworthy that when legislators presented and then answered questions regarding the finances of their bills, some did not have the information or exact funding needed. Maybe this is due to legislators already having the bills in hand so they don't feel they have to explain everything, but based on observation, the legislators struggled to answer questions. It is also remarkable that legislators voted for a bill when not all of their questions were answered. However, legislators mentioned in some bills that they needed more data to create better bills for the future. Time is a significant issue as the legislative mandate for the session has to end in May. According to Article V, Section 26 of the Oklahoma Constitution, regular sessions of the Legislature shall be "adjourned sine die not later than five o'clock p.m. on the last Friday in May of each year." This is common as only nine state legislatures work year round. Currently, Oklahoma legislators have voted to extend the session so they can ensure that specific funds are distributed equitably.

For the future, I think it is important to study the process of how a bill is informally created among bi-partisan members since it was mentioned in the interviews by Minority members. Also, I am curious if additional data collection could perhaps better explain the process of how bills are put on the agenda. However, I was impressed with committee members' questions because they were insightful in that they were thinking from an objective point of view, often from the administration, teachers, or parents' standpoint. It was clear most members

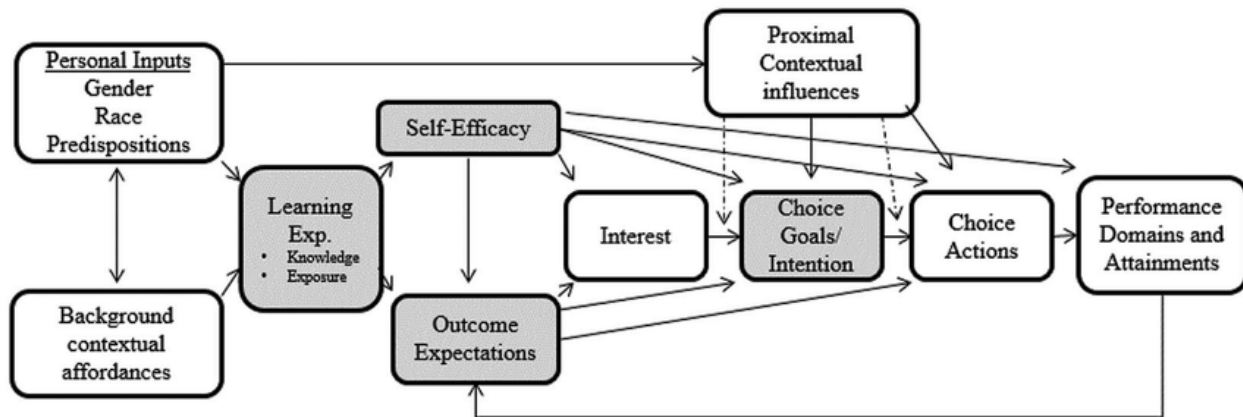
appreciated the impact the bill would have on these particular groups. Collaboration among committee members, between Minority and Majority members, and between the Senate and House legislators happens often and is admirable.

During their interviews, many of the participants said that relationships were the key to getting their bills heard, and some even said in their interviews that they were friends regardless of party. They all agreed education needed to be “fixed” and supported, but they don’t always agree how. I appreciate these committee members’ efforts and their dedication to seeking to meet their education-related goals.

Discussion through the Lens of Social Cognitive Career Theory

The Social Cognitive Career Theory asserts that learning experiences influence self-efficacy which directs goals that produce outcome expectations. The participants’ learning experiences are from their years in education, especially the Teacher Walkout of 2018 which is why some of them ran for office. Again, the survey revealed that they have strong self-efficacy and the interviews revealed that their goals are to improve education while serving the interests of their district. As mentioned before their outcome expectations are varied. Interview question number five “Please explain your confidence level, at this time, for meeting your stated goals in this position” and survey question number seven “I believe I can accomplish professional goals I have established while serving on my committee” showed these findings, which were primarily defined by political party.

Social Cognitive Career Theory



Note: This graph was retrieved online from “Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance, ” by R. W. Lent, S. D. Brown, and G. Hackett, 1994, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 45, p. 93. Copyright 1993 by R. W. Lent, S. D. Brown, and G. Hackett.

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Social-cognitive-theory-model-of-choice-behavior-From-Toward-a-Unifying-Social_fig1_303697663

This study demonstrates that although educators felt confident in themselves, external factors such as politics, party affiliation, leadership, and money played a significant role in their motives to improve or change education. The interview questions of “What motivated you to run for this position?” received the answer of “representing my district.” Interview questions focused on internal factors such as motivation, opportunities, stated goals, personal challenges, and perceptions. The responses did share similar themes in that they were confident in their personal abilities and have had mostly positive opportunities to further their campaign agendas. The remaining interview questions were aimed at addressing external factors such as challenges, strengths, and factors that influence the Legislature.

I thought their responses to the question of “What suggestions/changes do they have for supporting education” were interesting because they aligned with the thematic finding of teacher recruitment and retention. Also, when I asked them if they had anything more to add, most of them said something positive, particularly participant number 10 who said that education was the greatest thing ever in their opinion and that they miss the classroom almost every day.

Major themes were the Teacher Walkout of 2018; teacher retention and recruitment, relationships, leadership, and money garnering over half of the participants’ interview responses. I considered the following as minor themes because they were mentioned less frequently: politics, religion, supermajority, funding formula, and vouchers. Although these were mentioned by only three or four participants, I included these as minor because these words were important in the context of their answers. Regardless of whether they were major or minor, the themes are interwoven with each other and seemingly overlapped; however, they are individual in nature.

Comparisons of Findings to Literature

This study echoes what other literature has found in that politicians pay attention to funding. For example, Amerikaner (2018) stated that legislators must be vigilant when it comes to school spending. It is obvious Oklahoma Legislators do this because of my observations of committee meetings when members would ask legislators proposing bills how they were to be funded. Also, the Funding Formula is a thematic phrase that was often mentioned in the interviews. The OSDE’s website gives information about the Formula regarding its equality for students of all backgrounds. Hime & Maiden (2019) asserted that the Formula is multi-tiered in order to create a consistent financial playing field among districts.

Through observations and interviews, this study has shown that funding and especially the Funding Formula are very important and taken seriously by legislators. They are mindful of

bills that will require more funding as they continue to struggle to find more revenue for the State. According to Ballard & Maiden (2018) legislators create the standards and also the budgets for financing the educational system. Again, legislators are mindful of spending and many feel that more money needs to be spent on education even though half of the State's budget is already directed toward it. Although the participants frequently mentioned the Funding Formula, this study did not include a revision of the Funding Formula but is aware of its significance in the participants' responses and in the observations.

As noted in Chapter II, there are notable differences in the bills legislators create and how they are funded. Legislators appear to have a philosophical idea of what needs to be done to improve education, but they do not always have the information or the funding to accomplish their goals. Legislators create and endorse bills related to education, but they may not have an accurate idea of the precise costs associated with meeting successful educational goals (Ballard, 2016). This is true, especially this year with the voucher-related bills being presented.

Also, in my observations I noted that legislators do not often seem to have the facts or information needed to answer the questions directed to their bills, especially when it comes to funding the bill. During my observations when legislators were asked how much the bill would cost, they didn't always have a specific number. For example, a legislator, who was a former educator, was presenting a bill related to creating a school administrators preparatory program. When the legislator was questioned about the cost, they said that they didn't know the specifics but hoped that an outside group would help fund the program. This supports what the literature says about legislators not knowing the specifics about how schools must fund such programs.

An example to show that some legislators are aware and mindful of spending was seen in the House when two legislators proposed adding subject matter to the curriculum requiring that

specific topics be taught in the classroom but at no cost to the schools. The subject matter was already being taught, but these legislators wanted to make sure the topics covered specific grades because their research found that students were not learning the information consistently. Additionally, both of these legislators were former educators.

Outcome Expectations

Self-efficacy refers to individuals' ability to perform in the chosen work environment and perform tasks that will make them successful and personally satisfied. Self-efficacy is an important component in determining outcome expectations (Lent & Brown, 2008). It is the first step in determining the individuals' choice of career because it is based on personal beliefs and abilities to accomplish goals. All of the participants rated themselves strongly in the area of self-efficacy on the Appraisal Survey, and such personal beliefs have a correlation to their outcome expectations.

Bandura asserted that SCCT shows that personal beliefs directly influence outcome expectations. These educators turned politicians believed they could make a difference in education, but when they arrived at the Capitol, their outcome expectations were changed when they saw how the inner workings of politics within their committees and leadership occurred. Carrico & Tendhar (2012) stated that SCCT focused on types of goals: choice content and performance. These participants stated their desire to serve on the education committee, but their performances have been hindered by funding and leadership. Nonetheless, they all stated in the interviews and through the surveys that such obstacles would not stop them from working toward their goals of improving, supporting, and funding educational-related bills.

Although legislators were able to choose and be named to the education committee, their performance was primarily hindered by leadership and funding. The SCCT assumes that

behavior is closely related to personal factors and that self-efficacy belief and outcome expectation have a direct impact on intention (Gainor & Lent, 1998). Again, goals are an integral component of the SCCT because they influence an individual's behavior. Goals impact motivation and even though legislators are motivated to meet their goals, they were hindered by the external factors of leadership and funding.

Goals

Research question number two specifically addresses the goals of these participants, "What goals did they claim during their election and what goals do they currently have while serving on the Education Committee?" Although there does not appear to be any discrepancies between the politicians' stated goals during their election and their current goals while serving in office, there is a discrepancy between how they aim to meet those goals, especially those who are in the Minority. Goals are most likely to impact motivation on behavior because they are defined as "consciously articulated, personally relevant objectives that lend a sense of purpose and direction to people's behavior" (Elliot, et. al., 1997, p. 915).

These politicians have specific goals related to education and from the observations, interviews, and surveys their behavior shows that they are dedicated to such goals because they are willing to form relationships with leadership and those across the aisle. In the House, they work with others, especially leadership, to create bills so that they will be heard in the Common Education Committee. And in both the House and Senate, legislators are willing to amend their bills and "strike title" in order to get their bill heard on their perspective Floors. To "strike title" allows the bill to move forward in the process but it still needs changes, usually financial, made to it before it can be completely voted on by the Floor and entire legislature to be sent to the governor's desk for signing into law. Moreover, it appears that they are motivated to do whatever

it takes to get their education-related bills heard, passed, and to the governor's desk for final approval.

Alignment between Goals and Decisions

Schultze & Vanderbosch (1998) found that people are more likely to embrace information that is in line with their personal belief system and will use such data to support such beliefs. An alignment can be seen between goals and decisions by looking at the bills legislators present to their committees. All of the bills presented by the educators turned politicians reflected personal beliefs they conveyed to me during their interviews and our conversations before and after the interviews. Those who had a history of being administrators presented bills that would primarily affect administrative training and increase support staff pay while those who left the classroom to run for office, proposed bills that affect curriculum and professional development.

Discrepancies between Goals and Decisions

Baekgaard et al., (2019) stated that politicians often misinterpret information that is at odds with their personal attitudes and beliefs. It is possible that this may lead to politicians voting against their self-professed goals. This can be seen especially in the House and among the Majority who voted for or against vouchers. Although educators in general are against vouchers, some do support it because that is reflective of what their voters desire. However, Redlawsk, et al., (2010) found that there is a time when politicians cannot ignore the data and must go against what they personally believe. This happened with vouchers and with the support of some bills. One participant said that they personally did not support vouchers but had to be mindful of what the voters in their district wanted.

Several surveys have been conducted by the Oklahoma Education Association as well as other lobbyist groups reporting that a majority of voters do not support vouchers. However, the question begs to be answered, “Why are voucher-related bills still being presented in the Senate?” There is much speculation, mostly negative, but from my point of view those presenting the bills are not from educational backgrounds. So, is it personal goals or the wishes of their voters? There does not seem to be a clear answer at this point.

I found that among all of the participants they are very mindful of boundaries in their roles. They know that leadership and funding set such boundaries and if they are in the Minority, relationships with those across the aisle are necessary if they want their bills to be furthered. As I mentioned earlier, legislators’ inability to answer funding-related questions is significant. These issues seem to be clear discrepancies between their stated goals and the actual decisions they make in office because they support bills that do not make sense or are not sustainable for education adding to the list of unfunded mandates. It is not known whether it’s because of a lack of time, large amount of bills, or other concepts that would merit further research.

Limitations

This study is not without limitations because I am not a politician and do not have experience in the research, creation, and presenting of a bill. I would like to have done a follow up interview toward the end of the session to ask legislators if their bills passed the House and Senate and what the process was to do so. When legislators present bills in committee or on their perspective Floors, sometimes members ask that “title be stricken” or that amendments be made to the bill. All of the members who were asked to do these things agreed, and I am curious whether that helped their bill get passed on their Floors. To add an amendment means that other members have concerns about the bill’s language or funding, and they would like the author to

look at those specific areas. Although the Legislature's website shows the phases a bill goes through, it does not have the ability to explain all the conversations that take place in order to get that bill to that specific place. The informal external conversations that take place influence this process. Leadership and funding have a significant impact on bills. After conducting the research, my assumptions are that many individuals are involved in that process and much research has to be done on financing the bill, pleasing committee members and leadership's concerns to get the final approval for it to move forward.

Conclusions

Based on the data I gathered in this study, these are the conclusions that can be made. Political context and money are significant conclusions that emerged from my findings. The first conclusion is it makes a difference what party you're in and if the party is in power. The Majority party means your bill is much more likely to be heard and that it's easier for you to create relationships since your party is in power. Those in leadership are in the political majority so they are more likely to support bills from their own members. An example of this is legislators do not have to be present to vote on their perspective Floors. The question arises, "How can you convince people to accept your bill if they're not on the Floor?" This could perpetuate a stalemate because people don't have to listen. There is a possible gap between what they think they can do and what they actually can do. Party and leadership play a significant role and simply put relationships matter.

Funding is a significant issue. They all know it takes money but the conclusion is they don't know exact numbers on how much it takes to fund something. The Funding Formula is a problem that it needs to be addressed but no one has solutions. If a legislator does propose changing the Formula, most others balk in response. Changes to the Formula would most likely

come from those who are at the end of their term. Despite the velocity of addressing the Funding Formula, it was addressed in last year's session.

During the 2021 Legislative Session, House Bill 2078 addressed an area of the Funding Formula in that it allowed schools to modify the calculation of state aid funding, allowing for schools to carry over more money for the next school year. Although the bill received enough votes to pass, some Majority party members in the both the House and Senate voted against the bill. Both sides claimed that the bill would encourage schools to not spend money on hiring teachers and improving curriculum so they could have a larger carry over. Much debate occurred and the bill was signed into law by the governor effective for the 2022-23 school year.

Implications

This section discusses this study's implications for research, theory, and practice. There were four questions guiding this research:

1. What factors have influenced the decision-making of these newly elected officials as they have sought to increase funding for education in the State of Oklahoma on their education committee?
 - a. What factors are external (work environment)? (self-efficacy)
 - b. What factors are internal (beliefs and/or perception of abilities)? (self-efficacy)
2. What goals did they claim during their election and what goals do they currently have while serving on the Education Committee? (goals)
3. Are there discrepancies between those goals and what they have currently? (outcome expectations)
4. How does the Social Cognitive Career Theory explain these findings?

Implications for Research

Research has been conducted on funding education in Oklahoma but none has been done on recent educators-turned politicians' role in funding education. This study has investigated the motivation, political factors, and decision-making process associated with these individuals. Legislators are highly motivated to get their bills passed and that motivation comes through in the relationships they make with fellow party members, leadership, and bipartisan efforts. In the interviews many identified relationships as vital to their legislative success. The political factors involved are many, especially during this election year and participants stated that they have been influenced to either present certain bills or suppress others because voters will be especially aware of their actions in this election year.

The general public assumes that politicians are not in touch with what is happening in their district's schools, but from what I saw in my time at the Capitol, politicians' days are full of appointments with administrators, teachers, families, lobbyists, and other members who want their voices to be heard. Every week all legislators who were former educators meet in a bipartisan effort to collaborate on bills that would benefit education. Their schedules are extremely tight as they work at the Capitol and then return to their home districts almost every week to stay in touch with their constituents. There does not appear to be a disconnect between the education community and the legislative community. The continuing lack of revenue and lack of educators turned politicians be appointed to leadership roles. More research needs to focus on the Funding Formula and ways to improve its calculations, more transparency, and increase state funding for it.

Implications for Theory

Theories regarding the Oklahoma Legislature's decisions have been prevalent since the Teacher Walkout of 2018 with many speculating about funding issues at the Capitol. The SCCT

considered how self-efficacy, outcomes, and goals have impacted educational funding since 2018. Results of this study showed that many decisions are taken to fund K-12 public education. Educators turned legislators' goals did align with the decisions they make when creating, hearing, and voting for educational bills, but other significant factors such as leadership and funding impacted their voting.

The SCCT clearly shows that learning experiences from their education days, along with what they've learned at the Capitol, impact their personal beliefs that dictate their goals, which are seen in the form of the bills they present and their voting record and ultimately their outcome expectations. The participants seem to be unchanged from their educational values and continue to be very supportive of education at the Capitol. Although the SCCT proved useful in this study, perhaps other theoretical frameworks could also be utilized for further research.

Implications for Practice

As evidenced by this study, funding K-12 public education in Oklahoma is a significant problem that legislators face every time they conduct research and create and present that bill. Their decision-making process is an intricate one as they have many external factors that influence them. The interviews and surveys revealed that they feel confident in their ability to make the decisions, but external factors often keep them from doing what they think is best for education. Such challenges as revenue, leadership, and the current election year are significantly on their minds.

This study informed and made aware how the educators turned legislatures' educational funding decisions and how their learning experiences influences their self-efficacy and ability to set goals and the outcome expectations. The Teacher Walkout of 2018 played a role in over half of these participants' decision to run for office, and the interviews revealed that it is still on their

minds, four years later. The motivation is strong for these ten participants because they want to do what is best for education, but the lack of funding and leadership appear to be the two primary challenges they face yearly. If Oklahoma wants to improve its education system, more must be done at all levels of government to succeed.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although the motivation, political factors, and decision-making process were significant in this study, more research needs to be conducted. Longitudinal studies should be performed to see if the answers differ in a non-election year and what types of bills are presented. It would be interesting to ask the participants where they get ideas for their studies: from constituents, themselves, leadership, or other sources.

I know that the overwhelming majority of my participants were gracious, kind, and respectful on the many occasions that I spoke with them, observed them, and communicated through email. Their LA's (legislative assistants) have a challenging job juggling the many people who want to meet with them about various interviews. When I was waiting in their offices, almost all of them had individuals "drop by" unannounced or without appointments. Most of the participants got emotional when talking about education in general by sharing personal stories of struggle when they were in education. Even though they are at the Capitol and out of the classroom, they still feel our pain and know the struggle is certain. They have not left behind their experiences as a teacher but have brought them to the Capitol. I was moved by their dedication and see that they keep similar "teacher hours" if not longer at the Capitol. My favorite parts of the interviews were the conversations I had with the legislators before and after the recorded interviews because that is where we had a back and forth conversation about our lives, experiences, and what things are like at the Capitol. That is where they revealed some of

their deepest feelings, and I wish I could have included that in this study, which is why I am saying it here. These people are in a real battle and although they said everyone at the Capitol cares about education, revenue/funding limits them and other external factors challenge them daily. Therefore, more research needs to be done in the area of educational politics.

Recommendations for Practice

Clearly, the Funding Formula is a significant issue for education. It is always on the minds of legislators when they create bills. However, they are not always aware of how much funding their bills might require, and the Legislature has a history of passing bills that become unfunded mandates. Although legislators want to improve education, they must be mindful that signing unfunded mandates into law only puts more strain on an already-fragile education system. Chapter I stated how many of the unfunded mandates of HB 1017 in 1990 had to be repealed so the Legislature should be mindful of the past.

Leadership is another area that legislators who are new or are in the political Minority have to navigate in order to present their bills. I am not aware of any programs that first-time legislators can participate in to learn how to deal with external factors such as funding and relationship. From their interview and survey responses, it is obvious these impose significant challenges to legislators accomplishing their goals.

Summary

This study has focused on the problem of funding K-12 public education and why educators turned to politics in Oklahoma in 2018. Also, this study's purpose is to understand, through the lens of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), factors that elected educators have experienced that have influenced their ability and their motivation to affect increased funding for education in the State of Oklahoma. Bandura's Social Cognitive Career Theory (1986) and its

model developed by Lent, et.al., (1994) were appropriate for this study because they explained how learning experiences influence self-efficacy which impacts outcome expectations and goals.

The review of the literature showed how education was funded at the National level and for the State of Oklahoma's public schools. Educational funding in Oklahoma has not been studied much and the need is clearly there. Its funding formula is something that has been debated and both political parties acknowledge the need for revisions, especially when the State's economy is not strong or consistent. This study intended to investigate what internal and external factors influence legislators' decision-making process to fund K-12 public education, and if their stated goals regarding education are aligned with their behaviors using the SCCT to explain the findings.

The study's methodology included a discussion of the research questions and designs, procedures, my role as researcher, ethical considerations, trustworthiness of my findings, and limitations of the study. Data collected for this study was interviews, observations, and a survey. The interviews showed common words and themes that emerged from the interviews were as follows: teacher walkout, leadership, relationships, politics, money, supermajority, and funding formula; support for education; teacher retention and recruitment; classroom discipline; and the surprising themes of religion and vouchers.

Based on the data I gathered in this study, conclusions can be made that political context and money are significant. Findings suggest that what political party a legislator is in makes a strong impact on whether their bills will be heard in committee. Leadership is more likely to hear bills from members in their own political party. Also, funding is a noteworthy issue. Legislators are aware that funding is important to bills and education, but they do not always

know the financial details associated with both. The Funding Formula is a challenge as it does not always appear equitable and may not have the consistent revenue it needs.

Further studying political decision making at the Capitol by members of the entire education committees and the process by which bills are created would be valuable. The implications are that the continued lack of revenue and low numbers of educators turned politicians be appointed to leadership roles. Research needs to continue on the Funding Formula and ways to improve its calculations, more transparency, and increase state funding for it. Oklahoman children in K-12 public schools deserve an education that offers them the best opportunities, but there are obstacles that legislators continue to face, although their desire to improve education is palpable.

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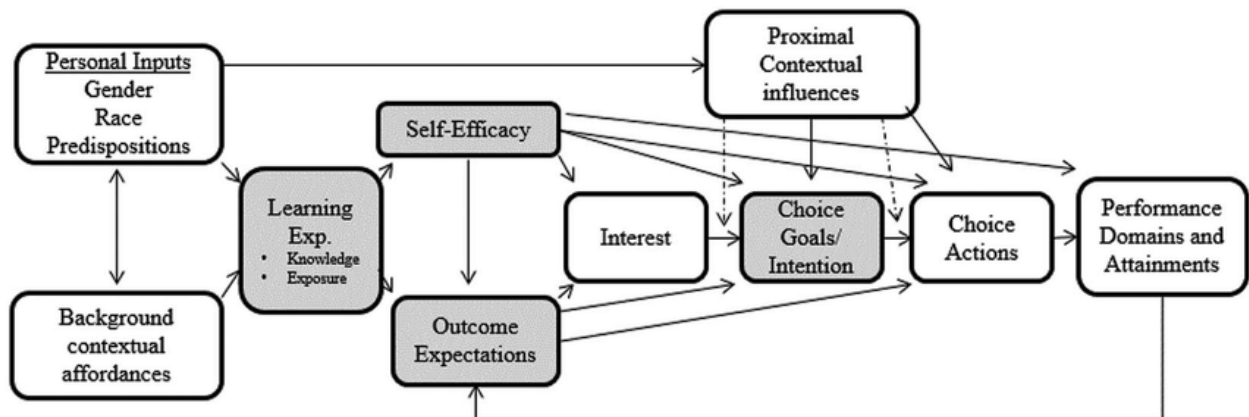
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Social Cognitive Career Theory



APPENDIX B

Appraisal Inventory Survey Questions for Oklahoma Common Education Members

Likert Scale

1	2	3	4	5
Cannot do	Possibly Can do	Can Do	Moderately Can do	Highly certain Can do

1. I am confident I can state my own political opinions openly even in hostile settings.
2. I can build and maintain relationships with members on my committee.
3. I can play a decisive role in decisions made on my committee.
4. I feel I have enough experience to be knowledgeable to make decisions on my committee.
5. I believe my work environment encourages collaboration.
6. I am confident that I can effect change (or play a leadership role) on my committee.
7. I believe I can accomplish professional goals I have established while serving on my committee.

*The purpose of this survey is to increase understanding and guide development of further political analysis related to education.

*Questions adapted from the following sources:

Bandura, A. (2006). "Guide for constructing self-efficacy scales." In F. Parajes & T. Urdan (Ed.), *Self-Efficacy beliefs of adolescents*, p. 307-337. Information Age Pub.

Caprara, G.V., Vecchione, M., Capanna, C., & Mebane, M. (2009). Perceived political Self-efficacy: Theory, assessment, and applications. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 39, 1002-1020. Doi: [10.1002/ejsp.604](https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.604).

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions for Oklahoma Common Education Members

1. What motivated you to run for this position?
2. What are your stated goals for holding this position?
3. What opportunities have you experienced that have supported you in meeting these goals?
4. What challenges have you experienced that have not supported the meeting of these goals?
5. Please explain your confidence level, at this time, for meeting your stated goals in this position.
6. From your perception, what are the greatest needs of education in Oklahoma?
7. How does the legislature work to meet those needs?
8. What factors influence the legislature's ability to meet educational needs in Oklahoma?
9. What are the legislature's greatest strengths in supporting educational success in Oklahoma?
10. What are the legislature's greatest challenges in supporting educational success in Oklahoma?
11. What suggestions/changes do you have for supporting education in the State?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX D



Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: 01/27/2022
Application Number: IRB-22-38
Proposal Title: Educators Who Turned to Politics in Oklahoma

Principal Investigator: Mary Sloat
Co-Investigator(s):
Faculty Adviser: Maryjo Self
Project Coordinator:
Research Assistant(s):

Processed as: Exempt
Exempt Category:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in 45CFR46.

This study meets criteria in the Revised Common Rule, as well as, one or more of the circumstances for which continuing review is not required. As Principal Investigator of this research, you will be required to submit a status report to the IRB triennially.

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be approved by the IRB. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, adviser, other research personnel, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any unanticipated and/or adverse events to the IRB Office promptly.
4. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact the IRB Office at 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Sincerely,
Oklahoma State University IRB

VITA

Mary J. Sloat

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Dissertation: EDUCATORS WHO TURNED TO POLITICS IN OKLAHOMA

Major Field: School Administration

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education in School Administration at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2022.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Education in School Administration at Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Weatherford, Oklahoma in 2008.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in English at the University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma in 2006.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in English at Phillips University, Enid, Oklahoma in 1996.

Experience:

2001-Present: English Teacher-Garber Public Schools (Garber, OK)

1996-2001: English Teacher-Oklahoma Bible Academy (Enid, OK)

Professional Memberships:

Garber Education Association

Oklahoma Education Association

National Education Association